



OREGON
MUSIC TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION

For Families of Syllabus Students

November 2022

Dear Families of OMTA Syllabus Students,

I commend you on choosing a highly trained teacher and on your dedication to pursuing tangible benchmarks in the performing art of music! You are clearly committed to the importance of music in your child's life and their wholeness as a person. When you chose a teacher, you probably interviewed more than one, choosing with due diligence the teacher who was the best fit for the student. Your teacher also performs with diligence, preparing skills and selecting repertoire appropriate to the level being tested, as well as staying current on Syllabus rules and policies, and up-to-date with fees and deadlines.

As State Syllabus Chairman, I see a trend of parents trying to make decisions about students' Syllabus participation instead of the teacher. Teachers who participate in Syllabus are already trained beyond the "average neighborhood teacher" and deserve to be treated with professionalism. Discussion of attainable goals with the teacher is healthy communication. Telling the teacher when you want your student to take Syllabus is not. Most students test only once a year, and keep in mind that these students are the exceptional ones. Average students do not take Syllabus exams at all, which is one of the many good reasons you've chosen this teacher. Pushing to take Syllabus twice in one year is usually not a reasonable request.

Another situation that occurs is when a teacher determines a student is not ready; it is their prerogative to either pull a student out of the exam or to change the exam tier from full Evaluation to partial Demonstration or to Creative Audition. Again, this is not the family's choice, and Syllabus is not the place to push your student through a full exam that they are not prepared for. It makes the teacher look unprofessional, it places the adjudicator in the awkward position of having to "police" a student who did not do the work to prepare for the exam, and it runs the very real risk of developing performance anxiety for the student.

The OMTA Syllabus program is well-thought out from every angle, has been in existence for over 70 years, and continues to be fine-tuned as new technologies arise. My hope is that your support will be in cooperation with your student and with your student's teacher.

The best possible chain-of-communication is student/family to teacher, teacher to district chair or adjudicator, and chair/adjudicators to Syllabus State Chairman. Respecting these professional boundaries keeps the lines of communication professional and untangled.

Wishing you many years of beautiful music with your student,

Barbara Roberts, NCTM

OMTA Syllabus Chairman