

ASTA with NSOA Certificate Program for Strings (CPS)
<http://www.ecu.edu/music/ncasta/NCASTAcertificateprog.html>
Frequently Asked Questions

Can a student play a piece that is not listed in the Syllabus? Yes, so long as the piece is of the same level of difficulty as the other pieces listed in the Syllabus, for that level.

How does one know for sure if a piece, which is not listed in the Syllabus fits in a certain level? If there are any doubts, check with your state CPS chair as early as possible. She/He may consult with other CPS chairs.

Is the CPS intended for only high achieving students? No. The program was designed for the average student who takes private lessons regularly. However the high achieving student will also benefit from it.

How do I know if my student is prepared enough to receive the certificate for the level applied for? The expectations are the same as for any public performance or audition. The student should be able to play the material with confidence, with good intonation and facility necessary for the chosen repertoire. Occasional lapses in intonation and some technical or musical shortcomings may be noted but will not prevent successful completion of the level.

What is the best way for a teacher to get acquainted with the CPS and test it? Read the CPS booklet carefully, talk to the state chair of the program, and most importantly participate: enroll a few students and act as monitor at the exams. First hand experience is best and it has been positive to hundreds who tried it so far.

How do I convey to my students the benefits of the CPS? Explain to students that preparing for the CPS evaluation is no different than preparing for a studio recital, youth orchestra audition or festival, except that the CPS evaluations are noncompetitive and not public. Future auditions will be more successful because of the practicing for the CPS evaluations. Tell them, if they will practice, you will make sure that no one goes to the evaluations unprepared and they will get a well-deserved Certificate of Achievement as they complete each level. Most students will participate, just as they participate in yearend recitals. After the first time, the CPS becomes an expected annual activity for all students, crowning the progress achieved each year.

How do I convey to the parents the benefits of the CPS? Parents are happy when their child practices and makes progress. They also have more confidence in the teacher's efforts when they see outside validation of that effort. The CPS fulfills these needs. Tell parents that preparing for the CPS exams is one of the best ways to motivate students to practice and bring scales and etudes as well as solo pieces to a polished level. The written evaluations and granting of the Certificate of Achievement after each level by the ASTA with NSOA, a national organization is recognition of high standards of teaching and progress.

Is there any informational material for parents? Yes. The ASTA with NSOA CPS informational brochure is available from the state chairs. It is recommended that teachers requests these from the CPS chair and hand it out to all parents, in addition to explaining the benefits of the program in person.

Do scales have to be played at the tempos listed? Can they be faster or slower? Scales should be played within the range listed, but slightly faster and well is acceptable. Aim for good intonation, a clear and full tone, security in shifting and fluency appropriate to each level.

Must everything be memorized? No. Etudes and Sonatas from the classical period and later, **may** be played from music. Scales and all other repertoire pieces must be memorized.

What if a student does not have everything (that is required) memorized? Memorization as described above is a requirement to pass the level. If the student plans to use music for scales and solos, he should play for Comments Only. He may change to Comments Only as late as the day of the exam, at the Registration Desk and by telling the examiner at the time of the exam.

What happens if a teacher registered the student for the wrong level? If the repertoire doesn't match the level the state chair will notify the teacher of the options to change the repertoire, correct the level or to play for Comments Only.

What happens if a student plays below acceptable standards? Does he/she fail? Every effort is made to acquaint teachers with the standards of performance necessary for a successful exam, so that they send only students who are well prepared. Very rarely, a student falls short. If a student gets 5 N 's (Needs Improvement) in any one category such as scales, etude or one of the solo pieces, it is recommended that he retake the exam in that category after some additional study. The Certificate of Achievement will be awarded at that time.

When should a student play for Comments Only? This option is available to encourage participation by the student who is worried about being graded, and for the student who has not memorized all the material as required but would like the benefit of the examiner's suggestions. No Certificate is awarded. Same fees apply.

What is Honors? Honors is a special designation reserved for an over all outstanding performance which includes at least one solo piece from a higher level than required for the level applied for. Please mark advanced pieces on the application form.

Is it OK to play the same solo piece for two different level exams? No, unless one of the exams was for Comments Only.

Does a student have to complete a level in one year? No. The rate of progress varies from student to student and often in the course of the same student's development.

What does the A or B designation mean? It means that the applicant is taking the same level exam more than once in order to have time to learn more of the repertoire and master skills suggested for that level. The CPS recognizes that taking the exam on a different level each year does not coincide with the rate of musical growth of all students. The built in flexibility, which is provided by the stretching of levels over multiple exams, is an important tool to be used by teachers when appropriate. Earning a Certificate designated A and then B allows students to feel that they are making progress within the same level.

Is it OK to repeat a level? Yes. Often a student benefits from learning more of the literature in a level, before proceeding to the next. A and B are appropriate designations for the first and second time exams.

Must A or B be designated on the application form? Only B designation (the second exam on the same level) needs to be marked. However the teacher should enter either A or B on the Certificate of Achievement of the students who take the exam twice, for ex: Level 5A or 5B.

Is it OK to skip a level? Yes, if in the teacher's judgement the student is qualified.

Must the pieces played be the editions that are listed? No. The editions are listed only to help in finding and buying the works. Teachers may select any edition.

Must a student be accompanied if an accompaniment is written for the piece? No. This is at the discretion of the teacher and student.

Could a teacher evaluate his/her own students? No. In order to assure complete impartiality the exams are conducted keeping the identity of teachers private.

May the teacher play the piano accompaniment? Yes.

May a member of the student's family play the accompaniment? Yes

What about repeats? In the interest of time, long repeats should not be made

Do cadenzas have to be played with concertos? No. Extended cadenzas are optional.

May a member of the student's family sit in on the exam? No. The evaluations are not public and the rooms are not set up for an audience. One parent may be allowed in case of special circumstances or very young children.

Can we change the repertoire after the application has been submitted? No, except in unusual circumstances. Discuss with CPS State chair.

To whom should the check for the application fee be written out? Parents should make out a check to the teacher, and then the teacher should make out one check with the total of all his/her students, to the state chapter: NC ASTA with NSOA