



What is Suzuki Method?

Suzuki Talent Education is a music method developed by Dr Shinichi Suzuki in Japan. It is based on his strong beliefs that “Musical ability is not inborn talent but an ability to speak their Mother Tongue. The potential of every child is unlimited.”



In the beginning one must have much perseverance, energy and patience.

DR SHINICHI SUZUKI



Dr Suzuki used the term “Mother Tongue” learning to describe the Suzuki Method. This term implies a similar learning situation to that experienced when children learn their native language where the parent or “mother” is part of this learning process.

“A child learns his first word one day and he repeats it over and over again until it becomes a part of him as an ability. Then he learns another word. After he has mastered these two words, he adds a new word to the two he has learned perfectly. He practices these words many times everyday, then he accepts the challenge of another new word to master and so forth. This is the way a child acquires his speaking ability”.

All the way through this learning process, parents keep talking to the child or speaking within earshot of the child regardless of his/hers attention or understanding to what age parent are saying.

(Notice the great environment the child is in? Listening, listening and listening...)

Parents also encourage ANY attempt by the child to speak no matter how he/she she did it. Imagine telling a baby “You’ve got it wrong, Babe”.

How is this applied?

It is through listening that the child learns language of music and develops a musical ear. Also, small children learn things by imitation. It is good for them to observe other children playing an instrument and having fun, so they will want to join in. It is natural for a child to copy those around them. Small children are enthusiastic about learning new things. They want to be like other children.

The parent is always involved in the children’s lesson. Especially with the young child, as they (the parent) will become the teacher at home, but the hard part is to stay the encouraging parent without pushing and putting down the child if he/she cannot do a certain skill they had to practice that week.

Always, **praise** and **encourage** the child

Small steps at a time

Repetition

All the above things we do with our children when they are babies, learning to speak, so really if we applied this to learning music, isn’t it a great way to learn? It doesn’t seem that hard when we look at it this way.

New Family life style

For all this to happen, the “Family has to fit into this new life style. It is not dramatic change – **just slightly change and re-arrange** a few things.

Sometimes we need to re-organise our “normal” daily routine habits. The key word to help you organise your child’s musical environment maybe “Priority”.

- Finding a special time everyday to spend with your child’s practice
- Fitting in
- Be organised
- Be organised with practice to know what the teacher wants learnt for next week’s lesson
- Not making excuses for your child not to practice
- Playing the music recordings.

This seems to be the hardest part for the parent’s!

Please remember it was the parent’s who set up the learning language environment for the baby. It’s the same here. It is the parents who set up the music-learning environment for the child.

Listening

It is always the parent’s responsibility to see the recordings/CD are played. Ideally your child should have several different kinds of listening.

1. Specific listening with the CD that has many **repetitions of the pieces** on which the child is working on or about to begin.
2. General listening to the **Book** the child is learning.
3. Very general listening.
4. Listening to **broad range of classical music** (children usually get to listen to other types of music from TV/ radio without parents help).

Please consider: babies, when they learn language, listen to not only parent’s speaking but also everybody else speaking around them in every topic imaginable, and they start using language they hear most often.

Re-organising our life style helps children know how to organise themselves with other activities outside music such as daily school homework, schoolwork, sport activities or maybe even organising their own bedrooms!

Benefits

There are so many benefits and if you speak to Suzuki parents who have been doing this for a long time the lists goes on and on. Every child and family benefits in different in different ways, if only the Suzuki methodology is applied. Through learning music “Suzuki” way, your child will learn, in time, some of the most important skills they’ll need in life, e.g. **ORGANISE, PRIORITISE, FOCUS AND CONCENTRATE**

- Set short, medium and long term goals (daily practice, weekly lesson, group lesson, workshops, graduation, someone’s special birthday, or that music, the child would love to be able to play one day etc.)
- Work towards goals one step at a time
- Learn bit by bit and build on it (Revision – Suzuki repertoire is like building blocks)
- Team work (parent + child + teacher, child + other students to play the instrument together.
- Have fun while working hard and moving on
- Give joy to other people (performing at various occasions)
- Have high self – esteem and confidence
- Be caring and encouraging (that’s the environment they are in).

“

**Don't rest, but don't rush.
Patience is an important
faculty for achievement.**

DR SHINICHI SUZUKI”

Practice

Dr Suzuki always reminds us in his writings the value of **persistence and action**.

Ability needs daily exercise to grow well and our children's interest and enthusiasm will remain high if they feel they are getting better.

Create a happy environment for the child to practice in

Find a **special** place in the house where the child can concentrate on playing their instrument.

Find a **time** everyday that suits your family.

Focus on one thing during the daily practice session; maybe one aspect of posture, or try playing a piece beautifully or even playing it with a happy heart and big smile.

The children need to become used to playing their instrument everyday. It needs to become habit too.

“Ability has been created when finding what is easy, easy, and what is difficult, also easy then the child can do it on the spot. It is here that the great power of habit manifests”

Habit is about listening too! So keep playing CD's.

Habit is also about how we praise the child.

Praise

Handy, helpful hint to: Put Pin – Point – Praise into Practice at “Practice”.

Pick at least one thing that was good about the child's play and describe it to the child, e.g. “What a beautiful sound you produced on the last note” or “This line sounded smooth and lovely.”

Or even “I could see you've noticed when you skipped that bit!” There is always something you can praise if you try and find it.

If you must correct the child's play, consider using the word “and” to add suggestions after praise. “But” can make you feel bad. “And” are more positive and uplifting.

Please compare the following examples.

“This line sounded very smooth and lovely BUT it could sound even better if you played with your bow straight next time.”

“This line sounded very smooth and lovely, AND it could even sound better if you played with your bow straight next time.”

Group activities

Why they are so important

Dr Suzuki described how children's “catch” learning, and when they take part in group lessons, workshops, concerts, and graduation they have an ideal opportunity to catch some positive learning such as;

If that child can play this, so can I

Hey, this is exciting! I enjoy playing with others

Is that what my teacher wanted? You do look better with proper posture!

That's a great piece. When can I play that?

Parent's can also “catch” some good ideas by talking to other parents or by observing other teachers teach.

Children need regular goals to work towards, and, concerts, workshops and graduation.

Provide regular achievement points during the year.

Graduation

Graduation is a central part of Suzuki graduation process and all instruments have a series of levels through which the students progress.

Students are expected to make a recording of their graduation piece.

Graduation concert is a focal point of the Suzuki calendar as it recognises the achievements of those who have reached graduation levels that year.

REFERENCES

Extracts were taken from these books:

Nurtured by love – Shinichi Suzuki

With Love in my heart and a twinkle in my ear – Sheila Warby