

PARENTAL GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICING

Time Schedule - 30 minutes per day is the minimum amount of practice time recommended for the average student. Practicing at the same time every day is good, but some flexibility should be built into this schedule. Don't bring the world to a halt at 6:30 every evening because it's practice time. Kids need time for fun and relaxation just as adults do. If the situation merits, reschedule the practice session to an earlier or later time.

Climate - Practicing should be done in an area that is free of distractions away from the TV, radio, stereo, telephone, and family traffic. Good lighting, a straight-backed chair, a mirror, and a music stand are definite assets. Reed players should have several *good* reeds available.

Encouraging your child - Spend some time listening to your child practice. Offer constructive criticisms, but choose your words carefully.

Is your child progressing? - The field of instrumental music is new for your child. He/She is learning to use his/her facial muscles in a different way, and his/her breathing apparatus for a different purpose. There is a new language of symbols (notes) that require the use of mind and body to translate into musical sounds. All this takes time! Even parents who have had band experience have probably forgotten the struggle of producing those first few notes. Parents can evaluate practice sessions by asking:

- Am I hearing attempts at new material (such as higher notes, new rhythms, new exercises) or am I hearing the same old tune daily? (If you only hear selections your child can already play, then the practice time is not being used efficiently. A student will not improve if he/she plays the same thing over and over.)
- Is the tone quality becoming more characteristic of the instrument or is the tone harsh, unmusical, or unpleasant?
- Does the familiar tune or exercise move along steadily with some sort of fluent rhythm, or is it halting and jerky with no rhythm?

If you reach the point when your evaluation is consistently coming up negative, please call one of the band directors. The student may be doing fine for his/her grade level; he/she may have hit a temporary plateau; or he/she may be having difficulty in grasping a basic concept that could bring his/her progress to a halt. This last problem may take a joint parent-teacher effort to be corrected.

Purchase a metronome - A **metronome** is a device that can be set to make a clicking sound at different rates of speed used to set the tempo for playing a musical piece. For example, if you set the metronome to 60, you will hear 60 clicks (beats) in every minute. If you set the metronome to 120, you will hear 120 clicks (beats) in every minute. So a setting of 120 is twice as fast as a setting of 60. The higher the number; the faster the tempo.

Essentially, a **metronome** helps the musician keep a steady beat. It's like having your Band Director in a box clapping the tempo for you! After more and more practice sessions with the **metronome**, the student will know when you are right on the beat of the **metronome** because they will get the sensation of not hearing the metronome while they play! Essentially, their notes are replacing the metronome beats. This will happen but requires much patience/practice to achieve.

Go to www.metronomeonline.com for a FREE online **metronome** to use with every practice session! Remember, your child should *always practice in a place that is free from distractions*, so parents should make sure there is no "instant messaging" while your student is using their online metronome!