

Dear Parents:

First I want to thank you for recognizing the importance of musical study, as evidenced by your child's participation. I am writing to share with you some of the ways you can help ensure your child's success in these musical endeavors.

If your child is currently playing in an ensemble but has never studied his or her particular instrument with a specialist, consider private lessons. While learning to make music with others is invaluable, private lessons offer the only real way for a child to learn the mechanics of the instrument. Band directors generally do not have the time or specialized training to be able to teach students to play a specific instrument; rather, their job is to work on developing the skills necessary for performing in a larger group. Talk to your child's band director and ask who they would recommend as a private teacher. Then act quickly to get your child started taking weekly private lessons.

Once you find a private teacher, have a talk about how you can help your child. Ask what the student's equipment needs really are. Does your child really need that new trumpet he has been asking for? Possibly he does, but most of the time parents are surprised to find out that they can significantly improve an instrument through buying a quality mouthpiece or better reeds. Don't buy any sort of equipment without talking to your child's private lesson teacher first.

Regular and thoughtful practice is another essential part of musical study. It is best to set up a practice routine and then to follow it as strictly as possible. For example, a half hour session every weeknight just before dinner could be an easy way to develop a routine. Once you establish a routine, try not to break it. Discuss with the teacher how much practice time your child needs. Generally it's a good idea to set a ballpark estimate of practice time, but bear in mind that, ultimately, productivity is more important than minutes.

Finally, expose your family to live classical music whenever possible. Nearly every major city has a professional orchestra or opera company. Find a concert that features your child's instrument. Hearing a professional player perform live can be a tremendous inspiration to young musicians. Often the experience can help open their eyes to future possibilities as well as motivate them to continue their own study.

Best wishes to you and your child while discovering the enrichment of musical study.

Sincerely,
Your friends at Keynotes