

ASTA Standards for Successful School String/Orchestra Teachers: An Overview and Resources for String Teachers' Professional Growth

In the August 2015 issue of *American String Teacher (AST)*, the American String Teachers Association (ASTA) published an updated version of the National Standards for Successful School String/Orchestra Teachers. The importance of these revised ASTA national standards for string and orchestra teachers were explained thusly: (a) Standards clearly define skills and knowledge necessary for the successful teaching of strings and orchestras in schools.; (b) Coupled with the *ASTA Curriculum: Standards, Goals, and Learning Sequences for Essential Skills and Knowledge for K12 String Programs*, the revised ASTA standards provide clear benchmarks for those assessing the quality of string teachers' teaching, and (c) Standards provide universities with a framework for determining the content and experiences necessary for preparing music education students for successful string teaching careers.

The purpose of this article is to make readers aware of the revised ASTA standards. It is hoped that better understanding of revised ASTA standards may be helpful to string and orchestra teachers, school administrators, university faculty, and those in charge of organizing state music teachers' conferences when organizing their actions pertained to string teaching. This article will also provide readers with a list of resources that are deemed to be useful to readers' efforts in accomplishing of the standards' propositions.

A Brief History of the National Standards for Successful School String and Orchestra Teachers

With periodic fluctuations, orchestra instruction in American schools has enjoyed continuous popularity since the early twentieth century (Humphrey, May, & Nelson, 1992; Turner 2001; Hamann & Gillespie, 2004). At the same time, the shortage of string teachers, the need for improving the quality of string teachers' training, and the commitment to advancing the image of the string teaching profession, seems to be three reoccurring themes discussed at music symposia (e.g. Tanglewood Symposia on String Teaching, 1963 and 1964; Loyola Symposium, 1986 & 1995; Wichita State University, 1996; ASTA/Ohio State University Symposium 1997) (Gillespie, 1997). Also affiliated are discussions of three reoccurring themes at professional organization meetings (e.g. Music Educators National Conference (MENC) Ad Hoc Committee on Strings and Orchestra Education, 1987-1995 produced video tape titled *More Than Music*), related conferences sessions (e.g. "Changing String Teacher Training to Meet the Need of the Year 2000 and Beyond" session at the ASTA National Convention in Rochester, 1995) (Gillespie, 1997) and the related research (Leonhard, 1991; Hamann & Gillespie, 1995; Smith, 1995).

Cosponsored by ASTA and the Ohio State University, the symposium was held in October of 1997 with the aim to produce a document that would delineate guidelines for the string teaching community.

This document was meant to address a string teacher shortage, the need for the improvement of their training and the need for the advancement of the image of the string teaching profession.

Over the period of two years (1997-1998)

Dr. Robert Gillespie, university educator from the Ohio State University, led over 300 people (school teachers, private teachers, university string educators, university applied teachers, and administrators) who participated in the development of the original ASTA standards in development of the first standards for string and orchestra teachers. These standards were officially adopted by ASTA and the National School Orchestra Association (NSOA) and endorsed by MENC and were published in : *Standards for the Preparation of School Orchestra String and Orchestra Teachers* in 1998.

In 2014, along with string educators Winifred Crock (Parkways Schools, St. Louis) and Sarah Black (Gwinnett County Schools, Atlanta), Dr. Gillespie was appointed to revise and update the original standards. Slight, yet substantive, changes were made to the original document, and after the ASTA National Board reviewed the updates and revisions, standards were adopted (January 2015) and subsequently published in *AST* (August 2015) as *ASTA Standards for Successful School String/Orchestra Teachers*.

Content of the Standards

As in the original 1998 standards, the 2015 standards are organized in three sections: (a) String Teacher as a Musician, (b) String Teacher as an Educator, and (c) String Teacher as a Professional. Each of these three sections propose a list of skills and knowledge that successful string teachers should have and strive for.

The String Teacher as a Musician section proposes a list of nine items to include: performing, aural and conducting skills, and understanding the principles of performance injury prevention. *The String Teacher as an Educator* section proposes a list of 17 items that includes skills and knowledge related to string pedagogy and general teaching, understanding of the *National Core Arts Standards: Dance, Media Arts, Theatre and Visual Arts*, and skills related to applying technology in string and orchestra classes. *The String Teacher as a Professional* is organized in four subcategories: a) Growth and Development, b) Professional Affiliations and Related Activities, c) Advocacy, School, and Community Relations, and d) Personal Attributes. Each subcategory held a list of items (for total of 11 items) including professional development as an ongoing goal and an increased importance of advocacy.



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To view the complete list of *ASTA Standards for Successful School String/Orchestra Teachers* go to:

www.astaweb.com/Public/Member_Resources/ASTA_Teacher_Standards.aspx

Resource List for String Teachers

The following is a limited list of resources that readers may find useful to their efforts to meet the propositions of the 2015 ASTA Standards. Proposed resources are organized in three subsections: String Curriculum, String Instruction, and Assessment in String Classes.

Resources for String Curriculum:

Printed Materials:

Benham, S. J., Wagner, M. L., Aten, J. L. *ASTA String Curriculum: Standards, Goals, and Learning Sequences for Essential Skills and Knowledge in K-12 String Programs*, 2011.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe J. *Understanding by Design*, 1998.

On-Line Resources:

New Core Music Standards: www.nafme.org/my-classroom/standards/

Oregon Department of Education (ODE) *The Arts-Standards*:

www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=1708.

Resources for String Instruction:

Textbooks:

Green, E. A. *Teaching Stringed Instruments in Classes*. Englewood Cliff, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.

Donald, H. I. & Robert G. *Strategies for Teaching Strings: Building a Successful String and Orchestra Program*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.

String pedagogy videos:

Rolland, P. (2008). *The Teaching of Action In String Playing* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States of America: University of Illinois String Research Project.

Fisher, S. (2010). *The Secrets of Tone Production on All Bowed String Instruments* [Motion picture on DVD]. United Kingdom: Craxton Studios.

Zweig, M. (2007). *Mimi Zweig: String Pedagogy* [Motion picture on DVD]. United States: Riax Studios.

String pedagogy summer workshops:

Indiana University: *Retreat for Violin and Viola Teachers*

Intensive string pedagogy retreat that provides an overview of Shinichi Suzuki, Paul Rolland, and Mimi Zweig's pedagogical approaches.

July 1-July 10, 2016, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

<http://music.indiana.edu/precollege/adult/violin-viola/index.shtml>

George Mason University: *Rolland String Rolland Workshop*

Focuses on teaching principles and techniques of legendary Paul Rolland.

June 24-June 26, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA.

<http://potomacacademy.gmu.edu/teacher-training/rolland/>

Foundation for the Advancement of String Education: *Bornoff String Teachers' Workshop*

Focuses on the teaching strategies, materials, and philosophy of acclaimed string pedagogue George Bornoff. June 19-June 24, Charlottesville, VA.

www.fase.org/index.php/about/latest-news/58-summer-workshop-schedule

Suzuki Association of Americas: *Suzuki in the Schools Workshop*

Summer workshops for string educators:

Ohio University String Teachers Workshop

Designed for string specialists and orchestra teachers as well as band and choir directors who teach strings. July 10-July 16, 2016. Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

<https://music.osu.edu/outreach/osu-stw>

Birch Bay String Teachers Workshop

Designed for string specialists and orchestra teachers as well as band and choir directors who teach strings.

August 1-August 5, 2016, Ferndale, WA.

www.birchbaystringteachers.com/#!/

Resources for String Curriculum

Resources for Development of Assessment Tools Based on Three Taxonomies of Educational Domains (Cognitive, Psychomotor, and Affective Domains):

Assessment Based on Three Taxonomies:

www.assessment.uconn.edu/primer/taxonomies1.html

Developed by University of Connecticut

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) with cognitive process and knowledge dimensions explained:

www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/effective-teaching-practices/revised-blooms-taxonomy

Developed by Iowa State University, Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

A Model of Learning Objectives:

www.celt.iastate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/RevisedBloomsHandout-1.pdf

Developed by Iowa State University, Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

References

Gillespie, R. (1997). "String teacher training: Using history to guide the future." *American String Teacher*, 47(1), 62-66.

Gillespie, R. (1998). "National standards for successful school string and orchestral teachers." *American String Teacher*, 48(3), 30-31.

Gillespie, R. (2015). "The ASTA national standards for successful school string and orchestra teaching, updated: 2015 and beyond: Here we come!" *American String Teacher*, 65(3), 50-52.

Smith, C. (1995). "The status of undergraduate string teacher education in American colleges and universities." *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 43, 139-56.

Turner, K. (2001). "A history of string programs." *American String Teacher*, 5(3), 74-81.

