

Practice tips for Parents

While you may not be playing an instrument, you are an equal partner in your child's instrumental participation, and you can make a big difference in their experience.

Most parents of new band or orchestra students have the same feelings; "I want to help my daughter/son have a great experience, but I don't know how to help!" There are a lot of things you can do to help, even if your musical knowledge is very limited. Here are some suggestions:

- Help your child arrange regular, daily practice in a quiet place with no distractions (like TV, stereo, game consoles, pets, etc.). Twenty minutes a day is necessary for most students to adequately learn their material. A few shorter sessions a day may work better than one long one.
- **Remind** your child to practice. Yes, they need to learn responsibility in practicing, but they need your help to make daily practice a habit. Just like any other behavior, regular practicing needs reinforcement to become established, so you can help by reminding them to practice.
- **Listen** to their practice. Your interest and support is crucial at this time. It's not fair to expect your child to do well, yet ask them to practice where or when it won't "bother" you.
- Be patient with beginning sounds, and always be positive. Children are sensitive, and positive comments help them feel good about what they're doing. If you hear something that sounds incorrect in their playing, you may ask her/him to check the note again, practice more slowly, or practice in short sections.
- Check your child's practice record in their lesson book, discuss it with them, and sign it every week. They are expected to practice approximately 30 everyday
- **Never** use practicing as punishment, or make it a negative. If you view it as a positive experience necessary for improvement, your child will view it positively as well. It is sometimes necessary to reschedule the child's practice time to allow for important conflicting events, but remember that it is her/his homework for band or orchestra, and must be treated with importance.
- Be sure they are practicing their correct assignments before other "old favorites" that they may also enjoy playing.
- Help her/him remember when their rehearsal or is lesson is, and remind them to take the correct equipment and materials with them. Reminders at the beginning of their band or orchestra experience will help remembering become a habit later on.
- Make sure they have extra reeds, oil, strings etc. on hand, and that their instrument is always in top playing condition.
- Encourage your child to play for others when the opportunity arises in the home, community groups, clubs, etc.
- Finally, don't forget the third partner in the partnership - the teacher. Feel free to write a note, call or e-mail