

STUDIO 88

THE PARENTS ROLE

IN YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS AT PIANO



BY BETH DEAN



WHAT EFFECTIVE PRACTICING IS AND ISN'T

I'm sure that you have heard the songs over and over. You know the songs as well--if not better--than your child does. Repetition, yeah, that should do it!

But, to actually be effective, practicing must involve more than just starting from the beginning of a song and playing to the end. Here are some tips that will help you, as parents, understand how to BEST use the time your child has!

LEARNING TO PLAY AN INSTRUMENT WELL TAKES TIME

Young beginners can practice 30 minutes a day, especially if they divide the time into two or three sessions. Children who skip a day of practice or practice only a few minutes a day never have a chance to discover how much they can accomplish. Their interest will fade in a year or two.

CHILDREN LIKE ROUTINE

Set aside a portion of each day for practicing and help your child. Help your child keep this schedule faithfully. I can tell you from experience with all of my students that the most effective part of practicing is **routine**.

CHILDREN WANT TO PLEASE THEIR PARENTS

Most children start lessons because their parents want them to learn an instrument. It is important in the process of learning that you, as parents, are involved as much as possible. Sitting down with them and watching them play helps them continue to grow. Piano is lonely sometimes, and when you are there to watch and listen, it gives them more of a reason to play for you.

Praising them daily will give them even more initiative to improve!





CHILDREN LIKE TO BE THE BOSS

Ask questions! Have them teach you. They LOVE to be able to tell me about teaching mom or dad something they learned. I hear that on a regular basis.

MUSICAL PATTERNS MAKE SENSE

Yes, you CAN help them--and maybe learn to play yourself! Watching for patterns in elementary music is something that you can help them with. Many times, children do not see what is coming ahead--just like reading --and with your help, they can learn to see the patterns and memorize their music much faster.

SMALLER IS BETTER

This is probably the most important topic I teach them in class, and my hopes are that they can one day use this at home. The goal cannot be so high that it is unreachable!

My Dad wanted me to play basketball so badly (yeah, right!) that he put the goal at regulation height. I gave up, and so did he. He thought it would make me work harder for it, but it made me feel like it would never happen. I use this example because children typically come home with a lot of stuff written on the page and don't know where to start. I suggest start small--and then, as they progress, you and I as a team can push them to reach higher goals.

SOME TIPS FOR PRACTICING "SMALL":

01

WORK ON A SMALL AMOUNT OF MUSIC AT A TIME.

One section, one phrase, even just one measure.

02

WORK ON THE DIFFICULT SPOTS

Once they have found the spots that are difficult for them, only work those spots. They can work the full song at the end of a practice session to see how well they did at "fixing" those spots.

03

LET THEM BE RESPONSIBLE

Once they have done this at the beginning of the week, they should be fine to practice on their own. I DO want to see how they're doing without your help, too. Get them going and then give them the responsibility to work out what they should.



EQUIPMENT TO HAVE ON HAND:



01

PENCILS

Use pencils **ONLY**. Do not use pens! We will need to be able to erase whatever marks are made. For theory. Colored pencils for marking places that they are still struggling with. Highlighters also work well, but can be a bit annoying to look at in the sheet music. Too many marks become too busy and can be difficult for the child to focus on what they should be.

02

METRONOME

There are multiple models available. They beep, tick, or tock, and can be rather annoying to hear. Because the students don't have a track at home to keep a steady beat, the metronome does it for them. I don't use these a lot because I want each of my students to learn how to feel the beat on their own, but the metronome can help them start. I also have background tracks and I play along with them in class. A metronome is a staple that every professional musician has, and relies on from time to time. I personally use them when practicing classical music to keep each note specific. If you have a keyboard, there is usually a built-in metronome function.

03

FLASHCARDS

These are an excellent tool for helping students remember note names. I remember my mother using flashcards with me and we always had so much fun! I have some available for purchase and they run about \$4.00 a set. You can also download the app, Flashnote Derby, which is an excellent and fun learning tool!

CHOOSING THE RIGHT KEYBOARD

Your student *must* have a full size 88 key hammer weighted action keyboard to practice on at home.

I recommend Yamaha and Roland brand keyboards. Casio brand keyboards also work, but they are not the same quality as the Yamaha or Roland keyboards are.

KEEP THESE PRACTICE TIPS ON THE PIANO. IT WILL HELP REMIND YOU AND YOUR CHILD HOW TO SET UP A PRACTICE TIME THAT IS SUCCESSFUL IN EVERY WAY!

ASK THE TEACHER!

I know that time in between lessons here is always a bit crazy. I want every parent to feel free to ask questions regarding *anything* about the lesson. I am willing and happy to help you as much as I possibly can! You are welcome to come in the class sometimes. I don't mind as long as your child doesn't. I wouldn't recommend sitting in on the lesson for the duration of the time, but if you need help learning the concepts so you are able to help your child, I'm fine with you being there to hear me explain them. You can also email me with any questions you may have. I should respond pretty quickly, as I do the majority of my work via email.