

## **THE ASTA CERTIFICATE PROGRAM FOR STRINGS DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM**

### **Definition**

The American String Teachers Association, through its Certificate Program for Strings, seeks to establish definite goals and awards for students of all levels through non-competitive examinations. Students are judged on technical and musical preparedness in one of eleven levels by an examiner of musical and pedagogical stature. Certificates of achievement are awarded for each level successfully completed.

### **Features**

1. Teachers may use any etudes or solo repertoire for the examination so long as it is of similar difficulty to works of the same level listed in The CPS Handbook.
2. Various editions in addition to those listed in The CPS Handbook may be used.
3. Built-in program flexibility makes the CPS attractive to different teaching and learning styles.

### **Benefits to Teachers**

1. A Handbook of scales, etudes, solo repertoire, and playing goals in eleven graded levels
2. Yearly feedback through an examiner's comments on each participating student's progress
3. Flexibility in choice of technical material and solo repertoire
4. Greater respect from students and parents who know that national standards are expected of students

### **Benefits to Students**

1. A Certificate of Achievement for each year of successful participation
2. Written documentation of one's achievements that can be used when applying to youth orchestras, summer music camps, and for college admission
3. Written standards that provide reasons to excel and persevere from year to year of study
4. Incentives to work on technical studies as well as solos
5. The opportunity to play prepared materials in a private, non-competitive setting
6. Greater success in recitals, festivals, competitions, youth orchestra, and college auditions
7. Uniformity of expectations from state to state if the student should move

### **Evaluation and Grading System**

Each category of the performance (scales, etude, each solo, and sight reading) is evaluated based on tone, intonation, stance, technique, rhythm, musicality, memorization, and stage presence using the following grading:

V (very good), S (satisfactory), or N (needs improvement). Plus signs (+) and minus signs (-) are added as shadings of the grades. Five N's in any category such as scales, etude, or solos (sight-reading excepted) indicate that that part of the exam should be retaken at a later date.

**Honors:** "Honors" is considered when a student performs a solo or solos from a higher level than those associated with the level chosen, or if a cadenza is played with a concerto. To be awarded Honors, all of the material played, including technique, must be given an overall rating by the examiner of "V". Teachers wishing their student to be considered for Honors should check the Honors box on the exam application. If awarded Honors, the Honors box on the Evaluation Form will be checked and "Honors" written with the level achieved on the Certificate of Achievement.

**Comments Only:** For students who prefer to receive written comments rather than grades. Comments Only is checked at the top of the exam form to alert the examiner that no grades should be given. This designation provides latitude for the student whose exam program is not complete, where memorization is marginal, or for students who fear grades but desire feedback on their performance. Comments Only can be requested of the site chair as late as the last minute before the exam begins. Regular fees apply. No Certificate of Achievement will be awarded.

**Optional B Level:** The letter "B" is attached to any number level (Example 5B) to indicate that a student is taking the same level of exam for a second time. Different material from the same level may be used allowing more time for maturing in any one level. It is understood that a level without "B" is automatically "A". "A" is optionally marked. Standards for passing the exam whether with or without "B" are the same and the same fees apply.

### **Exam Guidelines**

1. A student's level on the application is determined by matching the student's playing ability to a level listed in the Performance Exam Requirements in the Handbook. The level most closely resembling the student's level before the exam is the level that should be chosen.
2. High achieving students may opt to go through lower exam levels by playing solos from more advanced levels and thus becoming candidates for "Honors" at each exam. Students who reach Level 10 at an early age are encouraged to take additional exams for "Comments Only".

### **Exam Rules:**

1. Entrance may be at any level and skipping levels forwards or backwards is allowed. Levels may be played again, but with the "B" designation or Comments Only.
2. Memorization is required in all levels of scales, arpeggios, and solos except in sonatas from the Classical period onwards. Etudes are not required to be memorized at any level, although students will not be penalized for doing so.

3. Accompaniment is optional but recommended as an educationally sound practice. No grade deductions are made for a lack of accompaniment.
4. Accompanists are required to step out of the exam room when not actually accompanying.
5. **Photocopies are not allowed** unless the music is out of print. If the student uses unauthorized copies, he/she is automatically moved to Comments Only. No grade and no Certificate will be awarded.
6. Participating teachers must be current members of ASTA with NSOA at application and exam time. See [www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com) for membership details.
7. Participating students must study with a current member of ASTA with NSOA.
8. Teachers are required to assist on the exam day to assure exams run smoothly and efficiently.
9. The examiner's decisions are final.

### **Fees**

Students pay a CPS Exam application fee set by the state ASTA Chapter. Teachers must be current members of ASTA with NSOA and are urged to purchase the CPS Handbook, an indispensable guide for preparing students year to year for the CPS exams.

For participation details and fees, please contact your local CPS Exam Organizer, your state's ASTA Board, or the National ASTA office at [www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com) or Tel: 703-279-2113.

If no exams are planned in your area, please read Part 3 of this Handbook for instruction on how to organize CPS Exams.

### **CPS HANDBOOK PURCHASE**

For more copies of the Handbook, see [www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com) or 703-279-2113.