

FESTIVAL JUDGING GUIDELINES

Please take a moment to read these suggestions. The festivals are our way of taking stock of our students' progress. We all need to approach judging in a professional manner, while maintaining an encouraging experience for young musicians.

- In general, use these guidelines for grading:

Superior: Well played. **This does not have to be a perfect performance**, but it should show evidence of good preparation, with mostly secure memory, accurate rhythm, and sensitivity to the dynamics at the higher levels (don't overemphasize this at the Primary levels). If one piece was wonderful, and the other had several problems, a "Superior -" can be awarded. Reward an outstanding performance with a "Superior +".

Excellent: The student can get through the pieces, but with several insecurities. Rhythm may have errors, there may be some memorization problems, and dynamics may be minimal. Be specific in stating why you are giving this grade.

Satisfactory (and lower): After several tries, the student cannot complete the pieces. Memory is seriously flawed. Hopefully, there was still some evidence of accurate rhythm, fingering, hand position, or dynamics so that some positive comment can be made. Be very specific in stating why you are giving this grade.

"Red Check" and "Specially Capable" Students: Be aware that students with these designations should be given more "forgiveness" in their ratings.

- **Be sure to judge quickly as well as thoroughly. While it is important to write meaningful comments, try to keep to the schedule. Avoid getting involved in conversations.**
- Check the piano before you begin to judge. Look out for sticking notes, pedal problems, etc. If the piano has serious problems, let the center head know.
- Welcome the student with a smile and a hello. Ask them if they want to move the bench. They can usually make the needed adjustment for themselves.
- If a student arrives with photo copies of the music, ask them to return to the desk. This is ground for disqualification and will be handled by the center head.
- **The Festival is not a chance for us to teach.** There should be no verbal comment other than a word or two of encouragement. There should be no attempt to correct hand position, posture, etc. If you feel that something needs attention, note it in writing on the judges' sheet.
- Be generous and kind with your written comments. The students (and teachers) have worked long and hard for this day. Mix your criticisms with other encouraging remarks. Be specific and legible. Try to make age-appropriate comments. Make sure that your grade is reflected in the comments.
- Look for the beginnings of musicianship in the Primary level students. We can't expect all beginners to play with the sophistication of the more advanced students.
- Be sensitive to nervousness. Some performers have more trouble than others do with nerves. If after two attempts a student is unable to play with continuity, "Superior" should probably not be awarded. Suggest in your written comments that the student should try their pieces out for an audience as much as possible.

- **Scale recommendations for piano solos** are just that - recommendations. The teacher may alter these to meet the needs of each student.
- **Watch for a red check in the upper corner of the Rating Sheet.** This indicates a disability or learning problem of some sort. Please adjust your comments and grading appropriately. **Please note that the student does not know what the red check means.**
- Use a “Superior +” to reward a particularly fine performance. A “Superior -” can also be given to indicate that the playing, while mostly good, had moments that were not up to par. Pluses and minuses can be used with any of the grades.
- **Under no circumstances should a judge have physical contact with the student.** No pats on the back, no hugs, etc. These leave us open to harassment charges.
- Judges should not talk to parent or teachers about the auditions. If approached, please refer questions to the center head.
- A judge may not bring a child to be left unattended while they are judging.

Thank you for the time, energy, and musical insight that you contribute to the festivals!

Junior Festival Chairman