

ANN ARBOR SUZUKI INSTITUTE OF MUSIC



NEWSLETTER September 2014

www.annarborsuzuki.org

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The commitment of the Ann Arbor Suzuki Institute is to the most fundamental principles of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, that talent is not inborn, but can be developed. We believe that every child can learn, and we are free from all discrimination. We are a non profit 501(c) (3) organization which endeavors to educate parents and children in the Suzuki philosophy, using music to enrich their lives and the community. In this way, we help create a better world.

How to use praise to create a positive learning environment

Shannon Jansma

Positivity is important, and praise is one of the best ways to create an environment of positivity for children. At its most basic, praise is simply an expression of approval, but more can be gained from using praise as positive constructive feedback. We can use praise to help children feel motivated to practice, and to frame the efforts they make in a positive light. At its best, praise works as a behavioral mirror, letting children know what they're doing well. Praise must be done in certain ways to achieve these effects.

The most important factors of praise are that it must be perceived as specific and sincere to function as positive reinforcement (O'Leary and O'Leary, 1977). Praise that is seen as insincere is likely to be ignored by the child, and may make them feel patronized. Either way, it will have no positive effect on the child's conduct or motivation. Praise that is overly general may make a child happy, but it doesn't reinforce any positive behaviors. Instead, the praise becomes the goal of the child, valued more highly than excellence in the lesson. Rather than something unspecific such as "What a great cello lesson today", pick a specific aspect of the lesson to compliment, like "All of your hard work on your bow hand really showed today!"

Another pitfall of praise is that it can make a child feel that their self-worth is directly tied to a specific achievement. This idea can put too much pressure on the child, which can lead to a lack of interest or even behavioral problems (Henderlong and Lepper, 2002). For example, if each week after violin lessons the parent says how proud they are of the child "passing" another song, the child will come to see that as the only goal of lessons. The first time the child does not "pass" their new song in the expected time frame, they may feel like they have failed, and lose interest in or rebel against practicing. The same issue can occur in any situation where the outcome is praised over the effort of accomplishing the goal. Praise should therefore mainly be focused on the child's efforts and personal improvements (Dwyer, 2014). A better compliment would call to attention the child's focus throughout

the lesson, or increased willingness to practice at the agreed-upon time.

Praise is a wonderful way to nurture and encourage children. It creates a positive learning environment and helps children learn. When praise is specific and sincere, children are more likely to take it to heart and feel motivated. Children benefit most from praise based on their hard work and dedication instead of specific achievements, and are more likely to keep up the good work.

Dwyer, Carol (2014). "Using praise to enhance student resilience and learning outcomes". <http://www.apa.org/education/k12/using-praise.aspx>

Henderlong, Jennifer & Lepper, Mark (2002). The effects of praise on children's intrinsic motivation. *Psychological bulletin*, 128, 774-795.

O' Leary, K. D., and O'Leary, S. G. (1977). *Classroom management: The successful use of behavior modification* (2nd ed.). New York, Pergamon Press.

The importance of recordings

Shannon Jansma

The Suzuki Method is highly dependant on listening as a means of learning. This means that your child's progress is hugely dependant on the quality of the recording they're hearing regularly! Your child will mimic everything about what they hear, so it's important they listen to the very best. Youtube recordings can be a nice supplement to your regular listening, but should never take its place.

Got an instrument for sale, and want it listed in next month's newsletter? Email Shannon Jansma at shannonviolin@gmail.com.

Ann Arbor Suzuki Institute Faculty-Sharing Both Joy and Talent Violin: Katherine Almquist, Wendy Azrak, Judy Blank, Kevin Horne, Shannon Jansma, Rebecca Kaltz, Deborah Stanton, Anna Weller Viola: Katherine Almquist, Wendy Azrak Cello: Alice Greminger, Andrea Yun Bass: Derek Weller Guitar: Terry Farmer, MaryLou Roberts, Ryan Seay For more information on the Suzuki Method, visit: www.suzukiassociation.org

