



# VIOLIN

## Parents, Their Children, and Violin Lessons

### Secrets For Success

by Sharon Rothstein

Rarely a week goes by that I'm not asked the following question by at least one parent in my violin studio, "Why does that child play so much better than my child?"

Before I have a chance to inhale, the parent shrugs her shoulders and offers her own explanation, saying, "That child must just have natural talent and my child doesn't. It must just run in their family. My child will never be that good."

Each time I am asked these questions, and hear these types of explanations offered, what I wish I could tell the parent is the following:

There are many reasons why one child may progress quicker than another. Most often, it has nothing to do with natural ability and genetics, and everything to do with the things that set these children and parents apart from the crowd.

#### Tips for success:

- 1) Consistent daily practice. This seems so simple and obvious. Even so, most parents allow their child to miss one or two days of practice per week. The students who truly practice seven days per week progress faster.
- 2) Reasonable amount of daily practice time. Students who progress quickly put in the time that is required to be successful. Young students (age 3-5) do well with 30 minutes per day, often in divided sessions of 15 minutes each. Students ages 6-8 are often able to do 45-60 minutes per day. The amount of time increases as a child gets older. Two sessions per day, with at least 6 hours in between the 2 practice sessions is ideal. Practicing does not have to be done all in one session. Taking breaks is a good idea.
- 3) Quality of practice time. Students who keep a daily log of what they are practicing and make sure that their practicing is organized progress quickly. These students are clear as to what their assignment is, and their music is organized and stored in the same place after each practice session. They often start with scales, and then play etudes (technical studies), and then play their pieces after the technical work has been covered. These students have specific goals in mind with respect to what they want to accomplish during each practice session. They remain focused, and do not allow themselves to be distracted by TV, phone calls, and other things that may be going on in the house. The practice environment is conducive to self-teaching. A favorable location is a quiet place in the home with good lighting. A metronome, sharp pencils for writing in fingerings and bowings, and a tape recorder are all readily available.
- 4) Parental involvement/supervision of practice sessions. Students whose parents are involved in some way in each practice session tend to progress quickly. The younger the child is, the more involvement there needs to be. Young children must have a parent present and practicing with the child for the entire practice session. Older children who progress quickly are usually supervised by a parent, or at least play for the parent for at least part of the practice session. Parents who accompany their child on the piano notice that their child's intonation (playing in tune) improves quickly. Parents of students who progress quickly often attend all or part of the child's lesson each week in order to understand more about what the teacher is instructing the child to do. These parents are patient and supportive at times when the student is having a difficult time with a given assignment.
- 5) Attendance at weekly lessons and studio/recital classes. Students who progress quickly rarely miss a lesson, and if they must miss a lesson for any reason, they request to make that lesson up as soon as possible. These students also attend all or almost all of the studio classes and recital classes that are offered in the studio. Their parents recognize that the more opportunities that their child has to perform, the better performer he or she will become. Each recital class provides incentive and motivation to practice, so students who participate in recital classes whenever possible tend to progress quickly.
- 6) Children of parents who offer praise and positive encouragement on a daily basis tend to progress quickly. Their parents attend every recital class, are very complimentary and supportive after every performance, and let them know that they are very proud of their accomplishments.

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