

“Developing a Musician: Principles for Success”

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The following principles can be applied to practically any setting, from academic work to girl scouts...but very few individuals *really* understand the commitment that it takes to become a musician. When hearing a skilled musician, people often say: “It’s in their genes”, or “They’re gifted.” In truth, the individual worked very hard to develop their skills, applying principles for success.

Five P’s: Principles for Success for the Student:

1. **Preparedness:** This involves having all materials (books, pencil, a completed practice log) in a music bag, ready for lessons.
2. **Practice:** Six days per week, playing each selection three times with the goal of playing every piece well, with the goal of making it better than the time before.
3. **Participation:** Involvement in events to provide accountability, performance experience, and inspiration.
4. **Punctuality:** Receiving full value out of each lesson.
5. **Positive!** An “I can do it!”, “I want to grow”, and “I like a challenge!” attitude. The student is fully capable of making a decision to become the best they can be.

Five P’s: Principles for Success for the Parent:

1. **Positive!** Speak positive, high expectations about the student. Believe it to be true. Students live up to our expectations of them. This includes their attitudes, habits, abilities...everything.
2. **Purposeful Parenting:** Provide proper oversight to make sure the students’ goals (see #1 – 5 above) are being accomplished. Place the instrument in a central location in the home for appropriate accountability and involvement.
3. **Partner with the Professional:** Provide the necessary instructional resources at the proper book level for the lessons and home practice. Provide a working, tuned, quality instrument (touch sensitive, 88 keys) with a damper pedal. Form a supportive partnership with the teaching professional for the benefit of the child.
4. **Perspective:** As someone who is 20 or more years older than your child, you have a long-term perspective the child couldn’t possibly understand or appreciate. As the parent, retain the decision making about important, formative matters for your child, such as involvement in piano lessons. Communicate the expectations and provide the structure and boundaries the child needs when implementing the expectations. Children, like adults, want and need limits, but often resist them (this is normal).
5. **Pleasure!** Music is to be enjoyed! If we’ve missed this point, we’ve missed them all. The more the student and family invest in the process, the more enjoyment the student (and family) will experience (the principle of sowing and reaping). Developing a musician is “slow growing fruit”. Proverbs tells us:
Do not weary in doing good, for in due time, you will reap a harvest!