

# Certification 101

Sue A. Steck-Turner, Louisiana VP/Certification & South Central Certification Commissioner

[This paragraph for chairmen's use]

Certification 101 is an organized plan for [your organization] members to use to become nationally certified through the new Teacher Profile Projects. Starting with the [newsletter/this email], one project will be assigned each month from [March to September (your months)]—five projects over a period of seven months. Teachers will work to complete one project each month until [month] when Certification 101 will culminate at the [event/location]. A class meeting will be held from [date & time] at which time participating teachers will gather to discuss and evaluate each other's projects. The class will be offered free of charge, but those wishing to participate must pre-register.

## **Important**

(1) Do not send your certification application to MTNA until you have completed these projects.

(2) Before starting this endeavor, you must go to the MTNA website:

[www.mtnacertification.org/CertificationProcess/ApplicationProcessAfterJanuary12010/PianoOverview/tabid/736/Default.aspx](http://www.mtnacertification.org/CertificationProcess/ApplicationProcessAfterJanuary12010/PianoOverview/tabid/736/Default.aspx) where you will download the following materials: "Piano Teacher Profile Projects Workbook," "What Will the Evaluators Be Looking For?," "Assessment Tools for the Independent Teacher" and "Video Articles." Keep these materials in a binder for easy and frequent reference.

**Assignment No. 1** is the most involved—**Project #3 Present Your Teaching**. It is probably best to start this assignment early in the school year as spring could be problematic since much of the repertoire for the year is learned. However, any time is an excellent time to practice videotaping, with both teacher and student becoming comfortable with videotaping—and to correct any disturbing aspects of one's teaching.

**Step 1:** To begin Project #3, you must determine how you will videotape your teaching.

- If you are experienced with videotaping, use equipment and procedures with which you are comfortable.
- If you are technologically challenged, seek help. Ask—beg, bribe—a colleague, a family member, the pedagogy teacher at your local university, a parent of a student, anyone who seems knowledgeable, to guide you. This person might let you borrow equipment, perhaps give excellent instruction, or even volunteer to video you. In dire circumstances, hire a professional. Remember, in our business, time is money—and time saved is often sanity saved!
- Check all MTNA guidelines for the submission of your projects. Be sure to label your videos appropriately as indicated in the study guide. Remember to save your completed videos as an .mp4, .mov or .avi file. Upon receipt of your application, you will receive an e-mail with a link to the website where you can upload your entire submission

**Step 2:** Your task is to present three video segments of your teaching:

A 20–30 minute segment of the early stages of teaching a repertoire piece (maximum 5 minutes) with accompanying technique, theory and the like.

A 15 minute segment of the same student further into the process.

A 15 minute segment of finishing & polishing stages.

1. Begin taping several of your students each week or as frequently as possible. Even if you are not introducing new repertoire at this point in time, practice taping the segments which are appropriate to your students' current progress.

A. Choose students with repertoire at an intermediate level, ones who have pieces which you could easily introduce and choose supplementary activities. The repertoire should be accessible in a minimum of three, but not necessarily successive, lessons. If it is too easy, you may have difficulty stretching into three lessons; if too difficult, it may take much too long to finish.

B. Choose students who are not excessively shy or self-conscious and those for whom you have determined their learning modality.

C. Predetermine lesson plans for at least some of the students. Practice staying on task for the allotted minutes for each of the three required segments.

D. Consider your personal appearance on the video. Always wear appropriate, professional attire.

**Step 3:** Save all your original videos to a disk, flash drive or external hard drive. Label all sessions clearly so you can easily view the clips you really want. Review them as frequently as possible for the following items:

A. Check the sound of the video. All dialogue needs to be clear and easily heard.

B. Check the lighting. Lighting should be natural and bright—not somber. Avoid shadows when possible.

C. Check the camera position. Make sure the entire keyboard, the student's face and hands, and your face can be seen. Place the student in the foreground at an angle that does not distort the student's hand and sitting position. When you find the best angle and location, mark it for easy setup.

D. Evaluate your "performance." Watch for personal mannerisms and verbalizations you may wish to avoid. Evaluate your effectiveness in accomplishing your chosen focus and in encouraging student interaction.

**Step 4:** Consult—better yet, devour—all readings concerning Project #3 in the Projects Workbook (pp. 5–7), What Will the Evaluators (pp. 5–7) and the Video Articles. If you have questions or problems, contact [chairman/mentor & contact information]. She (He) may not know the answers, but she (he) will put you in touch with someone who does.

**Assignment No. 2** is a continuation of Assignment No. 1 and consists of two parts.

### **Assignment No. 2A Project #3, Part 3 Teacher Performance**

Your task is to video record yourself performing a piece(s) that demonstrates both your technical and musical ability.

A. Choose repertoire equivalent to Level 7 or above in *The Pianist's Guide to Standard Teaching and Performance Literature* by Jane Magrath (1995) published by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.

B. Performance should be between 5–10 minutes and does not have to be memorized.

C. Your playing should exhibit good technique, accuracy, fluency, musicality and an understanding of correct stylistic interpretation.

**Step 1:** Select the repertoire you will play on your video and begin to practice it regularly.

**Step 2:** As you reach performance level, begin taping yourself. Save all acceptable performances to disk.

### **Assignment No. 2B, Project #3, Part 2 Present Your Teaching**

Be sure to read carefully p. 6, Section 1A–C in *What Will the Evaluators Be Looking For?*

Your task is to prepare lesson plans and materials for the student/s you have chosen to tape, make the videotapes, and evaluate the lessons.

**Step1:** Choose a specific student/s and the repertoire selection/s you will teach.

**Step 2:** Choose the materials you will use in the lesson—method books, repertoire, theory books, technical studies and ear-training and sight-reading materials. Make a list of these materials to be included in your submission.

**Step 3:** Prepare a detailed outline (script) for the lessons and begin taping, continuing to save your work as you did in Step 3 of Assignment No. 1. When taping is complete, reduce the lesson plan to a synopsis of what you did in the lesson to be included in your submission.

**Step 4:** Evaluate your teaching for each video by discussing at least three points from the given list. This is an extremely important step. Acknowledge any portions in which you were disappointed and offer possible solutions. Acknowledge all portions with which you were pleased and the reasons why. Be sure to do this for each of the three videos.

**Step 5:** Collect three of the required assessments of your teaching for your submission (p. 7 Projects Workbook)

**Assignment No. 3** **Project #1 Write Your Teaching Philosophy** can easily be accomplished in a week or less. I would suggest spending one or two days studying information provided for you, one day of writing, and two or three days of mulling it over and revising.

**Step 1:** Carefully read p. 4 in the “Projects Workbook (PW)” and pp. 2 and 3 in “What Will the Evaluators Be Looking For?” (WWEBL) Visit the websites listed in the additional resources and read the texts and journals if available.

Also visit the following websites for more information and concrete examples:

[http://www.marthabeth.com/teaching\\_philosophy.html](http://www.marthabeth.com/teaching_philosophy.html)

<http://colorinmypiano.com/2011/01/06/thoughts-on-the-teaching-philosophy/>

<http://www.keynotespianostudio.com/teaching-philosophy/>

<http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~leonardg/philosophy.html>

<http://danopiano.musicteachershelper.com/teaching-philosophy>

[http://www.piano253.com/whats\\_new.html](http://www.piano253.com/whats_new.html)

[http://sitemaker.umich.edu/amandakingston/philosophy\\_of\\_teaching](http://sitemaker.umich.edu/amandakingston/philosophy_of_teaching)

**Step 2:** Determine the format for your essay, prepare an outline of items and ideas you want to include and begin writing.

Careful organization of your thoughts is extremely important. Organize according to the main points **who, what, how** and **why**. Be sure to include all the important points listed in WP and WWEBL as much as possible within the word limitation (600).

Be sure to include an obvious, substantial statement about one of the additional topics as listed on p. 4 PW. This is a very important portion which, if omitted, can result in the failure of this project.

**Step 3:** For the next few days, spend time thinking about what you wrote. Make any revisions which may clarify or improve what you have written. When you are satisfied with your essay, save it to a flash drive or external hard drive where it will be safe and easily accessible.

**Assignment No. 4** Project #4 **Share Information About Your Teaching Environment** is another project which should take minimal time and effort to complete.

**Step 1:** Carefully read p. 8 in the Projects Workbook (PW) and pp. 7–8 in “What Will the Evaluators Be Looking For?” (WWEBL)

**Step 2:** Make a list of teaching equipment in your studio. It can include a wide variety of tools such as bulletin boards, charts, all your instruments, any computers and electronic equipment, games and hands-on activities.

**Step 3:** Take either photos or a video of these materials and equipment.

**Step 4:** Describe how you use at least three of the resources to encourage a positive teaching environment.

**Step 5:** Organize your materials very carefully—once again, organization is very important. Notice that you are limited to 300 words.

**Suggested organization:**

- A. List the items and number each one.
- B. Either video the items in the same order or number the photos with corresponding numbers.
- C. Discuss the use of the items directly under the chosen item.
- D. Discuss as many items as possible with the 300 word limitation.

**Assignment No. 5** Project #5 **Discuss Your Studio Business Ethics and Policies** is an easy project to complete—and most of the items should already be part of your business documents.

**Part 1** is the discussion of three scenarios concerning ethical business practices. These scenarios are included in the Projects Workbook on pp. 8 and 9. You must choose one from each category. It is

recommended that you consult the MTNA Code of Ethics on the [www.mtna.org](http://www.mtna.org) website. In general these questions can be answered easily with good reasoning and from drawing on past experience.

**Part 2** requires the following business documents:

A. A copy of your studio policy. Make sure it contains information concerning lesson expectations, make-up policy, home environment, studio activities, fee structures and payment plans and any items you consider important in your studio operations.

B. Two lists of interview questions and activities—one for a new, beginning student and family members AND one for a transfer student and family members.

C. A hypothetical annual budget for an average studio/classroom, or if you are a salaried music teacher, a prototype budget. List all standard income and expenses incurred by the studio for one teaching year, creating your projected income.

**Assignment No. 6** Project #2 Analyze Four Teaching Pieces includes the analysis of four teaching pieces which will be sent to you upon application and payment of fee. For each piece you must answer six questions. You can begin preparing the following items before you receive the examples:

A. A discussion of each of the four musical periods and characteristics of the compositional style in that period. You will add a discussion of the selected composer later. Each of these discussions has a word limit of 150–300 words total. The content should be appropriate to the age of the student. Most pieces are at the intermediate level, placing the student at probably no younger than age 9.

D. A discussion of how you would teach a historically and stylistically appropriate interpretation of each piece. You can begin preparing statements for the critical elements within all periods such as dynamics, articulations, ornamentation, pedaling and how they differ within each period. Adhere to the 150–300 word limit.

F. A discussion of appropriate practice strategies and/or memory techniques. Determine a good general practice plan for both learning and memorizing a piece. Most teachers have a general procedure which they find the most efficient for both aspects. Outline the plans and when the music arrives, you can fill in the musical examples appropriate to the plan.

**When all assignments are completed, you are ready to send your application to MTNA.**

## Certification 101 - Profile Projects Check-list

### **Project #1 – Write Your Teaching Philosophy (maximum 600 words)**

- Philosophy of teaching statement
  - How you teach
  - Why you teach as you do
  - Goals and expectations
  - Choices and preferences
  
- Statement about at least one additional topic

**Project #2–Analyze Four Teaching Pieces (maximum 300 words per question per composition) (Pieces are provided by MTNA.)**

**For each of the four pieces:**

- Explore the piece
  - Life of composer
  - Composer’s compositional style
  - Characteristics of the era
- Discuss elements of theory to discuss with the student
  - Form, keys, cadence locations and types, modulations, interesting or unusual harmonies
- Discuss at least three skills a student must possess to successfully play each piece
- Discuss the historical and stylistic interpretation
  - Dynamic levels, articulations, pedaling, rubato, etc.
- Discuss at least 4 potential reading and/or technical difficulties AND Discuss strategies you would specifically use to solve each problem.
- Discuss appropriate practice strategies and/or memory sections.
  - Mark the areas and explain why you marked the particular areas.

**Project #3–Present Your Teaching**

- Three videos of a student lesson**
  - One 30-minute lesson of early stages of teaching a new piece with supporting technique, theory, and other elements for a well-rounded lesson
  - One 15-minute segment with the same student further into the process of working on the piece
  - One 15-minute segment with same student finishing and polishing the piece

**For each of the three videos provide:**

- An outline or synopsis of the lesson
- A list of materials used in the lesson
- A written self-evaluation of each lesson (maximum 300 words)
  - Discuss at least three points from the given list
- A discussion of your goals for the student in repertoire, theory and technique.
- Documentation (inclusion) of three options of teaching assessments
- A 5 to 10-minute video of your playing**

**Project #4–Share Information About Your Teaching Environment**

- A discussion of how you encourage a positive teaching environment (maximum 300 words)

- Documentation (photographs, videos) of at least 3 resources to promote the environment
- A discussion of how you use the above three resources (maximum 100 words)

**Project #5–Discuss Your Studio Business Ethics and Policies**

- A discussion for each of the three ethical scenarios found in the Projects Workbook
- Your studio policy
- A list of questions and activities for the interview for a beginning student and family members
- A list of questions and activities for the interview for a transfer student and family members
- A hypothetical annual budget for your studio

