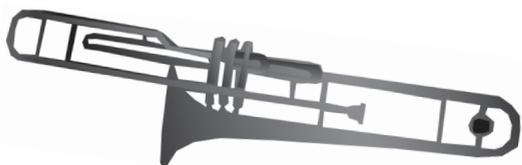


Congratulations on your decision to enroll your child in music lessons with the NIU Community School of the Arts! We welcome you and your child to the program. Below you will find some helpful tips for how to make the lessons a positive experience for everyone. If you have questions or concerns, call the office at (815) 753-1450 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. For details about recitals and other dates, consult the website at www.csa.niu.edu.

Music Building Fundamentals

The NIU Music Building is where most music lessons are taught and where you will come to attend recitals. It is important that parents understand this is a large facility shared by many people. Young children should be brought to and picked up from the room where lessons are taught, unless the parent and teacher make other arrangements. Parents who stay in the building during lessons are asked to supervise siblings at all times. A phone for free local calls to DeKalb and Sycamore is available outside Room 171 and a phone with on-campus access outside the side of the Recital Hall.



Talk to the Teacher

Attend the first lesson to meet the teacher and attend lessons throughout the semester to get a firsthand look at the interaction between your child and the teacher. Find out what your child has been assigned to work on. Then talk to your child to make sure he or she understands. Be sure to inform the teacher as soon as you know your child is going to miss a lesson. It is important for parents and teachers to exchange email addresses and phone numbers. You will find a make-up policy for missed lessons on the website and in the current flyer.



Help Make Lessons Productive

Bring your child to lessons on time with the materials he needs. Try to arrive in a calm, ready-to-work state. Encourage your child to concentrate during the lesson even if it has not been the best week of practice. Make sure your child is actually learning the names of the notes and where they are, to have the confidence that comes with the knowledge.

Have the Right Equipment

Music should be fun, but only if you take it seriously. Just as you outfit your children in shin guards for soccer, it is important to provide a good musical instrument and have it tuned and maintained regularly. Your child will find it helpful to have a music stand; for more advanced students a metronome and tuner are useful.

Establish Routines for Practice

There is no getting around it: Without hard work, good music will not happen. In the early stages, sit with your child – to offer encouragement and to reinforce how important you think music is. Give your child time to wind down after school before starting practice. Establish a routine. Individual practice routines may vary from day to day and from child to child, but most teachers feel daily practice is essential. Do not let children fall out of the practice routine, because it becomes that much harder to get back into it.

Make Practice Fun

Practice is not punishment and should not be treated that way. It is hard work that carries its own reward. Be matter-of-fact about it. Some parents find it helpful to keep track with a journal or log. A small child may respond to stickers. An older child will find rewards in improved playing, so be sure to comment on improvement as it occurs. Help children figure out ways to make practicing more effective. If he is having trouble with a few measures, have him concentrate on the problems rather than repeat the entire piece over and over. And if your child just wants to fool around sometimes, to improvise, that is okay, too.



Don't Push Too Hard

Never scold or yell at a child about his or her musical progress. Encouragement is vital for a child's musical growth. Try not to intrude between student and teacher. Do not put additional pressure on your child by asking her to meet weekly goals above and beyond what the teacher has asked for.

Listen to Your Children Play

Try to show that you value your child's music as much as you do her homework. Pay attention to what she is doing and show appreciation. Reinforce her with positive comments (i.e., "Your tone is especially good today." or "I hear a big improvement in your scales.").

Ask your child to play for you once in awhile, just for fun. Playing with a parent or sibling is a wonderful way to encourage a child and to reinforce the concept of musical teamwork.

Encourage Recitals

Recitals are a good way to celebrate a child's musical involvement. They also give a specific goal and motivation for practice. The recital audiences at the NIU Community School of the Arts are friendly and encouraging, so performers emerge with a feeling of accomplishment. There is a showcase recital scheduled at the end of each semester; some teachers also schedule recitals for their own students at the end of the semester.

Keep the Excitement Alive

If your child wants to quit lessons, either let him or help him succeed. Do not keep sending him to lessons without preparation. This may turn him against music for life. But do not make it too easy to quit, either. Sometimes children are just going through a rough patch, moving from one skill level to the next. Different music or different practice exercises might help. Summer music camp can be stimulating, exposing students to others working at different levels. And do not forget: all kids, no matter how long they have been playing, need your presence and your praise.

Celebrate the Joy of Music

Children should want to play music because they like to listen to it. Make music part of their lives. Take them to age-appropriate concerts. You'll find many to choose from at the NIU Music Building throughout the school year. Play music at home. Talk to them about what they like and do not like. Let them see the enjoyment music gives you. They should think of playing music as a pleasure.



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Community School
of the Arts**

College of Visual and Performing Arts

Parent Guide

Tips for Success for Children Taking Music Lessons

A resource guide from the NIU
Community School of the Arts.
www.csa.niu.edu (815) 753-1450