TIPS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF PIANO LESSONS

➔ Arrive on time for all lessons. Attend all lessons.

➔ Always bring all materials, including assignment notebook. For most students, this works best by having a bag specifically set aside for piano books. Students, not parents, should pack their bags the day of or day before lessons.

➔ Keep your home instrument in good working order. If you don’t have an acoustic piano, get one or begin budgeting for one now. If you do, have it tuned twice per year by a reputable technician.

➔ Schedule a regular practice time, and hold your child accountable to that time. Practicing should be a routine (like chores / brushing teeth / etc.), not a constant battle. Many students thrive by practicing in the morning before school. If your child’s practice time doesn’t seem to be working, consider why - is he hungry? tired? - and try another time of day. Remember that one of our jobs as parents is to help our children form healthy habits. It may take 2-3 weeks of consistent reminders to form a new practice habit.

➔ Check in with your child’s practice. This doesn’t mean you must practice with her. Simply ask her a couple of times throughout the week, “Are you reading your notebook?” or “What does your notebook say about that piece?” or “How does Miss Janna want you to practice that?” One parent said she noticed a marked improvement when she asked her son to read his notebook assignment out loud as he went through it. Check in with your child about the big picture. “Do you feel prepared each week?” “Do you feel that you are making progress in piano?”

➔ Sit in on your child’s lesson once per semester to see how things are going. Check in regularly with your child’s teacher to keep in touch. If you have a repertoire suggestion, by all means offer it. If you notice your child particularly enjoying some part of piano, by all means share!

➔ Offer positive feedback on your child’s practicing when you hear improvement. Rather than criticizing mistakes, try asking questions like, “Do you think slow practice would help on that section?” Remember that most practice sessions won’t sound like a concert. Students will often need to repeat small sections of music to get better at them. You may be tired
of hearing the same thing again and again. That’s ok.

➔ Avoid commenting on your distaste of a piece that is in progress. It’s hard to judge how wonderful a piece will sound when it’s brand new! Your child takes her cues from you and (in most cases) will not be motivated to play a piece about which you have been negative.

➔ Encourage your child to review old pieces frequently, and have your child perform regularly for you, grandparents, friends, relatives, etc. If you have older relatives living in a retirement facility that has a piano, ask if your child can play for them there - they usually love it!

➔ Use your video camera or audio recorder to have students watch themselves perform or practice. They might be surprised by what they hear! It’s also easy to share video of performances (at home or elsewhere) with friends and family out of town via YouTube or similar sites.

➔ Take your child to live musical performances of all genres. There is very little in this world that rivals good, live, musical performance. When at home, listen to Classical (and jazz and Broadway and other non-pop genres of music) via the radio, CD’s, Pandora, Spotify, etc.