

## Frequently Asked Questions

### “A” Level

If there is a B Level, isn't there an A Level? Yes, and it is optionally marked on the application, exam sheet, or on the certificate. A Level noted without “A” is understood to be “A”. “B” is noted when a teacher decides that a student needs more time to mature in any one level (See “B” Level below).

### Accompaniment

#### **Must a student be accompanied if an accompaniment is written for the piece?**

While it is an educationally sound practice to include accompaniment if it is written for a work, accompaniment is not required. Accompaniment is at the discretion of the teacher and student. No deduction in the score is made for lack of accompaniment.

**May the teacher play the piano accompaniment?** Yes.

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

**May the accompanist be in the exam room for the entire exam?** No. An accompanist should be in the exam room only for solos that he/she accompanies.

### “B” Level

Attaching a “B” to any level 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 to 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 that is provided by the stretching of levels over multiple exams is an important tool to be used by teachers when appropriate.

### Cadenzas

**Do cadenzas have to be played with concertos?** No. Cadenzas are optional. However, a cadenza played for an exam might qualify a student for Honors. (See “Honors” below).

### Comments Only

**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 or prepared adequately all the material as required but who would like the benefit of the examiner's suggestions. No Certificate is awarded. Same fees apply.

### Editions

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

### **Enrollment**

**Who should enroll in the CPS?** Both high achieving and average students benefit from the rigors of the program and the written appraisals of the examiners.

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

**Can repertoire be changed after the application has been submitted?** No, except in unusual circumstances. Discuss this with the Exam Organizer.

### **Family members**

**May a member of the student's family sit in on the exam?** Usually not. The evaluations are not public and the rooms are not set up for an audience. Exceptions are at the discretion of the Exam Organizer.

### **Fees**

**To whom should the check for the application fee be made out?** Student checks should be made out to their teacher. The teacher should make out one check to the state ASTA chapter for the total fees sending this and all applications collected to the Exam Organizer.

**Do teachers have to buy a CPS Handbook each year their students take the CPS exams?**

No. Teachers do not have to pay for a new Handbook each year that they participate, but they will want to own the most current edition to adequately guide their students as they prepare for the exams. New editions will be announced by ASTA.

### **Honors**

**What is Honors?** "Honors" denotes that a student is performing a work from a higher Level than required or that a student is performing a concerto and its cadenza. Honors is granted when, in addition to one or both of the above, the performance of all requirements is given an overall rating of "V". To be considered for Honors, the teacher checks the "Honors" box on the application. If Honors is awarded, it is noted on the Evaluation Form and on the Certificate of Achievement.

### **Information**

**What is the best way for a teacher to get acquainted with the CPS and to test it?**

Read this CPS Handbook carefully, talk to a state chair of the program, and most importantly, participate by enrolling a few students or acting as monitor at exams. First-hand experience has served many well. Contact information- 703-279-2113 or [www.astaweb.com](http://www.astaweb.com).

**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, a youth orchestra audition or a festival except that the CPS exams are noncompetitive and

are not public. Participation in the CPS Exams will make future auditions and performances more successful. Tell your students that if they will practice, you will make sure that no one goes to the exams unprepared and that they will get a well-deserved Certificate of Achievement as they complete each level. Most students will participate, just as they participate in year-end recitals. After the first time, the CPS becomes an expected annual activity for all students, crowning progress made each year.

**How do I convey to parents the benefits of the CPS?** Parents are happy when their child practices and makes progress, something that happens in preparing for the exams. They also have more confidence in the teacher's efforts when they see outside validation of work done. Tell parents that preparing for the CPS exams is one of the best ways to motivate students to practice and to bring scales and etudes as well as solo pieces to a polished level. The written evaluations and the 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. Parents should look forward to more and more universities recognizing these standards, as well.

**Is there any informational material for parents?** Yes. The ASTA with NSOA CPS brochure is available from state CPS chairs or by calling 703-279-2113. It is recommended that teachers request these and hand it out to all parents explaining the benefits of the program in person.

### **Memorization**

**Must everything be memorized?** No. While everything can be memorized with no deduction in score, etudes do not have to be memorized. Also, 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 each level. If the student plans to use music for scales and solos (except those noted above), he should play for Comments Only. He may change to Comments Only as late as the day of the exam by conferring with the Exam Organizer.

### **Passing the Exam**

#### **What happens if a student plays below acceptable standards? Does he/she fail?**

Teachers should acquaint themselves 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. In such cases, the teacher and Exam Organizer make an arrangement with an Examiner for the student to retake that section of the exam. A new exam application fee for that level is due prior to scheduling the exam. The Certificate of Achievement will then be awarded if the grade is "S-" or higher.

### **Pieces/Repertoire**

**Can a student play a piece for the examination that is not listed in the Curriculum Guide?** Yes. The student may play any piece for the exam so long as it corresponds in difficulty to those listed in the Curriculum Guide for that level of exam. This freedom in selection of exam material is one of the hallmarks of the CPS.

**How does one know for sure if a piece that is not listed in the Curriculum Guide is appropriate for a certain level?** If there are any doubts, check with your Exam Organizer as early as possible. This person may consult with other Exam Organizers or the State Chair. The response of your state's Exam Organizer is final.

### **Preparation for the Exam**

**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 the 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. (See also, Passing the Exam, above).

### **Repeating material or Levels**

**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. (See also, B Level, above).

**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.

**May a student play the same material a second year?** Whereas a minority of students might need to play the same material two exams in a row, the playing of new material, even at the same level, is strongly encouraged as it promotes growth in the student.

### **Repeats**

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

### **Scales**

**Do scales have to be played at the tempos listed?** Scales should be played within the range listed, but a slight deviation is acceptable. Aim for good intonation, a clear and full tone, security in shifting and fluency appropriate to each level.

### **Skipping a Level**

**Is it OK to skip a level?** Students may play at any level the teacher judges to be appropriate.