

## **What is Graduation?**

by Sheila Warby

‘Character first, Ability second.’ Shinichi Suzuki

The annual Graduation within the STEAA (NSW) is a recognition of achievement. Like any form recognition its true value lies in the process rather than the result. Within our society today the emphasis is often on how quickly they are gained rather than what we learn in the process. Graduation should not be like this.

For a student to obtain all the advantages of our wonderful graduation system it is important that the path to graduation is fully completed before the recording is made. It is often tempting at this time of year to try to rush the process or to send in a recording that is not the best a child can do; just to say we have graduated this year!

When as a parent, teacher or student we accept a recording that is not the best performance that the student is capable of, we do that child a great disservice. We are not encouraging either the development of ability or inner spirit. Children are very perceptive and we should never underestimate them. What an inferior recording says to the child is several things and none of them are positive. It says “People don’t think I can do any better”. It says “Any standard will do as long as it’s done”. It says “Striving is not important”. It says “This piece is not important”.

Each graduation piece has its own unique technical problems to be overcome. Each graduation piece is a peak of achievement for that part of the repertoire. Each graduation piece provides the ground-work for the pieces coming after. If the technical skills are not perfected in the graduation piece the later repertoire becomes difficult, and experience shows that even the later graduation pieces can become troublesome and hard to compete to a good standard. This is often when children want to stop learning or become reluctant practisers because it is all too much.

So let us all make sure that the students who graduate do so with the very best recordings. That as parents and teachers we will ensure that our children are given the very best they deserve and that means putting in all the work until the skill is there for a good performance. Otherwise we are setting them up for later failure. No responsible parent or teacher would want that for their children. If on the other hand the best possible recording is made, the student has the technical expertise to continue through the repertoire. The student experiences the joy of an achievement well done and the enrichment that this provides for the inner spirit. Graduation has then provided its rich rewards; an increased sense of competence and self esteem and increased ability.

“The fate of the child is in the hands of the parent”. Shinichi Suzuki