



The Parent's Role in Their Musician's Homework

**CLINICIAN:
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**DEMONSTRATION GROUP:
Lake Highlands High School Band**

Texas Bandmasters Association 2014 Convention/Clinic



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**JULY 27-30, 2014
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The Parent's Role in Their Musician's Homework

Texas Bandmasters Association Annual Clinic and Convention

Monday, July 28th, 2014 CC205, 8:15am

Presented by: Jeff Bradford, Lake Highlands High School, Richardson ISD

Demonstration Group: The Lake Highlands High School Wind Ensemble Principal Players

Grading, Expectations, Curriculum, Time, and Tools

- Parents need to know up front our expectations as directors. Is the band grade related to practice, performance, written assignments, etc. How exactly is a student graded, evaluated, and/or measured?
- What is the vision of the program and how does that affect each child?
 - When parents and students know the end goal, it's easier to process, motivate, and move forward.
- Time doesn't=100 or an A
 - Many parents and students equate time spent to a higher grade. The strain of marching band sometimes exacerbates this. We should teach students and their parents that hard work, consistent improvement, and high levels of achievement are how high grades are ***earned***.
- What is a reasonable amount of practice time per week?
 - For years we always heard 30 minutes a day. Practice logs sometimes allow for cramming of minutes in a single day/weekend.
 - Daily reinforcement of building fundamental skills, strengthening technique and muscle memory, and maintenance are the bare minimum. Going above and beyond this is when practicing takes students to the next performance level.
 - Teach consistency to your parents and their children. Relate music skills and development to things they already understand. How does muscle memory work for athletes? Have you ever broken a body part and had in restricted or unused for a period of time? What does it take to get the feeling and dexterity back? It's very similar to not practicing for days at a time or just showing up for rehearsals without in between attention and development.
- Why, when, and how to use a metronome
 - Teach them the purpose of tools and how to use them effectively.
 - You don't always have to use a metronome, but you have to understand development of pulse and how to use the tool as an aid, not a crutch.
 - Factoring, subdividing, division—it's all the same. Breaking things down in order to rebuild or better understand them.

Daily Routine or Outline

- 10 minutes of review on daily drill concepts
 - What did we do in class today and what am I not able to do as well as my peers?
 - I can't play very high, tongue very fast, or move my fingers like my friends. How can I improve this?
- 10 minutes of metronomic development and steady, mindful work
 - Scales, Clarke studies, technical development
 - Articulation at different lengths, speeds, and durations
- 20-30 minutes working on the task/music at hand
 - Marching Show memory work, concert music, solos, ensembles, audition materials
 - Slow, steady, persistent, and consistent

How Do I Practice?

- Teach students to work on what they are not good at. Teach them how to use the tools correctly so that they may build up to their end goal.
- “Learn your part at home, not during class.” No other classes teach kids this besides the arts. Therefore, it’s our job as directors to teach them this valuable life skill for better success and individualized growth.
- “Use your notes you took during class.” Are we making sure our kids write down things we tell them to? Are we adamant about making rehearsal notes for practice and improvement, not just musical markings?
- Repetition and correctly repeating something
 - Many times we rep something, but are we doing it correctly?
- “Have a plan, follow the plan, and don’t stop until you get it fixed!”
 - Teach students how to work around walls they run into.
 - Let them know it’s ok to stop, come back later, and try again. Don’t encourage giving up, but allow for rest and recovery to fight another time.
 - Teach your students to be doctors and mechanics of music. Perform, analyze, diagnose, and properly evaluate a plan of attack.

What Should They Look and Sound Like

- Most parents will not have music backgrounds. Have the kids teach them about music or actually have a demonstration class one night for your parents. Show them examples of the ideal practice area as well as what they should see/hear.
- Give parents the tools to know what questions to ask. Do they know what’s going on in class or at that point in the year? Send weekly reminder emails to the entire band so everyone has the information. They may not all dive into their child’s musical practice time, but they will have the tools, information, and opportunity.
- Use the internet, especially You Tube.
 - Make sure the directors send out the links. Share great links on your website, post great reference recordings, and make having a quality reference recording part of a student’s grade.
 - iTunes receipts, iPhones playlist, iPod playlist, old school compact discs.
- Is the student being consistent?
 - Can the parent tap their foot with the child’s musical beat? Are the sounds and repetitions getting better, worse, or staying the same? Does the student need a break?

Musical Examples

- Marching Music Memory Work
 - 2-4 bars at a time; have the parents hold the music for the kid, even if they don’t read music. It’s more cooperation and moral support than anything. Have the child explain to the parent where they are messing up or forgetting.
- Region Etudes
 - Most students don’t do well in this arena due to procrastination and lack of long term planning.
 - Establish written timelines and guides for the kids/parents. Chunk the music, take grades, and hear them weekly. Make the parents part of the grading process. Give the kids multiple chances to come back and replay for a higher grade. As you get closer to the audition dates, make the grade count as a one shot performance.
- Concert Music
 - This is the area that most students love or feel most comfortable.
 - Have consistent play tests, break down the music into chunks, and allow for multiple pass offs.
 - Can the parents be part of the solution? Of course. Post recordings of the music via Dropbox and send out links. Let parents hear the music and evaluate the kids. Allow kids to reference the recordings and work to attain that high level of achievement. If they have a model or measuring stick, most of them will use it and work towards it.

- Solo and Ensemble
 - Mostly student driven, but enforced by lesson staff and directors.
 - Have performance grades over the weekend where the student must play for a family member and be given written feedback. The grade is then given by the director after hearing the student and seeing the feedback. Allow parents to grade sometimes and get creative!
 - Sometimes just playing the instrument and attempting the performance for other people will benefit more than anything else.
- UIL Literature
 - It is our job as professional music educators to relate this to our peers and parents in a way they can understand. EOC, STARR, state wide mandated test.
 - Use objective sheets and weekly schedules/calendars to show where each student should be.
 - Use tempo charts for consistent progression and planning.

Five Fundamentals of Playing

- Still and Set, Breath, Start, Sustain, Release

Parent Help

- Hear kids weekly, while reminding them of proper habits and upcoming goals
- ***Stay in constant contact with their directors and lesson teachers!***

What is Practicing?

- Deliberate, systematic, highly structured
- Scientific (experimentation, clear goals, hypotheses)
- Goal oriented (short and long term)
- Slow and repetitive
- Careful self monitoring, self teaching
- Work on what needs improvement
- Solve individual problems
- Develop consistency
- Build correct muscle and musical memory
- Set attainable goals because achieving them is fun
- Efficient!

When to Practice?

- At a time of day when they have a high level of energy and ability to focus.
- Establish a consistent time of day; routine is important.
- For students with attention issues, two separate practice sessions throughout the day may be more beneficial.
- Brushing teeth before the practice session is recommended to cut down on instrument maintenance costs.
- Be careful that the student isn't practicing while everyone else in the family is having leisure time, this may create resentment.

Practice area, Posture, Music Markings

- In a distraction free environment (no TV or background music playing).
- In a well lit room to prevent eye strain.
- If there is a ceiling fan in the room, turn it off as it can sometimes spin the air and distort tone quality when it is on.
- Use a sturdy chair, such as a dining chair. This is for optimal posture to allow good breathing and air support in the music, as well as preventing physical discomfort while holding the instrument.
- Arm chairs are not ideal, and couches and beds should be completely avoided.
- A music stand should always be used and set to a height where the student is looking straight ahead and never down. This will encourage healthy posture habits.
- Students should be sitting or standing up tall without a curve or slouch in their backs.
- Backs away from the back of the chair.
- Chins should be slightly elevated, not pointed down or in towards their neck.
- Elbows should be slightly away from the body and relaxed.
- When sitting, feet and legs should make a 90 degree right angle with feet flat on the floor and not tucked under the legs or chair.
- Expect music to have pencil and/or highlighter markings.
- Notes and reminders on the music that are instructions from the band director.
- Private lesson music should have instructions from the private teacher.
- Tempos and corrections.
- Highlighted markings of key, accidentals, etc.

Playing vs. Rehearsing

- Playing
 - Not focused, mindless.
 - Auto pilot, for example: someone plays through a piece of music until they mess up, then they stop and play the passage again until it is a little better, then they keep going. This is only strengthening the ability to make mistakes in the music.
 - It doesn't make sense to play unconsciously, and then expect to perform consciously.
- Rehearsing
 - Band rehearsal is the opportunity for all the instruments and parts to come together.
 - Students will develop directed and critical listening skills. Group problems can be solved.
 - Students will learn how to balance their individual part with the people around them and learn how to match tone, tuning, articulation, and style with the others in the ensemble. This is the chance to do things together as a band that cannot be done alone.
 - Students should not come to band class to learn their part, but rather to learn everyone else's part and how their part fits in.
 - Individual practice allows the band as a whole to advance further musically. Students are responsible not only to themselves but also to their peers to learn their parts.

Resources

- www.tmea.org
- Practicingsguide.weebly.com
- www.lhabc.org
- <http://www.mtna.org/parent-and-student-resources/websites-for-kids/>
- <http://nafme.org/>

Contact

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How is my child graded?



- ❧ 25% Participation – during class, sectionals, rehearsals, anything that a child is involved in for rehearsal or practice.
- ❧ 25% Performance – concerts, performances, or in class performances at the director's discretion.
- ❧ 25% Skills – objective sheet pass offs
- ❧ 25% Fundamentals – objective sheet pass offs

Why Objective Sheets?



- ❧ Hold every child accountable at a high level and teach them about mastery, not earning an 85%.
- ❧ Hear every student on a weekly basis in a small setting.
- ❧ Provide a mini help session to advance students at a faster pace.
- ❧ Provide consistent and persistent feedback
- ❧ Avoid the state mandated testing flaw of testing kids, but not teaching them to master the objectives or skills.
- ❧ *Check you child's objective sheet weekly!!!*



Time Doesn't = 100 or A



- ❧ How many folks are in paid life for showing up and doing nothing?
- ❧ Is this what we want our young adults to learn, Time = Pay Me?
- ❧ I'm not paid for my time or just showing up: I'm paid for the job I do.
- ❧ Band students EARN their grade.



How much should my kid practice?



- ❧ Consistent time on the instrument.
 - ❧ This varies depending the musicians expectations and goals.
 - ❧ The hands and face are an intricate maze of muscles that need to be built and muscle memory developed.
- ❧ Daily and weekly reinforcement of daily drill and fundamental techniques.
 - ❧ Long tones (long sounds that move slowly)
 - ❧ Slurs and register changes (smooth note changes that vary with no extraneous noise)
 - ❧ Technique (scales/ finger drills/work on dexterity of fingers and embouchure)
 - ❧ Articulation (tongue work that starts long and progressively gets shorter/lighter/faster/stronger)

Why the Metronome? (clicky thing)

- ❧ The metronome--tool to build our internal pulse and subdivision.
- ❧ “Pulse” the backbone of almost everything: clocks, bodies, music.
- ❧ “Subdivision” divides the “beat” into smaller units to make it easier to play technical exercises: kind of like factoring in math.



Daily Maintenance



- ❧ 10 minutes review of daily drill concepts with metronome.
- ❧ 10 minutes working on technique that needs help or student wants to improve with metronome.
Range/fingers/tone/etc.
- ❧ 20-30 minutes working on the music at hand.
Marching show music, All-region etudes, Concert music, Solo/Ensemble, etc.



How to Practice Part 1



- ❧ Teach kids to practice what they aren't good at.
- ❧ Students learn their parts at home. They learn everyone else's during class or ensemble rehearsals.
- ❧ Low before high, slow before fast.
- ❧ Look back over ensemble notes. If they took notes and marked music during class, they know exactly what to address. Articulation, phrases, counting issues, etc.



How to Practice Part 2



- ❧ There is no substitute for time on the instrument.
- ❧ Repetition is sometimes the best thing to build the chops, technique, and master the task!
- ❧ Have a plan, follow the plan, and don't stop until you get it fixed.
 - ❧ When students get stuck or frustrated, take a break. Walk away and breathe. But come back with a different approach.
 - ❧ Directors teach their students to approach problem solving in the same manner as would a medical doctor or mechanic. Diagnose the problem, isolate the issue, try different courses of treatment - these lead to permanent solutions for any musical problem





What Should They Look/Sound Like?



- ❧ **Normal!** No changing of colors in the face, relaxed and tension free hands/face, and a tall/upright/proud posture. Feet should be flat and foot tapping with metronome.
- ❧ **Sounds good?** You should be able to tell if they sound good by going to www.youtube.com and pulling up a professional on their instrument. Ask your child for a professionals name. The better you educate yourself on what a professional musician sounds like, the easier you can track their progress.
- ❧ **In time.** You should be able to tap your foot with them and stay consistent with the beat of the metronome. If you listen to the radio and tap your foot/finger, it's the exact same thing. Maybe not as a catchy. If you can't find the pulse, chances are there isn't one!

Examples of Daily Drill; Long Sounds



- ❧ Full group; F descending
 - ❧ Doesn't move on until they sound good.
 - ❧ Eyes closed often for undistracted focus.
 - ❧ Listens for complete perfection in every sound.
 - ❧ Focusing on breathing/note starts/sustaining with quality tonal center/release with open/unobstructed oral cavity.
 - ❧ Metronome is set at 90-100 to establish a workable tempo.
 - ❧ Individuals may choose not to use met sometimes
 - ❧ Always listening for complete perfection in a quality sound.

Examples of Daily Drill; Flow Studies



☞ Ensemble

- ☞ These build range and push musicians to focus on tonal center and producing a quality sound in all registers.
- ☞ These were developed by:
 - ☞ Brass players to help extend range.
- ☞ The students have these in multiple keys and extended registers.

Examples of Daily Drill; Slurs/Register



- ❧ Alexa Pacio without metronome
 - ❧ Register slurs and adjustments
 - ❧ Creating seamless sounds with no extraneous noise
 - ❧ Working to build smoothness and complete stillness in all registers
- ❧ Kenton Wilhelm with metronome
 - ❧ Slurs; it's all about air, volume and speed
 - ❧ Embouchure plays a huge role, but should not create tension or pressure
 - ❧ Slurs are the backbone of building range and tone quality
 - ❧ MOST IMPORTANT EXERCISE FOR BRASS PLAYERS IS THE SLUR
 - ❧ Slurs are daily gym exercises that build strength and definition



Examples of Daily Drill; Technique

- ❧ Marcel Whorton with metronome
 - ❧ 12 major scales/ different tonguing patterns
 - ❧ Chromatic – this is every note, full range of the instrument
- ❧ Baxter Johnson with metronome
 - ❧ Clarke Studies in different keys
 - ❧ Different articulation; double tonguing for brass



Examples of Daily Drill; Articulation

☞ Ensemble

- ☞ Work all aspects of articulation from slow to fast, long to short
- ☞ Progressively speed up the met
- ☞ Brass use double tonguing on harder music. Examples of double tonguing.
- ☞ What is the difference in long/lifted/short?



Marching Music



☞ Alexa Pacio and Carolyn Weber



☞ Most kids struggle with memory work.

☞ Have your child teach you how to read music.

☞ It's not hard, just a new language.

☞ Once you have a better idea of music, it's easy.

☞ Have kids play for you not looking at the music.

☞ Make them tell you what they missed.

☞ Most of the time they just need someone in front of them listening. Nerves are the number one cause of missed pass offs!

All Region Music



- ❧ Start on this August 1.
- ❧ Music is chosen by collegiate professors on their instruments from across the state.
- ❧ Music is often pulled from method books that are like text books for each instrument.
 - ❧ They will scare kids at first because they sometimes stretch their range (notes above/below the middle of the staff) and finger technique (lots of black notes).

Examples of Region Music



- ❧ Brady Diffe w/ met *technical*
 - ❧ Make sure they set up like they would for the audition.
 - ❧ Select 50%-75% cuts of the music; have your child select a cut they think will be chosen for auditions
- ❧ Courtney MacDonald without met *lyrical; dynamics*
 - ❧ Let them know you care about their success.
 - ❧ Give them a weekly grade based on how they sound. Ask them how their etudes are coming. Ask to hear their best section of each etude and their worst of each. Ask them what their plan for improving is.
- ❧ Sean MacIntyre w/ metronome *artic*
 - ❧ Do they genuinely sound good, do they stay with the met, can you tap your foot with them?
 - ❧ Stay in constant contact with their lesson teacher and band director. Record them and play it back for them. Send sound files to their teachers for feedback.

Concert Music



- ❧ Holiday concert music is chosen to allow the kids to enjoy themselves, but also to find out what they are capable of for the spring UIL season.
- ❧ Spring concert music is chosen to build upon the hard work of the spring and prepare for the fall as well as showcasing special strengths of the ensemble.

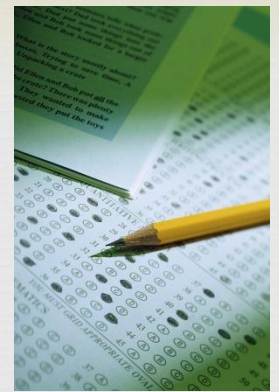


Solo and Ensemble Literature

- ❧ Nahiyah Khan, lyrical and Emily Moise, technical
 - ❧ Solo and Ensemble (S&E/Chamber Music Festival) are always held in February/March.
 - ❧ Solo music selected to stretch ability, ensure successful performance.
 - ❧ Solo's require independent, private lesson, and accompanist work.
 - ❧ Ensembles develop listening skills and allow kids to collaborate with others.
 - ❧ Contest allows for flexibility in choosing music and people to work with.



UIL Literature



- ❧ Austin Rae Downey and Josue Bazan examples:
 - ❧ Chosen by the director of the ensemble to:
 - ❧ Build skills and push the limits of the group's ability.
 - ❧ Showcase the group's specific strengths, while also hiding its flaws.
 - ❧ Must be chosen from a list decided on by UIL.
 - ❧ Worked on February-April. UIL Concert/Sight-Reading Contest is the TAKS/STARR/EOC of music education.

5 Fundamentals of Playing

1. Still and set – you must be still and have your mouthpiece/instrument still and set on your face in order to create a good sound.
2. Breath – breathe from your stomach, staying relaxed and calm as you inhale. This should feel natural and easy, allowing for absolutely no tension in the throat or upper body.
3. Start – this must be done with every member of the ensemble and with a “release” of the air. Note starts are done using the smallest part of the tongue, without causing abrupt sound to the start.
4. Sustain – sustaining your pitch with the best possible sound and centered tone quality. No decay in your sound. Only your best possible sound is acceptable.
5. Release – release each note by stopping the air from your diaphragm. Do not use your tongue or mouth to stop the air. Keep the embouchure still and just stop the air from escaping the body.



How Can I Best Help?



- ❧ Hear your child weekly
- ❧ Help them develop a habit of daily practice
- ❧ Make getting better attainable and fun by helping them set reachable goals
- ❧ Ask why they love music and remind them of that when they get down on themselves
- ❧ Stay in constant contact with the music experts



What is Practicing?



- ❧ Deliberate, systematic, highly structured
- ❧ Scientific (experimentation, clear goals, hypotheses)
- ❧ Goal oriented (short and long term)
- ❧ Slow and repetitive
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- ❧ Work on what needs improvement
- ❧ Solve individual problems
- ❧ Develop consistency
- ❧ Build correct muscle and musical memory
- ❧ Set attainable goals because achieving them is fun
- ❧ Efficient!



*Taken from practicingsguide.weebly.com *Thanks to Shadow Ridge MS**

When Should a Student Practice?

- ❧ At a time of day when they have a high level of energy and ability to focus.
- ❧ Establish a consistent time of day; routine is important.
- ❧ For students with attention issues, two separate practice sessions throughout the day may be more beneficial.
- ❧ Brushing teeth before the practice session is recommended for you to cut down on instrument maintenance costs.
- ❧ Be careful that the student isn't practicing while everyone else in the family is having leisure time, this may create resentment.



What does a Practice Space Look Like?



- ❧ In a distraction free environment (no TV or background music playing).
- ❧ In a well lit room to prevent eye strain.
- ❧ If there is a ceiling fan in the room, turn it off as it can sometimes spin the air and distort tone quality when it is on.
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Posture



- ❧ Students should be sitting or standing up tall without a curve or slouch in their backs.
- ❧ Backs away from the back of the chair.
- ❧ Chins should be slightly elevated, not pointed down or in towards their neck.
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What Should The Music Look Like?

- ❧ Expect music to have pencil and/or highlighter markings.
- ❧ Notes and reminders on the music that are instructions from the band director.
- ❧ Private lesson music should have instructions from the private teacher.
- ❧ Tempos and corrections.
- ❧ Highlighted markings of key, accidentals, etc.



What is Playing?



- ❧ Not focused, mindless.
- ❧ Auto pilot, for example: someone plays through a piece of music until they mess up, then they stop and play the passage again until it is a little better, then they keep going. This is only strengthening the ability to make mistakes in the music.
- ❧ It doesn't make sense to play unconsciously, and then expect to perform consciously.

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What is Rehearsing?



- ❧ Band rehearsal is the opportunity for all the instruments and parts to come together.
- ❧ Students will develop directed and critical listening skills. Group problems can be solved.
- ❧ Students will learn how to balance their individual part with the people around them and learn how to match tone, tuning, articulation, and style with the others in the ensemble. This is the chance to do things together as a band that cannot be done alone.
- ❧ Students should not come to band class to learn their part, but rather to learn everyone else's part and how their part fits in.
- ❧ Individual practice allows the band as a whole to advance further musically. Students are responsible not only to themselves but also to their peers to learn their parts.

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Resources for Parent Help

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☞ <http://nafme.org/>



Who to Contact



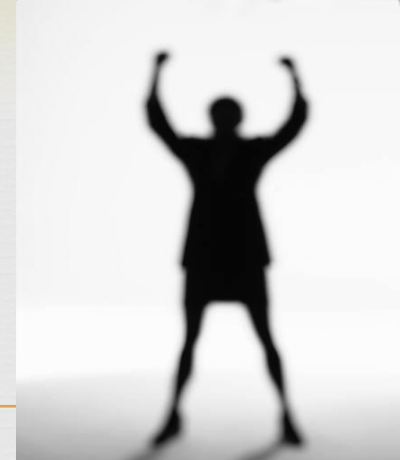
- ❧ Jeff Bradford, LHHS Band
 - ❧ Jeff.Bradford@risd.org 469-593-1057
- ❧ Any LH Cluster Band Director
- ❧ Private Lesson Teachers
 - ❧ **THESE ARE PARAMOUNT FOR KIDS SUCCESS!**

- ❧ Video your child and email it to their director/lesson teacher
- ❧ Make an audio file and do the same! We are happy to provide feedback
- ❧ Ensure your child uses a mirror, records themselves, and has good feedback!





Greatness



This journey that your **family** has embarked on will have it's up's and downs. They will sometimes come home unhappy, scared, upset, and frustrated. Rest assured your directors will have the same woes. But with a quality support system, (directors/lesson teachers/parents), your child will be successful. Every child will be different in ability and we understand that. But our expectations for trying, growing, and never giving up will never change. Consistency and persistency are the keys.

Band is the vehicle in which we use to teach our kids about life. Life is hard, you must be prepared, you must plan, and you can never give up. Your success in life depends on how hard you are willing to try, work, and commit. The things band teaches us all will carry us much further than the music we play. Music is the payout we all get from the work! Enjoy the journey because no one can ever take that away from you!

Special Thanks



- ❧ LHHS Wind Ensemble Principal Players
 - ❧ Alex Pacio, Nahiyan Khan, Emily Moise, Carolyn Weber, Josue Bazan, Austin Rae Downey, Baxter Johnson, Brady Diffe, Courtney MacDonald, Kenton Wilhelm, Sean MacIntyre, and Marcel Whorton
- ❧ Peggy Dillon, LHHS Principal
- ❧ Brian Britt, RISD Fine Arts Director
- ❧ LHABC, Lake Highlands Area Booster Club
- ❧ LH Cluster Band Staff
- ❧ Shadow Ridge MS Band, Chris Meredith, Alicia Desoto
- ❧ Kathy Downey – parent and editor of the presentation