

Six Steps to Helping Your Child Succeed in Music

- 1) Provide your child a quality instrument that is in good repair. It is difficult to make progress on an inferior instrument. Students can become frustrated when they put in the effort but progress is impeded by a poor-quality instrument. Instruments should be rented or purchased from stores specializing in band and orchestra instruments. Avoid the internet and prices that are incredibly low. Often the lower priced instruments break easily and they can be difficult to play in tune. As the saying goes, "If it seems too good to be true, it probably is."
- 2) Set a schedule. Everyone has a busy schedule and it's so easy to put off practicing till the tomorrow that seems to never come. Look at your weekly schedule with you child and set aside time four or five days for practice. In elementary school, students can succeed in with as little as 10 minutes practice in each session. The 10 minutes does not include assembly or putting away the instrument or breaks to get a pencil, drink or to go to the bathroom.
- 3) The two most important days to practice are the day of the school instrumental music class and the day before the class.
- 4) Find a place to practice with no distractions. The TV, computer, phone and stereo should not be sharing the practice space. Other family members, including pets, should let young musicians practice undisturbed. The one exception follows.
- 5) Listen to your child and note their progress. Ask your young musician to play the music he or she is working on. If you notice progress, let your child know that you can hear it. Be honest. At times, you may want to sit in on a practice session to make sure that your student is practicing efficiently.
- 6) If your student is making incredible progress, consider enrolling in private lessons. Without exception, the best players have taken private lessons, usually for years. Private lessons, along with regular intelligent practice, can help your child succeed in the competitive middle school and high school worlds of youth orchestras and all-state ensembles. Your instrumental music teacher can provide you with a list of teachers.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Bethesda Elementary School's Instrumental Music Teacher, Dr. Albert Hunt at Albert_T_Hunt@mcpsmd.org.