

Family Feature: More Than Music

Verenice D'Santiago-Eastman, PhD

Licensed Psychologist

Licensed Specialist in School Psychology

It is with heartfelt enthusiasm that I share our family's musical journey. As both a parent and child psychologist, I've had front-row seats to the many ways music education and the dedicated instructors at SAMA have shaped my children's growth. It's not just about learning notes; it's about resilience, emotional intelligence, and a sense of belonging that extends well beyond the stage.

As you read and reflect on your own path, I hope you'll see how these moments build into something truly remarkable, a transformation as uplifting as a well-played crescendo!

Emotional Outlet and Regulation

Music education has given my daughters a chance to practice emotional regulation and express feelings in healthy ways. In psychological terms, music is both a tool for affect modulation and a safe outlet for emotional expression. Learning an instrument isn't just about scales, it's a journey with high notes, low notes, and the occasional urge to dramatically flop onto the piano bench. For my daughter who feels deeply, playing music is her personal "emotional reset," far more melodic for us as parents! Both girls have faced frustration, and I've watched them use strategies like deep breathing, mindful breaks, humming, and self-talk. Instead of avoiding discomfort, they're learning to tolerate distress and persist. If there's one lesson I hope sticks, it's that they can do hard things, and sometimes, the best therapy is to let the music play!

Executive Functioning

Recitals are a unique opportunity to focus, plan, and execute goals, nurturing self-efficacy and autonomy. For my youngest, preparing for a recital is a masterclass in time management, goal-setting, and motivation regulation. Research shows learning an instrument boosts executive functions like working memory, attention, and cognitive flexibility. At home, her attention span has gone from less than half a minute (blink and you'd miss it!) to sitting through entire lessons and daily practice, noisy interruptions and all. Even more exciting is seeing this discipline spill over into academics. She's not just practicing music; she's practicing focus, persistence, and sticking with challenges. The result? Academic growth and initiative: whether it's a tricky piano piece or conquering a math skill for her own intrinsic value.

Resiliency

At home, the performance doesn't stop when the curtain falls. The girls regularly stage living room "concerts" (complete with "showlights"), blending music, dance, and sibling negotiation. These moments of imaginative play are more than adorable, they're building blocks for resilience, creativity, and social connection. Well-established studies show imaginative play

fosters problem-solving, emotional flexibility, and adaptive coping, all essential for developing resiliency. Children who engage in pretend play are better equipped to navigate challenges and bounce back from setbacks, so every living room concert is not just entertainment, but rehearsal for life's bigger stages.

Accepting Feedback

One of my favorite developments has been watching my daughters cultivate the superpower of handling constructive feedback. Thanks to music instructors skilled at delivering suggestions with encouragement and clarity, both girls have learned to view feedback not as criticism, but as an invitation to grow, a hallmark of the growth mindset. This shift nurtures the belief that abilities develop through effort and learning. I can almost see the gears turning as they start to interpret feedback as cooperation rather than critique. This year, I've become their student myself, and my daughters now face the fresh challenge of evolving into teachers.

Managing Anxiety

SAMA instructor, Andres Losada, recently wrote that stage fright is "not an enemy to eliminate, but something we can learn to channel." As you can imagine, this was music to my ears! In anxiety psychoeducation, we call this "anxiety reappraisal," transforming nervous energy into excitement and focus. My oldest has become a pro at "cognitive reframing," she sees her butterflies not as impending doom, but as a sign that something important is about to happen. (I suspect her butterflies now wear tiny tuxedos holding batons!) From my seat, I spot her deep breathing and using grounding techniques, and after the final note, a triumphant gasp of relief. In that moment, she radiates confidence and accomplishment, and there's a wonderful sense of camaraderie with fellow performers, all navigating their own pre-show jitters. This sense of belonging and connection is what every child needs.

I'm grateful for the way music education builds my daughters, not just as budding musicians, but as growing humans learning to manage nerves, savor achievement, and share joy with others. Most importantly, it gives them another adult in their lives who believes in them. Every child deserves another champion in their community. Thank you, SAMA, from the bottom of our family's heart. And if you ever need a ticket to the next living room show, I know a guy.

student of the month

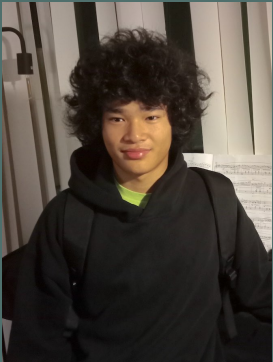


Alisynne M.

is a dutiful student, as made evident by her vast improvement in lessons and performances. Her knowledge of music theory and piano has been an invaluable resource, enabling her to guide herself and continue to progress without direct supervision. Always willing to take on a new challenge, Alisynne is a victorious star!

Khadijah Enriquez, B.M., Voice Instructor

student accomplishments



Congratulations to Han N., student of Dr. Maria Crystalia, on his Honorable Mention in the Janice Kay Hodges Competition!

upcoming events

SPRING BREAK

MAR 9-14

SAMA will be closed for Spring Break



MAR 22

Connie Edwards' Birthday



MAR 25

Randy Naranjo's Birthday



MAR 28

SAMA Students Bands Performing at Area 51 Food Park



HELP US BECOME THE BEST ACADEMY WE CAN BE.

SAMA ONLINE SURVEY



Submit a survey by **March 31** for a chance to win 1 of 5 **\$25 AMAZON GIFT CARDS**

SAMUSICACADEMY.COM/SURVEY

San Antonio Music Academy

NEW MERCH

AVAILABLE AT THE FRONT DESK

MARCH MERCH SALE

UP TO 60% OFF - WHILE SUPPLIES LAST