



# Achievement in Music Examinations (AIM)

## STRINGS

### Illinois State Strings Exams 2025-2026

#### What are the benefits of taking AIM examinations?

These exams enhance musicianship, develop confidence, and **make a significant difference with college applications and employment search.** Now that **many universities have phased out standardized tests,** and have a wholistic approach to evaluating students, more emphasis is placed on the students with extensive and relevant extracurricular activities, **especially music.** The same is true of the employers. They know that music training is demanding, requires highly developed cognitive and analytical skills, and long-term planning - invaluable skills for demanding college programs and employment. **We recommend that students complete as many levels as possible by the end of their junior year in high school to include the highest-level certificate with their college applications.**

AIM exams are demanding and require daily instrument practice and theory study. The goal is for students to have a positive experience and feel rewarded for their dedication and diligent work. Students receive a certificate for successful completion of the theory and the performance exams. Passing grade is 70% for each portion of the exam. Students can start from any level they are able to pass successfully and can do 2 levels per year with longer lessons and sufficient practice.

#### Mandatory Lesson Time Requirements

Due to the extensive and complex nature of strings AIM exams, they can only be prepared in 30-min or longer individual lessons.

**Mandatory lesson requirements per level: 1-3 = 30 min lesson; 4-6 = 45 min lesson; 7-8 = 1h lesson; 9-10 = 1h 15 min.** Combining multiple levels: **there will be a special mandatory lesson length requirement depending on the levels combined and it's decided by the teacher.** **Mandatory lesson times requirements applicable for quarters 1-4.**

Regular tuition rates apply.

#### Exam Dates

Please inform your teacher about your intention to take the exam as soon as possible. Early preparation is the key to good scores. Registration deadlines are announced in the fall. NMA will send e-mail reminders to all NMA strings students.

#### Strings Exam Dates for academic year 2025-2026:

May 3, 2026.

#### Are there any age limitations?

There is no age limit for strings exams.

#### 2 NMA teachers participating in strings AIM program:

Mrs. Ruth Gordon and Mr. Christopher Castillo.

#### How are the exams structured?

AIM exams are divided by level and content. There are specific technique, theory, and repertoire requirements for each level. Please consult your teacher about the exam level which would be most appropriate for your child.

#### Where are the AIM violin exams held?

The exams are held on NMA premises. You will receive the exam time information from your teacher, about a week before the exam.

#### Who adjudicates the examinations?

Experienced members of The Music Teacher National Association from our area are the adjudicators.

#### Are there any extra fees for AIM exams and materials?

Yes, for levels 1-2, there is a participation fee of \$30 per student per exam, and this fee covers both the theory and the performance portion of the exam. For levels 3-10, there is a \$25 fee for the theory portion of the exam, and \$25 for the performance portion of the exam. The fees are due at registration, payable by check or cash. For payment by credit card, please include an additional \$5 processing fee. There are additional costs for the books and the teachers will advise you how to purchase them.

#### How do I register?

You will be registering with your teacher directly or with NMA. Only individual teachers who are members of MTNA can enter the students into the AIM exams. Please see the fees explanation in the paragraph above.

**Please let us know if we can provide additional information.**

**Talk with your teacher at your earliest convenience to set everything up and order the materials.**  
**The sooner you sign up the greater the chance of the student's success at the examinations.**