

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PARENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What can I do to help/motivate my child to succeed at home?

DO:

- Help your child to find a regular time and place to practice
- Praise your child's efforts and offer compliments and encouragement regularly
- Encourage your child to play for family and friends
- Keep your child's instrument in working condition
- Show constant interest in your child's progress and their band/orchestra activities
- Show support by attending band/orchestra functions and concerts

DON'T:

- Use practice as a punishment
- Insist that your child play for others when he/she doesn't want to
- Ridicule or make fun of mistakes or less than perfect playing

I don't have any musical background; can I still help my child practice?

Yes! Take this time to learn with your child. Ask them to show you what they are learning in lessons. By simply monitoring your child's practice and insuring they are performing their exercises/songs as the teacher indicated, you will help them progress. You do not need to have any experience. Can a child be "musical" if the parents are not? No one can predict whether your child will become a musical person. Success in instrumental music is determined by a number of factors, the most important of which are regular practicing, support and desire.

What rate of progress should I expect?

Not too much, too soon. Please don't expect rapid progress and development in the beginning. After they have mastered the first 3 notes in the method book, most students will successfully learn to play simple melodies within a couple of months.

What if my child loses interest and wants to quit?

Occasionally, students will become frustrated with progress on their instrument, especially when the newness wears off. It is important to help your child through these situations by doing the following:

- Discuss the situation with your child to determine why his/her interest is declining.
- Talk with your child's teacher to see what might be done to stimulate interest
- Encourage your child to continue for a specified length of time
- Offer increased enthusiasm and support
- Seek advice from other band/orchestra parents
- As a last resort, discuss the possibility of switching to another instrument with your child's teacher

What should I do if my child misses a lesson due to illness, vacation or classroom conflict?

Keep practicing the same assignment from your last lesson. You may try to go on to the next page of our lesson book. Continue to fill out your home practicing record – just move on to the next line on your chart. If the student misses a lesson because they forgot the instrument or forgot to come, they should see the teacher as soon as possible to get the new assignment and explain what happened.

What if my child forgets his/her instrument on lesson day?

It happens once in a while. When a student forgets his/her instrument on band/orchestra days he/she should still attend the lesson or rehearsal. They will be given their new assignment and taught the new objectives. Sometimes a parent will bring the forgotten instrument to the school office. Then the office must notify the student to pick up the instrument on the way to lessons. We are trying to teach our young students responsibility for their activities, and decrease classroom and office interruptions, so perhaps it is best not to bail the child out by consistently bringing the instrument to school.

Some students are naturally forgetful, but most students will remember their instruments because they are looking forward to lessons. If the child consistently forgets, this may be a warning sign that he or she has lost interest or has too many activities to juggle. A simple technique could be to pack their instrument and book along with their school books and supplies – and place them near the front door the night before lessons day – that way in the rush of the morning, they will have everything they need.

Will my child be able to learn to play softly?

Family members of beginning band students may wonder if their young musician will ever be able to play softly. Have faith – they will. In the beginning it is difficult to coordinate mind, hands, facial muscles and breath. Their muscles are still learning the correct ways to hold the instruments, play notes, and blow out enough air to make a sound. Although string instruments are not capable of the same level of volume, the beginner can be a challenge to listen to. After many hours of practicing, your student will gain control of his/her instrument and body. He/she has just begun to know how much air or bow pressure is needed to produce certain notes. Try to be patient and encourage practicing even though it may be loud and/or annoying. The more practice at coordinating their minds, muscles and air, the easier it will be to play softer. Sometimes this ability does not happen until the 2nd year of playing – so hang in there, and be proud of the “baby steps” your child is making. Hopefully, this should not be too much of an issue, because the length of initial practice sessions will not be too long.

Can my child change instruments during the school year?

Unfortunately, this general answer is no – our lessons are group lessons and we progress together each week. Students wishing to stop their instruments may not switch to another as we do not have new beginning groups starting mid-year. They should plan to start the new instrument during the summer, at the beginning of the new school year, or privately at a music studio.

Does my child have enough talent for this?

The short answer to this question is yes. All children can benefit from music instruction, and many of the children who enjoy it the most are not the ones who have enough talent to be the next Itzhak Perlman. Much research suggests that students who receive music instruction do better in their other classes, and this effect may show up strongest in math class.

Your child needs no more talent to play a musical instrument than he/she needs to learn any other subject in school, or to learn tennis, dancing, baseball, football, basketball or riding a bicycle. All these things can be taught to a child. Some perform better than others, some learn faster, some are gifted and become professionals--but, if a child has the desire to play music, he/she will play, and his/her life will be richer because of it.

Will my child receive a grade for lessons?

They will not receive a letter grade on their regular report card, but will instead receive a separate Instrumental Music Assessment report twice per year, at the end of the semesters in February and in June. This report details progress in many areas of performance and classroom participation. The students are told about these evaluations ahead of time and given a short piece of music to prepare on their own.

What if my child needs braces - will this interfere with playing a wind or brass instrument?

Braces will not restrict your child from choosing the instrument they want unless the orthodontist advises otherwise. If a child highly desires a certain instrument, they will generally bear a little extra discomfort. Braces do cause irritation of the inner lip linings, especially with high brass instruments such as trumpet and French horn. However, a child who is highly motivated will still succeed, although they may progress slower while they have braces. In addition, there is an adjustment period when braces are removed, as this causes the lip formation to be different without the added dimensions of the braces under the lips.

What performance opportunities will there be for my child?

School concerts, assemblies, etc.; Check school calendar and teacher webpages for more info

What about private lessons?

Private lessons are the best way to accelerate instruction and a great way to motivate students – please check with your child’s teacher for recommendations!

PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS - WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN AND WILL BE HAPPY TO DO WHAT WE CAN TO HELP THEM SUCCEED!