

Suzuki Association of Indiana News

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Editor: Emily J. Thompson

Contributing Editor: Jillian Chrisman

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Suzuki Events Around the State

From Joyce Davis, Suzuki Music School of Granger, IN:

The Board of Directors is planning a 25th anniversary of directorship for Joyce Davis on May 17th. Alumni are invited and any Suzuki student who wants to join. All the information and music being performed will be on the Suzuki Music School of Granger Facebook page.

From Mary Kothman, Ball State University:

The string teachers at BSU are going to be having our first strings camp. It is from June 10-14 and will be a half-day camp. It is in the Suzuki style but we did not request approval in time to officially call it a Suzuki camp. It will be half-days in the afternoon with a final concert in Sursa Hall on Friday, June 14. Myself (Mary), Dr. Karin Hendricks and Tiffany Arnold will be co-hosting it. (We are all Suzuki teachers.)

The camp is called White River Strings Camp and you can find our website at: whiteriverstrings.com We are really excited about this as we think this is something that's been lacking in our local area! We can also mail brochures if anyone's interested.

If you are planning a Suzuki event, please let us know! We will send out updates as new events are announced.

What's going on with you?

Last week, Jillian sent out a question to the membership: *I thought today how nice it would be to have one sentence from everyone as to what is going on with you at the moment - teaching wise, professionally or even a personal note. It would be fun to know what everyone is up to in one segment of their life!*

Here are your updates from last Monday (edited into status update format):

Jillian Chrisman: “Enjoying working up the 2nd violin part to Beethoven's 9th this week to play with Carmel Symphony this Sat.”

Karen Walls: “Starting a new, eager student this week, 13 year old girl who shows lots of promise and is okay with learning the Twinkles and being in my group class with much younger kids.”

Kim Fanning: “Have slept through the night twice since the twins were born on November 28, 2012. :)”

Joe Kalisman: “Having a play date with the cello part to Shostakovich 10th.”

Liz Efroymsen-Brooks: “Practicing for a home recital sometime in June. I just added two new beginning cellists to my studio with the Indianapolis Suzuki Academy.”

I didn't, but I would have, written, **Emily Thompson:** “Putting off work on the newsletter. . .”

Anyway, thank you so much. Your updates were a great snapshot of the gifts SAI members are sharing with the world. I was especially impressed by the nurturing attitude everyone shared, even when talking about their music!

A week ago, I was trying to learn Rachmaninoff's “The Bells” and Shostakovich 9th Symphony for Marion Philharmonic's concert on April 13. I had the music for about 5 days before rehearsals started on Wednesday (5 days with teaching and parenting to do!). But I loved the music, especially the Rachmaninoff. And as you all know: “When love is deep, much can be accomplished.” ~Emily

Teacher Talk: Nurturing the Suzuki Teacher

By Elizabeth Efroymsen-Brooks

The relationship between a teacher and a student is the heart and soul (in my opinion) of the Suzuki experience. The teacher becomes a mentor, guide, psychologist, cheerleader and in many cases a lifelong friend of the student (some of my students call me their "cello mama"). The importance of this relationship, especially if it is a nurturing one, can make profound influences on a student's life.

Conversely, it was not long after I started teaching, that I realized that my students were actually teaching me! In fact, many of my teaching ideas come from my students, who blurted out their image of what shifting felt like or suggested that we do reverse ski jumps instead of just down the fingerboard ski jumps. In dealing with many challenging students, I learned so much from their lessons that I began to apply it to my own playing and in teaching other students.

Which gets me to my point - who is the real student? Of course, the answer is that we learn from all our experiences. As Suzuki teachers, we are really "teacher-students". And that leads me to the point I want to make is that Suzuki teachers also need to be nurtured. Let me state that again: SUZUKI TEACHERS NEED TO BE NURTURED.

There is no doubt that as Suzuki teachers we are dedicated to spending more time and energy than we are actually paid for. How do we as Suzuki "teacher-students" nurture follow the Suzuki principles in our own lives?

Listening: Do we listen on a daily basis to music with beautiful tone and phrasing? Do we actively listen to the tone and musicality for our students or do we just check the fingerings and bowings? Sure, we are surrounded by music all the time, but can listening to great music enhance our souls?

Parent Involvement: Do we know the name of the student's parents? Do we know who they are and their job situations? Do we talk to them during the lesson? Are we "friends" with these parents? Conversely, do we reveal ourselves to the parents? Do we show the students and parents our human side?

Repetition: How can we nurture ourselves in this respect? I guess by rewarding ourselves for our patience but also giving ourselves time in the lesson to work on a small but important detail. I have to remind myself often that students don't often fully get something the first time around. The comfort comes from the knowledge that the repetition of a piece or a technique is essential - repetition doesn't mean boring – it means mastery. And while we do repetition with our students, we are refining our own technique.

Small Steps: It is amazing how much we expect from ourselves as teachers, but have so much more patience with our students. The wonderful thing about teaching is that we can always become better. But not instantly - it is a step by step, week by week, year by year process. We don't become a good teacher overnight - it is a journey that begins with a small step and continues.

Groups: I once took a training course where the teacher (Tanya Carey) said that in order to be better teachers, we must be better players. But we need the motivation (just like our students) to practice and perform. In order to nurture ourselves as "teacher-students," perhaps we need to find ways to play with other musicians and find ways to motivate ourselves to perform and practice more.

I would love to hear more from other Suzuki teachers about this idea. I think Suzuki teachers are the most incredible people - and I want all of us to feel "nurtured" and appreciated.

Liz Efroymsen-Brooks

Book Review: *The Talent Code* by Daniel Coyle

By Jillian Chrisman

This book answers one of the biggest questions I've had as a teacher. "Why do some students progress more with the same amount of practice time as other students?" In *Nurtured by Love*, the environment is the great answer. As great as it is, and I'm a firm believer in environment, even Dr. Suzuki had students who excelled greatly while others not as greatly. I had surmised over the years that the basic premise of intelligence must be a factor as well. But yet, this question still arose within me and I was not satisfied with the answer of intelligence alone.

I once met Joshua Bell. The main impression upon meeting him, and shockingly so, was the intensity with which he focused upon me. He might as well have bored two holes through my head, one for each of his intense eyes. Most teachers have had that exceptional and very exceptional student. With the handful of exceptional students I've experienced, there is not only intelligence involved but a fierce ability to focus.

Daniel Coyle, in his book 'The Talent Code', has finally answered my puzzling question. Mr. Coyle provides proof that myelin, which wraps around our nerve fibers, is the path towards physical talent development. Myelin, until recently, was mostly ignored by the medical field. Myelin is the insulation around the nerve paths that increase the rate of speed with which the impulse travels. Think of it like rubber casing around an electric cord. Myelin can build up in multiple layers significantly increasing the speed of impulse.

The book opens up with, what seems at first, a very typical moment of a child practicing the clarinet. It describes a moment of puzzlement, problem solving and discovery of correcting the notes. This opening moment is referred to again and again as the reader learns more about myelin and focus. Mindless repetition does not build myelin like focused, deep thinking, attention to physical minutia repetition. So the answer to my question has now become *the exceptional ability to focus intensely while slowing everything down during repetition work*.

'The Talent Code' is a great read, short, inspiring and enriching. He proves his point with his research on many of the world's talent hotbeds as well as medical research. And he offers observations on how these great "hotbed" coaches and teachers teach. The focus in my practicing has changed and I accomplish more in less time. I highly recommend reading 'Nurtured by Love' then the 'The Talent Code'. I think the two books work together beautifully – one having stood the test of time with the importance of nurturing environment and the other, 75 years later, offering us vital research information on how an individual's body and mind learns by building myelin.

**Post your comments for our discussion of *The Talent Code*
on Suzuki Association of Indiana's Facebook page!
We will share the comments in the May newsletter.**

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Blog: <http://suzukiassociationindiana.blogspot.com/>

Send comments, events, and articles to Emily J. Thompson: emilythompsonviolin@gmail.com