



Professional Certification

Video recording your teaching for the MTNA Certification Teacher Profile Project #3

By Christine Steiner, NCTM

As East Central Division commissioner for the National Certification Commission I support the decision to require the certification candidate to submit video recordings of their teaching, I chose to engage in the video recording process that will be required of all teachers seeking MTNA Professional Certification beginning January 2010. Not only did I want to “practice what I preached”, but I wanted to offer assistance to teachers who might find the idea of

video recording their teaching somewhat intimidating.

It is difficult to look at oneself in a video recording, but imperative for the learning opportunity this project provides. I discovered using the camera to be unsettling, but gained confidence the more I videotaped myself. Here are suggestions based on what I learned during the process.

Video record yourself during a lesson before you video record your teaching.

Record yourself several times. Watch yourself and evaluate what situations or behaviors you want to change. Consider the following:

Are you professionally attired and well-groomed? If you are a woman, avoid low-cut necklines and dangling necklaces that clank when they hit the piano. Wear shoes even if you have the students remove theirs.

Are you making frequent eye contact with the student while giving instruction? Do you avoid nervous gestures, and unusual facial

expressions? Are you crossing your arms too often or pointing with your finger too much?

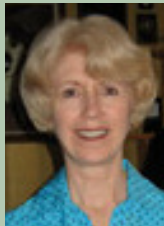
Do you convey confidence in your voice? Avoid dull or high-pitched speaking. Avoid use of filler words such as “O.K.,” “um”, “you know” and others. Do you talk too much? Do you pause to allow the student to respond to your question?

Do you maintain personal space? Are you close enough to the student to be engaged, but not so close you crowd him/her? Do you ask permission to move the student’s hand? (The music tote bag is also their personal space so avoid digging through it without their permission.)

Does your studio look clean and organized? Does your teaching chair allow for freedom of movement as you sit straight and attend? Are the materials you need for the lesson prepared and within easy reach?

Is your answering machine set at low volume so it does not distract? Have you arranged for a special line for your students? Can you

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monitor the need to answer the phone by use of caller ID?

When you are ready to rehearse video recording the student and the lesson, do the following:

- Tune your piano
- Select a student

Choose one or two students you will consider for your final project and who are willing to help you practice the process.

Choose students who will speak up when you ask a question and engage enthusiastically in the lesson.

Practice taping your chosen student(s) weeks before you video record the lessons you will submit for Project #3. Students are more likely to speak up after several taping sessions.

Learn to use your video recording equipment

Use or borrow the best. Mine is not that old, but gave a poor quality picture. If the results are unsatisfactory, try other equipment.

Read the instruction booklet.

Ask a parent in your studio to set you up, help with the video recording and the final transfer to DVD.

Experiment with angles.

Place the video camera in such a way that the certification evaluator can see the student's body, their hands and the face of both student and teacher. Depending on your video camera you may not be able to include the student's feet. The musical score does not need to be seen in the video.

In determining the best angle for video recording you may have to adjust the angle of your piano. You may also need to adjust angles if you typically stand up during your teaching.

Attach an external microphone (required).

The microphone on my video recorder did not pick up the conversation at the piano so I understand why **an external microphone is required**.

Place the microphone so that the voices of both student and teacher are heard clearly. (It is not my purpose here to suggest use of specific equipment, but you may even consider using lavalier microphones.)

Enlist the help of a parent or assistant.

You may set the camera and record the entire session from your predetermined angle or you may wish to have a parent or assistant monitor the video camera. This is especially helpful if you typically move away from the bench for a movement activity or if the student stands up to mark something in their music.

On my camera I was able to rotate the LCD panel 180-degrees allowing me to monitor the LCD screen as I taught, but you don't want to be looking at it all the time to access whether you are getting the picture correct.

During this process you will learn a lot about yourself as a teacher. I guarantee you will adjust how you do things. I certainly did. As you evaluate your work I also recommend you use the materials found in "**Assessment Tools for the Independent Music Teacher**" available from MTNA. ■