

# Appendix E. Article

## Does My Child Really Need to Practice?

By Shawn Roberts, © 2013

The short answer is YES! However, all practice is not good practice. So, while the short answer may seem adequate enough, your understanding of the necessity of practice is more important. Parental support is one of the cornerstones to a successful musician. Working together, we can help your child realize the success of their full potential.

### Value of Playing an Instrument

In order to understand the value of practicing your instrument (where the voice is the instrument for one who is in chorus), you have to first appreciate the benefits of playing a musical instrument. According to Matthews (2011), "Playing a musical instrument has many benefits and can bring joy to you and everyone around you." Matthews continues to outline 18 benefits of playing an instrument, which include the following:

Playing an instrument...

- ...increases the capacity of your memory.
- ...boosts your team skills.
- ...enhances your coordination.
- ...improves your reading and comprehension skills.
- ...exposes you to cultural history.
- ...fosters your self-expression and relieves stress.
- ...promotes your social skills.
- ...teaches you discipline.
- ...enhances your respiratory system.
- ...refines your time management and organizational skills.
- ...teaches you perseverance.
- ...better your mathematical ability.
- ...increases your responsibility.
- ...sharpens your concentration.
- ...creates a sense of achievement.
- ...boosts your listening skills.
- ...elevates your performance skills and reduces stage fright.
- ...promotes happiness in your life and those around you.



In his article, Matthews explores each of these eighteen benefits in detail. I encourage you to take a look at Matthews' article, which can be found in the references below.

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## Value of Practicing

So, we know that playing an instrument has many great benefits. So, why practice? Is it really important? According to McPherson (2000), student progress regarding their ability to play an instrument is based upon two things: commitment and practice. While student commitment is important to learning an instrument, practice is important to achieving a high level of progress on that instrument.

As well, Oare (2011) will guide us a little further, stating, “to practice effectively, one must first know how to practice.” Following a clear set of guidelines to practicing will help students become independent learners, who will be able to:

- “set clear, measurable, timely goals;
- plan and create effective strategies;
- self-monitor and adjust;
- structure optimal learning environments;
- seek out advice and information; and
- display consistent effort and persistence.” (Oare, 2011)

## How Does this Pertain to Students in the Mary Passage Middle School Performing Arts Program?

Students are going to not only be encouraged to practice daily, but will also learn how to practice while in rehearsals and lessons. Oare (2011) discussed a seventh grade student named Nick in his article. In his study, Oare recorded one of Nick’s practice sessions, where Nick practiced through seventeen exercises and songs. Oare states, “At no time did Nick stop to correct or repeat a section of the music that needed work” and mentioned that Nick stated, “I wish I had more music to play...I’ll bring more music next time, because I ran out.” A month later, Oare recorded Nick’s practice again, where Nick played much of the same music and made no progress. What’s wrong with this picture? What happened? Simply, Nick was never taught how to practice.



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During this school year, we will be reviewing every aspect of the practice session. We will be setting goals for students, and helping them to create a practice regimen that will foster success. As well, students will learn how to self-assess to understand their strengths and weaknesses, helping them become better in their playing.

### Parental Support Needed

So, what does this mean for the parent? Parental support is one of the most important aspects of student progress. Parents are encouraged to listen to their child practice, and look for the skills listed above. While the Director will assess students formally and informally throughout the year, it is often difficult to really have a working knowledge of each and every student's practical success. What a student does in the classroom is not necessarily what they do at home. When a parent observes their child (either directly or indirectly), they can listen to see if their child is practicing correctly.

### Communication with Parents

As the Directors of the Performing Arts Program, we will be communicating with you, the parents, throughout the year to give you support in recognizing good practice habits. If you notice that your child does not seem to be successful in their practice regimen, I encourage you to contact your Director for assistance. Through our partnership (Director and Parent), we can help your child be successful in their development as musicians, and foster their love for music!

### References

Matthews, M. (2011). 18 benefits of playing a musical instrument. Retrieved from <http://www.effectivemusicteaching.com/articles/directors/18-benefits-of-playing-a-musical-instrument/>

McPherson, G. E. (2000). Commitment and practice: Key ingredients for achievement during the early stages of learning a musical instrument. *Bulletin Of The Council For Research In Music Education*, 147, 122-127.

Oare, S. (2011). Practice education: Teaching instrumentalists to practice effectively. *Journal*, 97(3), 41-47.

