

Historical Perspective ~ 1960 to 2000

The 2000 and 1989 revisions of the Handbook of Student Activities retain as much as possible of the format designed by Dr. Amanda Finnell Adams for the 1980 Handbook. Its clarity and orderly progression are already familiar to many FSMTA members.

“Student activities, especially when made concrete and specific through such organized systems as the FSMTA Student Day, High School Auditions, and other related programs, are absolutely essential to our healthy existence as a music teachers’ association. Without constantly coming to grips with problems and possibilities which are relevant to each individual student’s musical well-being, we should become merely a sounding-board for each other’s opinions. Student activities, their success or failure, are the real proof of our value as teachers.

“There will be a continuing need to revise and expand this Syllabus and other visible signs of our involvement with the actual performance of living, genuine music students.”

These are the words of Jane Sterrett, FSMTA President (1965-67) who played an important part in the success of the annual State Student Day. The first State Student Day was held in November, 1966, during her term as President, and many of the students participating in that first day were there through her efforts to make the program succeed.

In 1960, several teachers had expressed the desire to resume the practice of having a student recital on the State convention program. The Executive Board worked out a plan of having each District select one student to perform on the program. However, in the summer preceding this convention, MTNA announced a contest for high school students (now known as High School Auditions). Thus, the first “recital” in 1960 became the first contest for high school students. The following year, MTNA expanded its program to include a contest for college students (now Collegiate Artist Competition) and later announced the Baldwin Junior Keyboard Achievement Award (now Junior High School Performance Competition).

Many members contributed ideas which led to the programs for student participation offered to FSMTA-MTNA members. In 1963, Dr. Elmer P. Magnell, MTNA President (1963-65), conceived the idea of a “festival” for private music students similar to District and State festivals for band, orchestra and choral music students in the public school system. This led to the development of the Studio Participation Plan by Miss Merle Holloway, another Past-President of FSMTA. An expansion of this program led to the first State Student Day in 1966, followed by the first District Student Day in Pensacola in 1967. It would be impossible to list all the teachers who contributed to the success of the Studio Plan, District Student Day, or State Student Day.

During the term of Natalie Adcock, FSMTA President (1967-69), four State contests were initiated: the Chamber Music Contest, the Composition Contest (the plan for which was accepted in 1969 and put into effect in 1970), the Concerto Contest, and the Mrs. M. B. Byrd Memorial Scholarship Award. Since 1972, the Composition Contest has been part of the MTNA program. The Collegiate Chamber Music competition was added in 1988.

In 1969, a committee worked to produce a syllabus which would fully explain the rules and regulations of the Student Activities Programs. Those working on this project were Jane Sterrett, Bernice Hack, Ruth Carrell Johnson, Natalie Adcock and Charles Johnson. The 1970 Handbook of Student Activities covered all student activities in one publication for ready reference by FSMTA members and judges.

By 1973, a revision of the Handbook was necessary. The Association is indebted to the following contest chairmen and committee members for their contributions : Dorothy Reaves and Sarah Gregg (strings), Bernice Hack and Mary Reeder (piano), Jane Sterrett (voice), Rebecca Rodenberg (organ), Mary Roman (brass), Eugene Gonzalez (woodwinds), and James P. Hale (percussion). Rebecca Rodenberg coordinated the High School Honors Program. Charles Johnson devised an Aural Theory Test and provided sample test questions for inclusion in the Handbook.

Special thanks are extended to Lucille Sellars for her contributions to the FSMTA Student Activities Program. The first contest and program by students were held during her term as President in 1960. The first District Student Day took place during her tenure as District Student Activities Chairman of District I. Under her direction as State Student Activities Chairman (1960-72), the first Student Activities Handbook and Judges Manual were published, and a standard rating sheet was adopted for all contests. For the 1976 Handbook she compiled a list of piano sight-reading materials and devised a tally sheet.

The second edition of the Handbook was published while Katheryn Birchfield served as State Chairman (1972-74). Carolyn Lippo, Chairman (1974-76), implemented a statewide program of judging workshops, devised Concerto Certificates, and revised the Certificate of Proficiency. During the term of Ann Holderness (1976-78), the 1976 edition of the Handbook was published, the requirement was passed for recommendation to State Student Day, winners' certificates were first issued for the State Composition Contest, and the Certificate of Progress came into effect. The 1978-79 term was filled by Valetta Fellenbaum, Mae Stetler and William Saunders.

For the 1980 revision of the Student Activities Handbook, under the chairmanship of Dr. Amanda Finnell Adams, Dr. Lillian Pearson prepared sample Aural and Written Theory Examinations, correlating with the twelve levels of Achievement and Proficiency Examinations.

Subsequent Student Activities Chairmen were Marie Hasse (1981-83), Martha Stubbs (1983-85), and Sharon Walker and Elizabeth Von Ende (1985-87). Elizabeth Madden, under a constitutional change, served as the first Vice-President for Student Activities (1987-89). It was during this time that the Mrs. M. B. Byrd Memorial Piano Scholarship Award was replaced by the Byrd Piano Ensemble Award, designed by Norma and Leonard Mastrogiacomo.

During the term of FSMTA President Dr. Budd A. Udell (1985-87), and continued under President Mary Coleman St. John (1987-89), the Student Activities Handbook was expanded. It presented new skills and repertoire for instruments and voice, and a complete revision of the FSMTA Theory Program developed by a statewide committee headed by Bernice Maskin and Elizabeth Sugalski, co-chairpersons. Contributions to this were made by representatives from each district. The Young Collegiate Piano Award was established in 1994 and later named to honor Gray Perry. The Community Service Award was also renamed to honor Leroy Greenspan.

In 1996 the vocal skills and evaluation forms were revised by a committee led by Marie Attwood-McGuire, working with Neil MacLaren, Gene Putnam, Marjorie Gordon and Helen Niedung.

After nearly a decade and depletion of supplies, it became necessary to have another major reprint of the Handbook. In 1997 the Vice-President of Student Activities, Paulette Kilts, conducted a survey to assess the need for any changes. The results of the survey were tabulated by Betty Hines and over the following two years members were invited to discuss the issues that were raised, culminating in the present 2000 edition.