

Motivating Children to Practise!

Suggestions for the teacher:

- Be clear about what you would like the children to practise... even within a piece. (For example, if you were refining the right hand of 'A Music Box' in class with a particular focus on the tricky ending, you might ask the children to practise the *ending* many times and then play through the whole right hand)
- Refer to practising throughout the lesson
- Provide homework sheets which involve ticking or colouring as achievements are made at home

Suggestions to give the parents:

You may like to use some of these helpful suggestions when educating the parents on how best to support their children's music education.

How to Help Your Child with Practice

Becoming a good musician does not happen by magic! We know through experience that musicians achieve their skills through regular practice, combined with a positive attitude. The following suggestions are designed to help parents and children achieve the maximum benefit from music lessons through their practice at home. Remember that even the most talented professional musicians sometimes need more than a little encouragement to practice – and mastering a musical instrument takes time and persistence.

- Set aside a regular time for practice – concentration is best in the morning and several short sessions (5 to 10 minutes) are better than one long session.
- Create an achievement chart – stamps and stickers for goals achieved.
- Be positive – encourage and praise before suggesting improvements.
- Include the rest of the family – home-made percussion instruments, games, dances.
- Play the pieces as duets – you play the left hand or right hand part whilst your child plays the other part.
- Try playing your child's pieces yourself, with your child as your teacher to correct your errors!
- Allow your child to explore sounds at the keyboard – encourage creativity, even if it isn't tuneful!
- Reinforce activities from class, especially new repertoire, but also play well-known pieces for confidence and pleasure.
- Maintain the practice each week, as the courses are sequential in their musical development and the child needs to retain the information and skills gained at the lesson.
- Listen to the tape or CD – in the car and at home.
- Sing the songs – anywhere, anytime!
- Develop a keen sense of persistence in the practice but also develop the child's natural love of playing – it's a pleasure, not a chore.
- Encourage the confidence gained, even if the playing is not perfect.
- If there is reluctance to practise, check if it is lack of confidence in **how** to play a piece; perhaps gain confidence in just a small section rather than taking on the whole piece at once. Check if the child is tired and try to re-establish a **regular** routine; encourage and motivate with charts, or arrange a performance to relatives or friends, or have the child teach the piece to family members.
- **Above all, speak with your teacher.** Sometimes a class activity or performance can be the motivation that is needed. Also, our Education Co-ordinators are available between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. to take your calls and assist with practice issues during the week.
- Remind yourself that there is no magic wand – it just takes persistence and a positive attitude. Remember: musical talent is 5% inspiration and 95% perspiration!