

WSMTA Music Literacy Program Curriculum Guide

Modified Tests for Strings and Other Instruments As Noted

Revised 2025, used with permission from Kansas Music Teachers Association ©

Rhythm Level Guide – All Instruments

For all levels, the provided 4 measure rhythm will be clapped/tapped at a metronome tempo of at least 72, preferably with a measure of preparatory counting. Any counting method is allowed, as long as it is correct.

- Level 1 Rhythm may include quarter, half or whole notes in 4/4 time
- Level 2 Rhythm may include quarter notes and rests, half notes and rests, dotted half notes and whole notes in 4/4 time
- Level 3 Rhythm may include eighth note pairs, quarter, half, whole notes and rests, dotted half notes and tied notes in 3/4 or 4/4 time
- Level 4 Rhythm may include upbeats, eighth, quarter, dotted quarter and half, whole notes and rests in 4/4 time
- Level 5 Rhythm may include eighth, quarter, half and whole notes and rests, dotted quarter notes, eighth note triplets and upbeats in 4/4 time
- Level 6 Rhythm may include sixteenth notes (only groups of 4), eighth, quarter, dotted quarter and half, whole notes and rests, upbeats and eighth note triplets in 3/4, 4/4 or 6/8 time
- Level 7 Right hand rhythm may include sixteenth, eighth, dotted eighth, quarter, half and whole notes and rests, eighth note triplets and upbeats, while the left hand taps steady quarter notes in 3/4 or 4/4 time
- Level 8 Hands tap different rhythms simultaneously, may include any combination of notes and rests including sixteenths and upbeats (excluding triplets) in any meter
- Level 9 Hands tap different rhythms simultaneously, may include any combination of notes and rests including sixteenths, triplets and upbeats in any meter
- Level 10 Hands tap different rhythms simultaneously, may include any combination of notes and rests including sixteenths, triplets, upbeats and duple versus triple patterns between hands

Sight Reading Level Guide – *Violin and Other Treble Instruments**

**Key signatures and note ranges for lower levels are determined by the order that notes are learned on violin. Lowest note will be G3 (lowest violin string).*

Excerpts for each level are approximately the same grade of difficulty as repertoire selections for the prior level. Scoring for most levels is based on continuity, note accuracy, rhythm accuracy and bowings (on violin). Bonus points can be awarded for dynamics and suggested fingerings.

- Level 1
- Play an 8 measure piece.
 - Key of D, notes from D4 to D5 only (violin D and A strings), with no accidentals.
 - Rhythms will include quarter, half and whole notes.

- Level 2
- Play an 8 measure piece.
 - Will include notes from G3 to B5 in the keys of D, A or G, with no accidentals.
 - Rhythms may include quarter notes and rests, half notes and rests, dotted half notes, eighth note pairs and whole notes.
 - No slurs.

- Level 3
- Play an 8-12 measure piece.
 - Two-octave range; keys of G, D, A, C or F major; no shifting (violin).
 - Will include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - Includes dynamic changes, slurs and ties.

- Level 4
- Play an 8-12 measure piece.
 - The key may have up to 3 sharps or 2 flats, major or minor, with notes from G3 to D6. May include accidentals.
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - (Violin) Includes some fingerings for 3rd position shifting; following the suggested fingerings will not be scored.

- Level 5
- Play a 12-16 measure piece.
 - The key may have up to 3 sharps or 2 flats, major or minor, with notes from G3 to D6. May include accidentals.
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - (Violin) Includes some fingerings for 3rd position shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.

- Level 6
- Play an early intermediate level piece (12-16 measures).
 - Keys up to 3#/3b. Range G3 to E6 (violin: 3rd position extension).
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - (Violin) Includes some fingerings for 3rd position shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.

(Treble Clef Sight Reading, continued)

- Level 7 - Play an intermediate level piece (16-20 measures).
- Keys up to 3#/3b. Range G3 to E6 (violin: 3rd position extension).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- (Violin) Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 8 - Play a mid-intermediate piece (16-24 measures).
- Keys up to 3#/3b. Range G3 to E6 (violin: 4th position).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- (Violin) Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 9 - Play an upper intermediate level piece (16-24 measures).
- Keys up to 3#/3b. Range G3 to E6 (violin: 4th position).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- (Violin) Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 10 - Play an upper intermediate/lower advanced level piece (16-24 measures).
- Keys up to 4#/4b. Range G3 to F6 (Violin: 5th position).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- (Violin) Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.

Sight Reading Level Guide – Viola (Alto Clef)

**Key signatures and note ranges for lower levels are determined by the order that notes are learned on viola. Lowest note will be C3 (lowest viola string).*

Excerpts for each level are approximately the same grade of difficulty as repertoire selections for the prior level. Scoring for most levels is based on continuity, note accuracy, rhythm accuracy and bowings. Bonus points can be awarded for dynamics and suggested fingerings.

- Level 1
- Play an 8 measure piece.
 - Key of D, notes from D4 to D5 only (viola D and A strings), with no accidentals.
 - Rhythms will include quarter, half and whole notes.
- Level 2
- Play an 8 measure piece.
 - Will include notes from C3 to E5 (viola C, G, D, A strings, high 2nd fingers) in the keys of C, D, or G, with no accidentals.
 - Rhythms may include quarter notes and rests, half notes and rests, dotted half notes, eighth note pairs and whole notes.
 - No slurs.
- Level 3
- Play an 8-12 measure piece.
 - Two-octave range; keys of G, D, C or F major; no shifting.
 - Will include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - Includes dynamic changes, slurs and ties.
- Level 4
- Play an 8-12 measure piece.
 - The key may have up to 3 sharps or 3 flats, major or minor, with notes from C3 to G5. May include accidentals.
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - Includes some fingerings for 3rd position shifting; following the suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 5
- Play a 12-16 measure piece.
 - The key may have up to 3 sharps or 3 flats, major or minor, with notes from C3 to G5. May include accidentals.
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - Includes some fingerings for 3rd position shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 6
- Play an early intermediate level piece (12-16 measures).
 - Keys up to 3#/3b. Range C3 to A5 (3rd position extension).
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - Includes some fingerings for 3rd position shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.

(Alto Clef Sight Reading, continued)

- Level 7 - Play an intermediate level piece (16-20 measures).
- Keys up to 3#/3b. Range C3 to A5 (3rd position extension).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 8 - Play a mid-intermediate piece (16-24 measures).
- Keys up to 3#/3b. Range C3 to A5 (4th position).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 9 - Play an upper intermediate level piece (16-24 measures).
- Keys up to 3#/3b. Range C3 to A5 (4th position).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- (Violin) Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.
- Level 10 - Play an upper intermediate/lower advanced level piece (16-24 measures).
- Keys up to 4#/4b. Range C3 to B5 (5th position).
- May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
- Includes some fingerings for shifting; following suggested fingerings will not be scored.

Sight Reading Level Guide – Cello/String Bass and Other Bass Instruments

**Key signatures and note ranges for lower levels are determined by the order that notes are learned on cello and string bass. Lowest printed note will be E2 (lowest bass string).*

Excerpts for each level are approximately the same grade of difficulty as repertoire selections for the prior level. Scoring for most levels is based on continuity, note accuracy, rhythm accuracy and bowings. Bonus points can be awarded for dynamics and suggested fingerings.

- Level 1
- Play an 8 measure piece.
 - Cello: Key of D, notes from D3 to D4 only (D and A strings), with no accidentals.
 - String Bass: Key of G, no accidentals
 - Rhythms will include quarter, half and whole notes.

- Level 2
- Play an 8 measure piece.
 - Cello: May include notes from E2 to E4 in the keys of C, D, or G, with no accidentals.
 - String Bass: May include notes from E2 to B3 in the keys of C, D or G, no accidentals
 - Rhythms may include quarter notes and rests, half notes and rests, dotted half notes, eighth note pairs and whole notes.
 - No slurs.

- Level 3
- Play an 8-12 measure piece.
 - Two-octave range; keys of G, D, C or F major; no shifting.
 - Will include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.
 - Includes dynamic changes, slurs and ties.

- Level 4
- Play an 8-12 measure piece.
 - The key may have up to 3 sharps or 3 flats, major or minor, with printed notes up to G4. May include accidentals.
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.

- Level 5
- Play a 12-16 measure piece.
 - The key may have up to 3 sharps or 3 flats, major or minor, with printed notes up to G4. May include accidentals.
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.

- Level 6
- Play an early intermediate level piece (12-16 measures).
 - Keys up to 3#/3b. Range C3 to A5 (3rd position extension).
 - May include the same rhythms for this level as listed in the Rhythm section above.

Sight Reading above Level 6 for Cello-String Bass-Bass Clef has not yet been developed.

Technique (Scales and Arpeggios) Level Guide – *Violin/Viola/Cello/Bass**

**As recommended by RCM (Royal Conservatory) and ASTA (American Strings Teachers Assoc.)*

Levels 1 – 10:

The actual testing sheets are available to use for preparation. They detail the number of scales, which keys, and how many octaves must be prepared for each instrument at each level, as well as tempos, slurring and arpeggio types.

Written Theory Level Guide – *Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass, And Other Treble and Bass Clef Instruments*

Questions written specifically for string instruments are in italics.

- Level 1
- Identify the number of beats for quarter notes and rests, half notes and whole notes
 - Recognize and give definitions for forte and piano symbols
 - Identify note direction as up, down, or repeat
 - Give the letter names of notes on the staff (treble, alto or bass) in key of D. Highest and lowest notes no more than 2 ledger lines above and below the staff.
 - *Give the letter names of notes on a fingerboard diagram:
Violin, Viola, Cello: All open strings and notes in the D major scale on the D and A strings.
String Bass: All open strings and notes in the G major scale only.*
 - *Identify half and whole steps on a fingerboard diagram ,customized for each instrument.*
- Level 2
- Identify the number of beats for quarter notes and rests, half notes and rests, dotted half notes, and whole notes and rests
 - Write in the counting for rhythm examples in 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4 meter
 - Recognize and give the definitions for forte and piano symbols, legato and staccato
 - Give the letter names of notes on the staff (treble, alto, bass) from the scales required for this level, by instrument.
 - *Give the letter names of notes on a fingerboard diagram for your instrument, encompassing lowest to highest string and notes included in scales for this level.*
 - Draw sharp, flat and natural signs
- Level 3
- Write in the counting for rhythm examples in 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4 meter. Rhythms may include paired eighth notes, quarter notes and rests, half notes and rests, dotted half notes, and whole notes and rests.
 - Recognize and/or give the definitions for piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte and forte symbols
 - Identify ties and slurs
 - Explain the meaning of the numbers in a time signature
 - Draw sharp, flat and natural symbols on the staff in proper placement
 - Draw note stems on note heads in the correct direction and on correct side
 - Give the letter names of notes on the staff, with accidentals. Notes are selected from those included in required scales for this level, per instrument.
 - Identify intervals of whole or half steps between notes with accidentals on the staff (same note range as above)

(Written Theory, continued)

- Level 4**
- Write in the counting for rhythm examples in 2/4, 3/4 or 4/4 meter. Rhythms may include eighth notes pairs, quarter notes and rests, dotted quarter followed by eighth note, half notes and rests, dotted half notes, whole notes and rests and upbeat
 - Recognize and/or give the definitions for pianissimo, piano, mezzo piano, mezzo forte, forte and fortissimo symbols
 - Explain the meaning of the numbers in a time signature
 - Recognize and give the definitions for accent, staccato, D.C. al Fine, *arco* and *pizz.*
 - Give the letter names of notes on the staff, with accidentals. Notes are selected from those included in required scales for this level, per instrument.
 - Write the pattern of whole and half steps for major and natural minor scales.
- Level 5**
- Write in the counting for rhythm examples in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 3/8 or 6/8 meter. Rhythms may include eighth notes and rests, quarter notes and rests, dotted quarter followed by eighth note, half notes and rests, dotted half notes, whole notes and rests, eighth note triplets and upbeats.
 - Write 4-note arpeggios on the staff in same keys as scales for this level.
 - Identify major key signatures up to 5# and 5b
 - Add sharps/flats to natural notes on the staff to create ascending scales in keys for this level, including harmonic, natural and melodic minors
 - Identify arpeggios on the staff by key and as major or minor, from scale keys for this level.
- Level 6**
- Using examples provided, complete the measures by filling in the missing beats. Examples may be in any meter.
 - Write one-octave major and minor ascending scales in selected keys up to required Level 6 Technique scales. Minors may be natural, melodic or harmonic.
 - Identify major key signatures and give the relative minors in keys up to 5#'s and 5b's.
 - Write major key signatures up to 5#'s and 5b's.
 - Identify intervals with distances of 3, 5, 6 and 8 and with quality of major, minor or perfect
- Level 7**
- Using examples provided, complete the measures by filling in the missing beats. Examples may be in any meter.
 - Give two enharmonic names of natural notes, using sharp (#), double-sharp (x) flat (^b), or double-flat (^{bb}) symbols.
 - Identify major, minor and perfect intervals on the staff, giving distance and quality, built on any key, up to 3 ledger lines above staff. All intervals from 2-8.
 - Write one-octave major and minor ascending scales (natural and harmonic forms) in any scale key up to Level 7 Technique scales.
 - Identify major key signatures and give the relative minors up to 6#'s and 6b's.
 - Write the sharps in order and the flats in order as they would be added to key signatures. (Teachers please note: this is by letter name and symbol only, not on the staff.)

(Written Theory, continued)

- Level 8**
- Using examples provided, complete the measures by filling in the missing beats. Examples may be in any meter.
 - Write major, natural minor, melodic minor and harmonic minor one-octave ascending scales, beginning on any key
 - Identify and write parallel and relative natural, melodic, harmonic minor scales, one octave
 - Write major, minor and perfect intervals as double-stops in any key, up and down

Level 9 NO DIFFERENTIATION FROM KEYBOARD EXAM

- Write the counting for rhythm examples in any meter; write each half beat into examples using any combination of notes and rests through 32nds, including triplets and upbeats
- Identify major, natural, harmonic and melodic minor, whole tone and pentatonic scales and white key modes
- Write major, natural, harmonic and melodic minor scales, beginning on any key, and white key modes
- Write major, minor and perfect intervals, up and down, from any note
- Write augmented and diminished 4ths, 5ths and 8ves, up and down from any note
- Identify tritones as augmented 4ths or diminished 5ths
- Identify and write major seventh, minor seventh, and dominant seventh chords, root position and inversions, in any key
- Identify the key signature of an excerpt

Level 10 NO DIFFERENTIATION FROM KEYBOARD EXAM

- Write major, natural minor, harmonic minor, melodic minor, whole-tone, chromatic, modal or pentatonic scales, beginning on any key
- Identify and write major, minor, dominant, half-diminished and fully-diminished seventh, root position and inversions, in any key
- Analyze the chords in a hymn; give the chord name for each beat and draw an X through non-harmonic tones
- Identify the key, mode or scale of an excerpt

Ear Training Level Guide – All Instruments, with Accommodations*

**Some questions with piano terminology or advanced theory concepts that may not be covered by specific levels on orchestral instruments are marked as optional on the tests. Explanations of these accommodations are provided at the end of this section.*

Examples will be played 3 times, and all intervals and chords played melodically and harmonically, unless otherwise specified.

- Level 1**
- Identify low, middle and high sounds
 - Identify forte and piano dynamic levels
 - Identify the directions of 5 notes as moving up, moving down, or repeating
 - Listen to an 8 measure example played by the facilitator, then clap along to the steady beat as it is played a second time
 - Identify the general quality of music by choosing the best description(s) from a multiple choice list (i.e. smooth and dreamy, fast and lively etc.)
- Level 2**
- identify staccato and legato
 - identify forte and piano dynamic levels
 - identify the direction of three notes as moving up, moving down, or repeating
 - listen to an 8 measure example, then clap along with the steady beat as it is played a second time
 - OPTIONAL: identify the distance between notes as skips or steps
 - identify the general quality of music by choosing the best description from a multiple choice list (i.e. smooth and dreamy, fast and lively etc...)
- Level 3**
- OPTIONAL: identify intervals by distance: 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th.
 - Identify major vs. minor chords (triads).
 - Select a rhythmic pattern from two written examples. The pattern will be played twice.
 - Add a sharp or flat sign in front of a note to indicate movement up or down
 - Identify the general quality of music in regard to tempo, dynamic, mood and articulation by choosing the best descriptions from a multiple choice list.
(Teachers please note: tempo and dynamic indications use English terms, not Italian.)
- Level 4**
- Identify perfect 4ths, perfect 5ths and perfect octaves, labeling with distance and quality. Each interval will be played 3 times, melodically and harmonically.
 - OPTIONAL: identify intervals by distance only: 2nd, 3rd, 6th.
 - Identify the tonality of a short, early level piece as major or minor.
 - Identify whether the melody in a piano piece is in the treble or the bass.
 - Identify the pulse of a piece of music as having 3 or 4 beats per measure. Example will be an elementary level piece with no eighth notes or upbeats.
 - Rhythmic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be two measures in 4/4 meter, using any combination of quarter, half, dotted half and whole notes.

(Ear Training, continued)

- Level 5 - OPTIONAL: identify intervals by distance (2-8) and quality (P, Major only); partial answers can be given for extra credit.
- Identify the tonality of a short piece or excerpt as major or minor.
 - Identify the pulse of a piece of music as having 3 or 4 beats per measure.
 - Rhythmic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be 2 measures in 4/4 meter, using any combination of eighth, dotted quarter, quarter, half, dotted half and whole notes.
 - Select a melodic pattern from two written examples
- Level 6 - PARTIALLY OPTIONAL: identify intervals, up only, by distance (2-8) and (*optional*) quality (P, Major, minor); full answers can be given for extra credit.
- Identify scales as major, natural minor, harmonic minor, or chromatic
 - Identify the form of an early intermediate level piece as binary (AB) or ternary (ABA)
 - Rhythmic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be 4 measures in 4/4 meter, using any combination of four sixteenths, eighth, dotted quarter, quarter, half, dotted half and whole notes.
 - Melodic dictation: fill in the missing notes in a 4 measure example. Only a treble clef staff is provided for the answer; the notes are in the key of C.
- Level 7 - Identify major and minor intervals, up only; and perfect intervals, up and down; by distance (2-8) and quality (P, M, m).
- Identify the tempo of a piece or excerpt, choosing from a list of Italian terms
 - Rhythmic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be 4 measures in 6/8 meter, using any combination of two sixteenths, eighth, quarter, dotted quarter, and dotted half notes.
 - Melodic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be 4 measures in 4/4 meter, using simple rhythms. The first note is given. Answer can be written on either a treble, bass or alto clef staff.
 - Identify the tonality of a piece or excerpt as major, minor or bitonal
 - Identify the form of a short piece as binary (AB), ternary (ABA) or theme and variations
- Level 8 - Identify the meter of a piece or excerpt as simple (duple) or compound
- Identify major, minor and perfect intervals, up and down, labeling with distance and quality.
 - Identify the tonality of a piece or excerpt as major, minor or modal
 - OPTIONAL: identify whether the texture of a piece is thin, thick/full or imitative.
 - Identify the form of a piece as binary, ternary, rondo or sonata-allegro
 - Rhythmic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be 4 measures in length and will include any combination of sixteenth, eighth, quarter, half and whole notes, including dotted rhythms.
 - Melodic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be 4 measures in 4/4 meter, using simple rhythms. The first note is given. Answer can be written on either a treble, bass or alto clef staff.

(Ear Training, continued)

- Level 9**
- identify the meter of a piece as 3/4, 4/4, 6/8 or multi-metric
 - choose the correct tempo from a multiple-choice list of Italian terms
 - identify the tonality of a piece as major, minor, atonal or modal
 - identify the texture of a piece as monophonic, homophonic, or polyphonic
 - identify the form of a piece as binary, ternary, fugue, sonata-allegro, rondo or through composed
 - identify the style of a piece as Baroque, Classical, Romantic or Contemporary
 - melodic dictation - 4 measures in any meter. The first note is given. Answer can be written on either a treble, bass or alto clef staff.

Level 10 NO DIFFERENTIATION FROM KEYBOARD EXAM

- Describe the following elements of a piece:
 - Pulse
 - Tempo
 - Texture
 - Melody
 - Tonality/harmony
 - Form
 - Style
- Melodic dictation: Write the pattern that you hear. The example will be 4 measures in any meter, in treble clef only.

WSMTA Ear Training Test Accommodations for Other Instruments

The existing Ear Training (“Listening”) tests were developed for piano students, based on the typical learning progression of standard piano methods.

The pre-recorded test questions were not modified in any way when instrumental tests were added to the WSMTA offerings. Instead, accommodations have been made in the instrumental grading rubrics at several Levels, based on reviews of common teaching progressions and other testing programs for strings (ASTA, RCM etc.). Each WSMTA chapter that administers the MLP to instrumental students may decide how to grade the tests for their own students.

Piano teachers sometimes ask why these accommodations have been provided, especially for the Intervals test questions at the intermediate levels. As a violin teacher, I hope this background might be helpful.

Unlike piano method books, strings method books do not provide guided instruction on intervals until Level 3 or beyond, and many method book series stop after Level 3 anyway. String method books have no companion Theory books at all. The MLP tests were originally designed to be a measure of what the average student would be taught by the average teacher at each level, not what a piano teacher thinks a cello student “should” know. This is apparent in how the Rhythm tests were designed for piano students – see below.

For strings students, the way that notes are formed and visualized on an unmarked fingerboard and four strings tuned in fifths (or fourths for string bass) is completely unrelated to how note relationships can be seen and played on a continuous keyboard.

Intonation is a string teacher's biggest challenge into at least Level 4, and best-practice is to teach awareness of the instrument's resonance when fingered notes are in tune with open strings. Properly-tuned whole and half steps, then octaves (where open strings resonate to matching pitches), fifths (tuning strings) and fourths (when learning to shift to their first upper position) are the most important intervals until Level 4-5. Knowing the names of intervals other than Whole/Half/Octave before an intermediate level is not essential to turning written notes into correct finger placements and listening for consonance/resonance. The time a teacher would spend drilling a Level 3 student to aurally identify 3rds vs. 4ths is time we don't have in a lesson to work on their whole-step intonation.

Even at the lower MLP levels, the recordings for the interval test questions play a melodic interval followed immediately by harmonic. This is not how melodic-instrument students hear intervals when they play. String players' first harmonic intervals or "double stops" (Level 4+) are fifths, octaves and sixths, not thirds, fourths or sevenths.

At Level 6, the rubrics for the instrumental tests and the piano tests begin to converge, and by Level 7 an advanced-intermediate instrumental student *could* be expected to be able to identify the same intervals as a piano student. For many string teachers, developing this skill will just not be as important as working on advanced technique and precise-to-the-microtone intonation.

While the Ear Training tests progress in intervallic fluency quicker than most instrumental students are prepared for, the Rhythm tests could be critiqued as not being advanced enough for instrumental students at the early levels. Strings students learn eighth notes practically from the first lesson, sixteenth notes in Level 2, and dotted-quarter-eighth also at Level 1-2. These patterns don't show up until Levels 3, 6 and 5 respectively of MLP Rhythm tests. But at Rhythm Level 8, students are supposed to tap two-hand polyrhythms, and the test is no longer functionally relevant for melodic instruments. This just shows the need to adapt the test to the student, not the other way around. Teachers should feel free to place their students at a higher level for Rhythm than for Theory, for example, or decide that they won't test their instrumental students above level X in some subjects.

The goal for the MLP program, as always, is for students to be successful at whatever testing level their teacher has decided they are ready for.

Jane Melin, NCTM
WSMTA Vocal and Instrumental Chair
2025