

answers and inevitably, more questions, as we continue on our journey as lifelong learners in pedagogy and music. When Pablo Casals (at age 93) was asked why he continued to practice the cello three hours a day, he replied, “I’m beginning to notice some improvement.” Surely,

the same can be said of us as pedagogues. The IRSTE is a vital ingredient to the continued renewal of our art and our craft as Suzuki teachers.

To learn more about the work done by the IRSTE, please read one of its articles in the *American Suzuki Journal* from recent

and forthcoming issues. I invite you to learn more about the presentations from the 13th Symposium, some of which I touched on above, by visiting irste.org.

Part 6:

Parent Education in Suzuki Studios: Who offers it? Who receives it? What does it look like?

By Kathleen M. Einarson, Karin S. Hendricks, Nancy Mitchell, Elizabeth M. Guerriero, and Patricia D’Ercole

This is the sixth installment in a series of articles reporting on a large-scale demographic survey of North American Suzuki teachers. The previous article in this series examined some of the perceived challenges of group class. In this article, we will review teachers’ descriptions of the parent education offerings within their studios. Teachers were asked to provide information about the structure, content, and intensity of their parent education programs. The survey questions included both initial education for new families entering their studios, as well as ongoing education for returning families.

Within our sample, 75 percent of teachers offered some form of parent education for incoming families. Teachers were able to type open-ended descriptions of their education offerings in the survey, and were given the option to describe as many types of programming as needed (as such, the responses below sum to more than 100 percent). Based on teachers’ descriptions, we grouped the responses into categories for different types of experiences. Of the teachers who offered some form of initial parent education, the most common approach was to hold parent meetings or workshops (55 percent). Teachers also

reported distributing reading materials (43 percent), conducting parent education within the private lesson (43 percent), having discussions between the parent and the teacher (25 percent), and having incoming families observe lessons (18 percent).

Although the number of teachers who offered parent education to new families was quite high, the number who offered ongoing parent education to families already in their studios was significantly lower: Only 50 percent of teachers reported offering continuing parent education for returning families, and the majority of those who did reported that these opportunities were “minimal.” Although the educational experience for returning families was less comprehensive, the formats teachers reported using were quite similar to those for initial parent education, including meetings or workshops (55 percent), reading materials and online resources like “Parents As Partners Online” (35 percent), conducting parent education within the private lesson (25 percent), or having discussions between parent and teacher (20 percent).

Many teachers who described their initial and ongoing parent education offerings also mentioned that they struggled to find effective strategies and resources for communicating with parents. Since certain parent education resources were mentioned by name frequently (that is, mentioned by 10 or more teachers in our

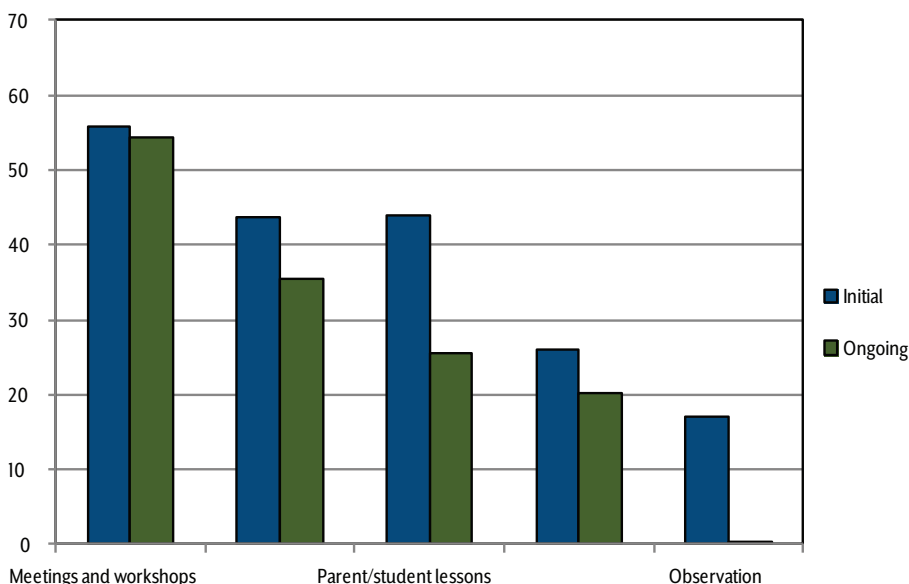


Figure 1: Format of Parent Education

(note: values will not sum to 100)

Continued on p. 26



Parent Education, continued from p. 25

survey), we would like to share them here. Colleagues who are interested in expanding their own education programs more may be interested in exploring the following frequently-used resources:

- 📖 SAA's *Parents as Partners Online* lecture series
- 📖 SAA's *Every Child Can* one-day introductory course
- 📖 The book *Nurtured by Love* by Shinichi Suzuki
- 📖 The book *Ability Development from Age Zero* by Shinichi Suzuki
- 📖 The manuals in the *Parent Education* series by Jean Luedke
- 📖 The book *Building Violin Skills* by Ed Sprunger (an instrument-specific resource)

In our survey we also inquired about the intensity of parent education offerings, and invited teachers to rate whether the amount of education they offered was 'Extensive,' 'Some,' or 'Minimal.' Among those teachers who reported offering either type of experience, intensity was noticeably higher for initial parent education than ongoing parent education. This suggests that even those programs that successfully offer initial training may not be able to offer ongoing support at the same intensity.

Table 1: Intensity of Parent Education

(note: values will not sum to 100)

	Extensive	Some	Minimal
Initial education	5 percent	61 percent	5 percent
Ongoing education	1 percent	37 percent	76 percent

In our previous article about the challenges of group class, we reported teachers' descriptions of the challenges and frustrations they face. Some of the most common issues included 1. parents only making time for private lessons, 2. struggling with scheduling and group class logistics when families are busy, and 3. managing parent expectations about the level or composition of group classes. We feel that one very effective way these concerns could be addressed, albeit gradually, is via parent education about Suzuki philosophy and pedagogy. It is possible that parents' inability or unwillingness to meet teachers' expectations (be they about group class attendance, or class assignments, or many other challenging aspects of managing relationships in a Suzuki studio) is attributable to misunderstandings about exactly *why* and *how* these activities are important.

Clearly, parent education that is both effective and also sustained over the course of a Suzuki family's journey can provide parents with the tools to be more effective members of the Suzuki triangle. More specifically, it has the potential to improve parents' understanding of the values of group class, review, listening, and other important aspects of Suzuki pedagogy. Many teachers in our survey expressed a desire to strengthen parent education, and were interested in strategies to do so. We speculate that training new teachers to offer both effective and sustained

parent education has the potential to improve not only teacher satisfaction and student retention, but also teachers' ability to implement Suzuki pedagogy and philosophy. These challenges are worth consideration given the potential for increased student success, higher parent satisfaction, and more rewarding and effective teaching experiences that could result.

Advanced Violin Performing Ensemble, continued from p. 21

a few short days, Nick was able to bring our group together and create an amazing performance."

Another student, Jaehyun Kim from Great Neck, NY, shared his thoughts on how this impacted him: "This opportunity meant a lot to me. Being part of an ensemble with kids from all over America was an eye opening experience for me. It was also cool to be able to rehearse pieces with a professional violinist (Nick Kendall) who was funny and most importantly, understood that the other participants and I were there simply because we enjoyed playing the violin. I was so happy to be able to make music in an environment that was relaxed and not filled with competition and judges ready to test us on every single note (something we violinists are awfully familiar with). But besides having fun, I think this experience was also an important step on the staircase of violin playing for me: it gave me my first grasp of the real world of violinists."

Isabella Benrubi, from Northport, NY, offered her take as well on her experience: "My days at Minneapolis were some of the best days of my life. It was incredible to be around so many talented musicians that shared the same interest and passion. Whenever performances were given, the atmosphere created by the teachers and students was nothing but supportive. Teachers were extremely helpful, giving suggestions for our playing that we could use for the rest of our lives. Being a part of the ensemble with Nick Kendall is something I will never forget. He motivated all of us to play with more energy and inspired us with his talent, to play with confidence and courage. It felt like all of us were part of a big family. I consider it a tremendous honor just simply saying that I met these amazing musicians."

After reading these personal thoughts from the participants, we can all agree that our students have a profound impact on us as well. It's clearly a two-way street. Having had the opportunity to observe Mr. Kendall's interaction with the students during the rehearsals and the performance, I concur with all of these observations. Mr. Kendall not only had the group playing from the heart, but he also taught from the heart with his deep understanding, constant encouragement, and endless positive energy. It made me proud to be a part of this wonderful Suzuki family and without a doubt, it would have made Dr. Suzuki proud as well.

