



ANN ARBOR SUZUKI INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

NEWSLETTER

September 2023

www.annarborsuzuki.com

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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.*  
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Smoothing the Beginning of Practice Time

Shannon Jansma

Every parent who has embarked on the journey of nurturing their child's musical talents has undoubtedly encountered a few bumps along the way. Especially as schedules get busier and time comes at more of a premium, it's important to optimize practice time! Here are three common stumbling blocks that you might encounter at the beginning of a practice, and some tips for overcoming them.

Moving from One Activity to Another or "Changing Gears" - When your child pleads for "just five more minutes" before practice, it's usually a sign that they're struggling to shift their attention from their current activity to playing their instrument. While setting timers can be helpful, incorporating transitional phrases and activities can be even more effective. For younger children, try using phrases like "bye bye (whatever we were just doing), hello (instrument)." For an older kid, try taking some deep breaths and talking through the steps of beginning to practice. Say something like "it's time to (clear up/turn off what you were doing) and start unpacking your instrument"! These simple words can set behavioral expectations in a positive way, so your child knows what to do to be successful. Additionally, consider engaging in transitional activities such as listening to a piece of music (Suzuki or otherwise) and clapping to the beat, dancing, doing jumping jacks, running up and down stairs, practicing yoga, or enjoying breathing exercises together. These activities help bridge the gap and make the transition smoother.

Resistance to Practice - Another common complaint you might encounter is when your child adamantly declares they don't want to practice. Don't push and don't give in, try a more collaborative approach. Ask your child what would make them more willing to practice. While they might not have a clear answer, suggesting ideas can spark their interest. You can inquire, "Would a new practice game or activity make practicing more fun?" Alternatively, introduce joyful

and silly elements into the practice routine, such as experimenting with different practice times during the day, playing fun games during the more repetitive parts of practice, borrowing an exciting book from the library about their instrument to read before practice, or reminiscing by playing a silly song from the early stages of their musical journey.

Feeling “Too Tired” - Sometimes, children claim to be too tired to practice, even when they have energy for other activities. This could be a sign of feeling overwhelmed. In such cases, it's essential to create a calming environment and bond before practice. Cuddling with your child, wrapping up in a cozy blanket, or engaging in gentle breathing activities can help them unwind and feel more at ease. These pre-practice bonding moments not only relax your child but also reinforce the positive connection between you and their musical journey. Once your child is calm, talk through a plan for the practice so they know what to expect. This can help keep the rest of the practice calm.

Navigating the challenges that arise during your child's practice time can be both rewarding and fulfilling. Hopefully addressing these common struggles with these new techniques proves successful for your family. Remember that patience, creativity, and understanding are key elements in fostering a love for music that will last a lifetime. Happy Practicing!

Cultural Heritage Spotlight

Please join the AASI in celebrating the diverse and fascinating heritage of classical music.

Please come together for a slightly early celebration of Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month! Running September 15-October 15, this month celebrates the important cultural contributions of Hispanic and Latinx Americans! [Here](#) is a great article about performers of this descent. You can also hear a playlist of modern and historical classical music by Latinx composers [here](#).

Happy listening!

Ann Arbor Suzuki Institute Faculty, Sharing Both Joy and Talent!

Violin: Kathy Almquist, Judy Blank, Graham Emberton, Kevin Horne, Shannon Jansma, Deborah Stanton, Anna Weller, Wendy Zohar

Viola: Kathy Almquist, Wendy Zohar

Cello: Alice Greminger

Bass: Derek Weller

Guitar: Terry Farmer, Vera Flaig, MaryLou Roberts

For more information on the Suzuki Method, visit: www.suzukiassociation.org