

TEACH SUZUKI

A resource for teachers and parents with a focus on the Suzuki Method.

"To teach is to learn twice."

Joseph Joubert, French moralist

<http://teachsuzuki.blogspot.it/>

Paula E. Bird

How am I Doing? (Parent Report Card)

When I first opened up a serious private lesson studio, I wrote an article for parents to use as their own report card. The information is as relevant today as it was when I first wrote it for my studio newsletter. Here are the statements I included to help parents consider and evaluate their performance as parents of a Suzuki student. The comments in parentheses after the statements indicate what the important purpose is behind the statements.

1. I take my child to his individual lesson regularly. (Progress does not occur if lessons are inconsistent.)
2. I take my child to group lessons regularly. (Group classes provide valuable lessons in ensemble and leadership skills, and they help to motivate students to want to learn to play).
3. I work with my child in daily home practice sessions. (Parents should model consistency and discipline if they expect their children to progress).
4. I play the Suzuki recordings regularly for my child (at least 5 times per week or more; every day is best). (Playing the recordings is the parent's responsibility; listening is a foundation for music instruction.)
5. Although I attend my child's lessons, I do not participate verbally in my child's lessons unless the teacher invites me to do so. (More than one teacher in a lesson can be confusing and distracting for the student).
6. I take notes during my child's lessons for use during the daily home practices. (Parents can be more effective home teachers if they take careful notes and do not rely on the teacher's taking lesson time to do it for them).
7. When I leave the lesson, I understand what my child should practice at home. If not, I ask the teacher to explain her instructions. (I role model to my child what a good student's behavior should be and how to be an effective learner).
8. I focus on one thing at a time during my child's home practice sessions. (Too many things at one time confuse the child, increase frustration, and lessen interest).
9. I do not talk too much during my child's home practice sessions. (Talking can be distracting to a child. It also can interfere with the child's natural learning pace, focus, and concentration).
10. I let my child learn through her senses rather than telling my child what to do. (Telling the child what to play rather than letting them experiment is usually a sign that the parent is trying to finish the home practice session material too quickly).

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11. The home practice sessions last only as long as my child is able to concentrate. (Forcing a child to continue beyond their ability to focus teaches them how not to concentrate).
12. I let my child learn at his own pace and do not try to rush through the practice session or quickly learn new songs in order to move ahead. (Expectations that are too high or go beyond the child's abilities indicate that the parent is trying to make the child match the parent's goals rather than the child's pace).
13. I review earlier pieces with my child regularly (at least 4 review pieces per week, and sometimes more). (Review and repetition are a mainstay of the Suzuki method of instruction).
14. I take my child to concerts or expose my child to other musical activities or performances. (Exposure to music in the child's environment helps to create desire in the child to learn. It also sends the message to the child that music and the child's learning how to play a musical instrument is important to the parent).
15. I always bring my child's lesson materials and equipment to the lessons. (It is the parent's responsibility to come to the lessons prepared. The parent is the role model for the child. I do not expect 5 year olds to have the capability to remember these things on a consistent basis, although children will eventually be taught how to do this well. In the beginning it is easier if parents are in charge of this area until the child is an independent learner).
16. I always come to lessons on time and help my child to have his instrument ready to go by the appointed lesson time. (The parents are the role model for the child).
17. I create a positive learning environment for my child at home. (*"Nothing has a stronger influence psychologically on their environment and especially on their children than the unlived life of the parent."* - C. G. Jung).
18. I am enthusiastic about my child's musical instruction and development. (The child has a strong desire to please her parents).
19. I encourage and praise all of my child's endeavors. (A child whose parents are supportive will continue to want to learn).
20. I allow my child the freedom to experiment and to fail. I ask rather than tell. (Children and adults are very sensitive to the way language is used and do not respond well to being told what to do. Asking questions is more effective than giving orders).
21. I regularly consider the environment I have created and its impact on my child's development. (Reflection is the best way to make positive changes for the benefit of the child).
22. I strive to avoid criticism and anger during my child's home practice sessions. (*"Children will do what they dislike if they are scolded. However, if they do not have desire to do it, it will not develop into an ability."*-- Shinichi Suzuki).
23. I look for things to enjoy and approve of in my child's playing. (This is the best way to avoid criticism and to create the healthy habit of seeing a glass as half-full).

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24. I have not over-extended my child in his school or extra-curricular activities. (Too much is too much. Better to do a few things well then to do many things poorly).
25. I understand and can explain the following statements of the Suzuki philosophy:
- Talent is not inborn.
 - All children have talent.
 - Every child improves depending on his parents.
 - Parents are their child's most important teacher.
 - Parents are their child's most important role model.
 - It is the parents' duty to create the child's desire to learn.
26. I treat my child with respect. I try to have an unconditional love relationship with my child by accepting my child as he is, being fair and predictable in my moods and discipline, earning and keeping my child's trust by not betraying him or hurting his spirit or heart, and displaying affection regularly. (Children want to please their parents. Showing a child that you love them unconditionally will build a strong relationship and bond between the parent and child that will last a lifetime).
27. I look for opportunities for my child to perform for other members of the family or community. (This helps to motivate the child and creates a desire to learn).
28. I make sure that the instrument and equipment are in good condition at all times. I do not delay in having the instrument repaired or tuned properly, obtaining new strings or a larger size instrument, or purchasing new music. (This shows the child that her activities are important to the parent).
29. I model respect and courtesy to my child, the teacher, and other students during lessons. (Parents are their child's most effective role model).

How did you do? If there are any areas that you need help in, be sure to ask your child's teacher how you can improve as a Suzuki parent.

I wrote the above report card a decade ago for the parents in my studio as a reminder of what we are trying to accomplish in the studio. I have a global view of what I am working to accomplish as a teacher. I subscribe to Dr. Suzuki's philosophy that teaching children (and adults) how to play a musical instrument will create fine human beings with a noble heart. I wrote the above statements as reminders to my studio parents of the importance of everything we do in and out of the studio.

Turn about is fair play, so stay tuned as I provide a report card for teachers in a future article.

----- *Paula* -----

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