



From Opponents to Teammates: Helping Parents & Caregivers Reduce Conflict in the Practice Room

2024 SAA Conference | Christine E Goodner

Teamwork Mindset

- “You and your child are on the same team, working to accomplish a goal for the next week's lesson.”
- Do what you can as the practice grown-up to avoid practice becoming a battle with the student. Focus on learning to work together.
- Observe how your child learns and what motivates them. This will help you support their daily practice.
- Work with your child's strengths so they can learn to work with themselves.
- Help support the areas that are hard for the student, so they can develop those skills over time. This includes musical skills, executive functioning skills, and skills navigating frustration and perseverance needed to learn an instrument.
- Teammates, on a healthy, functioning team, support each other and appreciate each other's strengths, while also striving to improve and grow.
- Be the mentor or coach or teammate, rather than the judge or jury.

What caregivers often need support with:

- Motivation of their own.
- Effective practice strategies and potentially the chance to practice them in the lesson.
- An understanding of how their child learns. We can point out what we notice in lessons.
- A vision for where we are headed.
- Ongoing support and open communication.

Strategies to help families reduce practice conflict:

- Set the expectation that challenges are likely to come up and that you, the teacher want to hear about them and have strategies to help.
- Be clear how you prefer this communication to happen: request a phone call or conference, email, beginning of a lesson (rather than the end), text etc. Families may want a way to bring this up that is not in front of the student.
- Model and talk about the scaffolding you are providing the student (that you ideally want the caregiver to provide as well) and give opportunities to practice in the lesson. Some people are hands-on learners and will be more successful when they can try it with you.

- Be intentional with language: “we are asking them to recreate the tasks from the lesson in a caregiver/child relationship” and that *may* look different than the lesson did.
- You do not need to have the answers right away - a “let me do some research or reach out to some colleagues and get back to you” and helping families feel heard, is a great start.
- “Everything about this feels hard” is a stressful place to be. Moving towards “here is one area we can start to make progress and make this feel less stressful” is a huge step forward.
- We are asking caregivers to support practice and help the child with what they can’t do alone yet, and we have the opportunity to help caregivers in that same way. Thank you for all you do to support families in your program!

Resources:

- **Article with research about The Real Life Ups and Downs of Parent-Child Practice** (2017)
<https://suzukitriangle.com/the-real-life-ups-and-downs-of-parent-child-practice/>
- **Time to Practice Podcast** (free wherever you stream podcasts) topics that relate to this talk:
 - *Executive Functions and Music Practice: Episode 21 with Emily Hawe
 - *Treating everything in lessons as skill to be learned: Episode 28 with Kristina Turner
 - * Parents and the Support they need: Episode 2 with Kimberly Wong
 - *Focusing on Beginners: Season 2, Episode 1 with Crystal Boyack
 - *On the Parent Journey from the Start to Independent Learning: Episode 44 with Alan Duncan
- **Executive Function Information:**
 - *Tera Sumpter, SLP at Seeds of Learning, is a great resource. She has a book, course, and community: <https://terasumpter.com/seeds-of-learning>
 - *Emily Hawe at Mindlaunchers.com has great resources as well
 - *Book (an academic read) *Executive Functions: What They Are, How They Work, and Why They Evolved* by Russell A. Barkley

Books mentioned in this talk:

- *Positive Practice: 5 Steps for Helping Your Child Develop a Love of Music (Workbook)*
by Christine E Goodner
- *Music Practice Makeover: Strategies to Make Practice with Your Music Student as Painless and Efficient as Possible* by Christine E Goodner
- *Practice Perfect: 42 Rules for Getting Better at Getting Better* by Doug Lemov, Erica Woolway, and Katie Yezzi
- *The Scaffold Effect: Raising Resilient, Self-Reliant, and Secure Kids in an Age of Anxiety*
by Harold S. Koplewicz
- *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* by Daniel Siegel, MD and Tina Payne Bryson.