



2020 Piano Syllabus: Getting Started

Recently the Piano Exam Development Committee surveyed MMTA members about their use of the piano syllabus and exam program, and here are the results: You affirmed the value of this comprehensive program, and you want tools to help you make this program even more accessible for more students.

For those who have not yet discovered the value of this program, we'd like to detail a variety of ways teachers use the syllabus with their students, discuss the tools and resources we use to manage syllabus planning for our students, and give tips for mentally preparing students for the exam experience and for interpreting the adjudicator's comments so that the student gets the full benefit of the program. Look for these and other helpful articles on the Resources page of the MMTA website.

One comment that we heard many times from survey respondents was, "the syllabus provides the framework for my curriculum; I use it with all my students, even if they don't go to the site and take the test." That really sums up the value our members find in the syllabus.

So how do you get started using this fabulous curriculum with your students, if you haven't before?

- Some teachers get started by using one part of the exam with all their students. It might be the technical skills, or it might be the sightplaying. Students can prepare these portions of the exam and test them separately if the comprehensive exam seems too daunting for a first step.
- Some teachers learn the syllabus level by level. One year, they enter a bunch of students in the Prep level. The next year, those students advance to Level One and a new bunch of students start Prep. Each year, the teacher is simply learning the requirements for one new level of the syllabus.
- Some teachers use the syllabus just for their hardest working students.
- Some teachers limit the choices – for instance, having all students at a certain level play the same repertoire selections.
- Many let repertoire selections do double duty – contest pieces can be substituted, so that a piece the student has already learned well can be the start of a full program.
- Use your mentors. If you don't have one, find one or ask a committee member for help. Check in with a mentor when you are planning repertoire selections, and ask questions when requirements seem confusing.
- Volunteer on testing days. It's a great way to get some hands on experience with the program. Helping at the desk, you will see how things work and what you can do to make it a good experience for your students. You'll have time for conversation with seasoned teachers, too.
- Check out the resources available to support the syllabus: the Resource Book and Resource File help you find syllabus pieces in many anthologies; the Preparation Book includes sample skills

tests plus reproducible planning forms; Style Characteristics Chart helps students prepare for oral questions; Keyboard Skills Workbooks are available for Prep through Level 6. All of these resources are available online at www.mnmusicteachers.com on the Teachers Resources page.