Dear Beginning Parent,

I have sat in your chair several times, for I have twice been a beginning Suzuki parent. I’m still a Suzuki parent, and that’s not much different—just a little more time put in at lessons and practice. Being a Suzuki parent has not changed my initial response to what my child is doing. It has caused major changes in my expectations and what I do with my reactions (usually).

If your child is like every other child I’ve ever known, he or she will definitely learn to play the chosen instrument. Along the way, he will most certainly—at one time or another:

- Lie down on the floor when everyone else is standing.
- Stand when everyone else is lying down.
- Interrupt a lesson with a rambling discourse—definitely not on music.
- Seem more interested in the mechanics of the instrument than in playing.
- Have times when he feels more sleepy, hungry, angry, or lazy than he does musical.
- Resist and test your ideas about habit-building especially concerning practice.
- Get to a lesson and do absolutely nothing he has worked on at home.
- Make pronouncements to the teacher regarding your practice or lack of listening or lack of home life, family problems and secrets, etc.
- Appear to you to be the only one out of step in the entire class.
- Drop his violin on its bridge or other delicate part.
- Have a 5-to-10 minute attention span and sometimes only 5 to 10 seconds.
- Deliberately do things backward or incorrectly.

It’s funny—I can appreciate these actions and reactions in the other kids in the class. As a matter of fact, I think they’re cute and funny, and well, just terrific to be making the progress they’re making. It’s exciting to watch learning happen. With my own, sometimes I want to sit on my hands, bite my tongue, hide my face, duck my head, or maybe yell! I am learning, over the years, that my kids sense it when I feel that way, and they become nervous and less confident. What they need most is:

- My interest—I’m here, I care.
- My faith—I believe he or she can learn to play the violin, viola, guitar, cello, piano.
- My enthusiasm—this is a neat thing to do!
- My respect—For him, his very real efforts, his concentration, his personhood.
- For his teacher, his ideas, advice, interest, ability, training.
- My enjoyment—of every step along the way.
- My acceptance—indicated by a pleasant expression on my face at lesson, class, and practice.
- My praise—of every small success.

This is the habit-building I’m still working on every day. My expectations for my children are high, because I want so much for them, and because I want to protect them. It’s also involved with my own image of myself and whether the teacher or other parents will see me as a good, effective parent. I am trying to remember that our teacher sees my child working very hard and is appreciating his efforts—not criticizing him or me. Our teacher has seen many children, and she knows that although mine is the only one in this class insisting on taking his shoes off because the teacher did, she’s seen this before, and is not bothered so I’ll try to restrain my motherly sigh and roll of the eyes.

My goal for this year is to relax—and try to enjoy my own child as much as I’ll enjoy yours. I hope this will be your goal too.

A Suzuki Parent

August 20, 2009

Dear Suzuki Parents:

Welcome to a new year of fun and music making. The Suzuki teachers are looking forward to a new year with all of your wonderful children. I would like to introduce two new teachers to our program.

Dr. Laurie Sommers is an ethnomusicologist by profession. She has played the violin for most of her life. Mary Turcotte will be leading the Suzuki piano groups. She is a graduate student at MSU and a life-long Suzuki student, now teacher. Chris Hamilton will be starting a Suzuki Guitar program at CMS. We look forward to seeing this portion of our program grow! I welcome these professionals and look forward to their wisdom and great teaching!

Make a habit of frequently check the MSU-CMS Suzuki website; start at www.cms.msu.edu then click on the Suzuki link. The MSU-CMS Suzuki Program Newsletter will be posted on the web every two months. I encourage you to read the information, calendar of events and up-coming news to stay well informed. Hard copies of newsletters will be available a private lessons.

Some Important Dates

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>New Suzuki Parents Information Session, 7pm, Rm 106. This is an informational meeting for parents who have never had children enrolled in any Suzuki program before.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 8</td>
<td>Fall semester begins, no group lessons this week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>CMS Open House from 3 – 5 pm. Come enjoy some wonderfully diverse music, an instrument petting zoo, and refreshments. Please share this information with friends that are interested in learning more about the Community Music School.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Group lessons begin this week. Class assignments will be listed on the website and around CMS prior to the first class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 26</td>
<td>Our first Observation Scavenger Hunt! More details to come.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 9</td>
<td>Recital Week. All students involved in group classes will get a wonderful opportunity to perform for their fellow musicians and parents. Recitals will begin at 5 pm and will run concurrently with our group times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>Strings Holiday Party Caroling, playing together and treats, beginning at 5:30pm in the Auditorium.</td>
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</tbody>
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Sincerely,

The entire MSU CMS Suzuki Faculty

Susanne Garber, Suzuki Program Director
Anne Kearney-Looman, Suzuki Program Assistant Director
Judy Palac, Suzuki Program Director Emeritus
"Music is the language of the heart without words"

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**Suzuki Violin Book Graduation Information**

**Graduation Eligibility:**
- Students are eligible to graduate from the Twinkles when they have reached Andante.
- Students are eligible to graduate from a book when they get to the middle of the next Suzuki book.

**Graduation Procedures:**
1. Make a well-prepared recording of the required pieces. There should be no cut and paste recordings.
2. Submit the recording to your individual instructor; the recording will be reviewed by an instructor from the CMS Suzuki staff who will provide written comments.
3. Perform one of the recorded pieces at a recital. After the performance you will receive a graduation certificate, your recording, and the written comments. If you are unable to attend the Suzuki Graduation Recital, you may perform on one of the two Suzuki Recital Days during the year or a CMS All-School Recital and receive your certificate and comments at a later date.

A CD needs to be recorded over a period of time with a deadline of April 1 so that the student can perform at for their graduation from the book(s) on the Graduation Recital in May 2010.

**Recording Repertoire and Standards:** Please discuss with your teacher what the specific requirements are.

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**CMS Suzuki Program Policies**

**PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES:** At least one parent is expected to:
1. Beginning Parents must observe lessons of either their prospective teacher or another teacher; attend minimum of 4 observations either before beginning lessons or during the first semester of lessons. Have observation signed by the teacher that you are observing and hand observations into Director after having completed each one.
2. Read *Nurtured by Love* and other materials, bought ahead of time or provided in the beginner materials pack.
3. Provide adequate instruments, books, listening equipment.
4. Attend and participate in all private and group lessons, take notes and make certain the assignments are understood.
5. Practice with your child on a daily basis.
6. Assist your student in completing the daily listening assignment.
7. Learn to play the instrument yourself at minimum through the Twinkle Variations.
8. Volunteer to help with at least one extra activity a year.
11. Provide a variety of musical activities for your child, listen to professional recordings, attend concerts, participate in outreach concerts, and attend workshops or camps.

**GROUP LESSONS:** Group lessons are vital to the success of the Suzuki approach! Students must enroll in and attend group lessons unless other arrangements are made with your teacher (also see attendance policy below).

**SPECIAL GATHERINGS:** There are various times during the year special gatherings may be scheduled in place of group lessons. This may be a focus of students of all levels come together and play through repertoire, learning by example. These are an integral part of the Suzuki method, attendance is expected.

**SPRING WORKSHOP:** Each spring we hold a workshop with guest instructors and unique enrichment activities. This is a fun and valuable experience. Students and parents benefit from working with a variety of instructors. A tremendous amount of planning goes into this event and attendance is expected.

**GRADUATION:** Book Graduations can take place at any of our annual Graduation recitals in the spring. In order to graduate from any given book level, students must:
A. Make a recording CD/DVD of the required pieces (generally, the last piece in the book, a piece of their choice, and all previous graduation pieces, please check with your teacher) and turn it in to your teacher two weeks prior to the recital you are going to perform on.

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**OUTREACH CONCERTS:** Students are expected to participate in a minimum of two concerts off campus per calendar year. Sign-up sheets will be available at group classes. We hope that all will be able to participate to ensure sufficient participation at each concert.

**CONCERT DRESS:** Concert dress will be worn for all public group concerts unless otherwise agreed upon. Concert dress is a white shirt and black/dark bottoms, unless you have a green polo shirt with our Suzuki name on it. Please dress in a neat manner, tucking in all shirts as needed. Students should be prepared to participate in the concert they committed to. Should a conflict arise, first attempt to find a substitute, if you are not successful please notify either the director or assistant director.

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**What's my job in all this? Parents, your roles change as your child grows up. In Suzuki, they are a pivotal part of the learning process. Learning about the philosophy that Dr. Suzuki based his method on is very important to the success of your child.** If you have been a part of the journey for awhile, then re-reading Dr. Suzuki's ideals will give you a renewed sense of accomplishment. Some of these roles change over time, but are good to consider at all times:

- **The parent is an assistant to the teacher.**
- **The parent as a home teacher keeps the practice time consistent.**
- **The parent as a home teacher should immerse the child in all types of music.**
- **The parent as the home teacher should understand the proper techniques for playing the instrument.**
- **Finally, the parent must encourage and support the child's efforts on a daily basis.**

B. Perform on any of the Suzuki Graduation Recital. Graduation from any level should not occur until a student is at least half-way through the next book.

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**ATTENDANCE:** Suzuki students are expected to attend all private lessons, dress rehearsals, concerts (including outreach concerts that one has signed-up for), and the yearly workshop in the spring.

A. Students must be present for at least eight group lessons per semester in order to perform in the concert for the year.

B. Students who miss the dress rehearsal will not be allowed to participate in the concert without special permission from the director or assistant director.