

# Measuring Your Child's Success

by Lisa Zeller



**W**hen you enroll your child in a Suzuki Program, you are exhibiting a high level of concern and commitment to your child. You are investing your own time and resources to give the child the special opportunities of the musical world. Along the way, it is important for you to evaluate the progress of your child.

While it is natural to question the "success" of each student, it is critical to use healthful measurements. Questions posed with a positive and caring attitude will elicit productive responses. A measurement that leads to enthusiasm, confidence, or empowerment will help provide a healthy sense of progress.

It is important to determine what scale you are measuring against. When your child began studying the Suzuki Method, you most likely had in mind goals such as wanting to bring music into the child's life, instilling love and appreciation for fine music, building strong values like discipline and work habits, and building skills such as concentration and listening that would help your child in all areas of life. Being conscious of these goals and periodically reviewing and revising them is important, because it is these goals which will guide your assessment of progress.

The child should be the yardstick for measurement. By focusing on your child and her personal growth, you will avoid the dangerous pitfalls of comparing your child to other students. One of the most valuable aspects of the Suzuki Method is the emphasis on the *process* of learning. Concentrating on results such as the number of pieces learned undermines the continuum of progress begun with those very first steps. Each aspect of instruction such as listening to the recorded repertoire, tonalization, and review contribute

to the student's foundation. With such a broad base of support, progress is strong and steady. Striving to pile one piece on top of another, higher and higher, results in a tall, but very shaky and unsteady column. Could that be called success?

With the child as the yardstick, decide what you are going to measure. Look at the level of concentration in your child: has the attention span grown? Examine practice habits: has a routine for efficient practice been established?

What new skills has your child acquired? Is the bow hold routinely well formed and relaxed? Is the left hand shape consistently correct? Consider areas such as posture, vibrato, fingering and bowing as well. For repertoire, has the quality of performance improved? This is especially important for older pieces, since they can be performed with beautiful tone and expression.

Also consider performances: has your child played in several concerts or an event which really excited her or was an occasion for celebration and pride? What about the relationship between you and your child: has the shared experience helped you to grow together? Has your child listened to a concert with greater appreciation?

Perhaps your child has developed friendships with other children in the program. Have you seen greater self-confidence in lessons, groups, and performances?

All of these questions should tell you what levels of success your child has attained. They can serve as guidelines to keep you attuned to a positive and productive Suzuki experience. The best measure of success should be the feeling of love and joy you have with your child as you work to build a solid foundation on which your child can build for the rest of his life. ♪

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