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# International Research Symposium on Talent Education, Part 6: Parent education in Suzuki studios

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## International Research Symposium on Talent Education, Part 6:

### Parent Education in Suzuki Studios

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

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% 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%), reading materials and online resources like "Parents As Partners" (35%), conducting parent education within the private lesson (25%), or having discussions between parent and teacher (20%).

*(note to editor: insert Figure 1 approximately here)*

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 ten or more teachers in our 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.

*(note to editor: insert Table 1 approximately here)*

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 (a) parents only making time for private lessons, (b) struggling with scheduling and group class logistics when families are busy, and (c) 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.

Figure 1: Format of Parent Education

(note: values will not sum to 100)

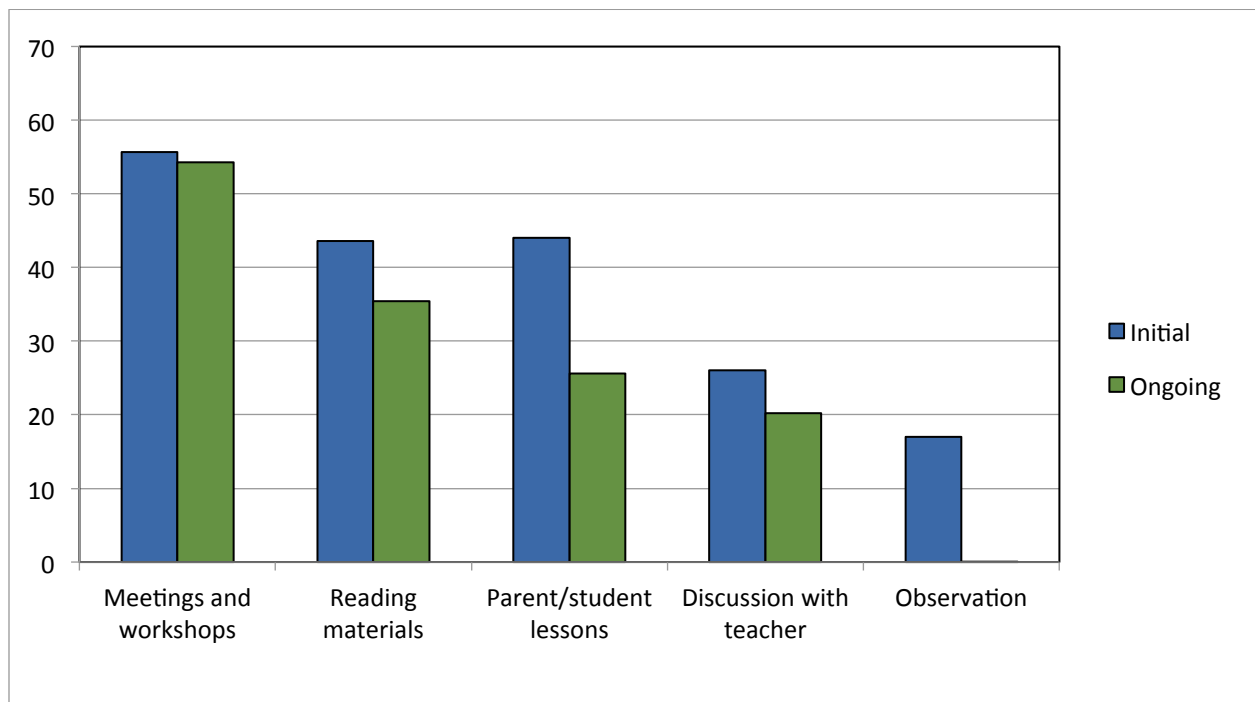


Table 1: Intensity of Parent Education

(note: values will not sum to 100)

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