

The School Music Program: A New Vision K-12 Standards, and What They Mean to Music Educators

GRADES K-4

Performing, creating, and responding to music are the fundamental music processes in which humans engage. Students, particularly in grades K-4, learn by doing. Singing, playing instruments, moving to music, and creating music enable them to acquire musical skills and knowledge that can be developed in no other way. Learning to read and notate music gives them a skill with which to explore music independently and with others. Listening to, analyzing, and evaluating music are important building blocks of musical learning. Further, to participate fully in a diverse, global society, students must understand their own historical and cultural heritage and those of others within their communities and beyond. Because music is a basic expression of human culture, every student should have access to a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential program of study in music.

Terms identified by an asterisk (*) are explained in the glossary. The standards in this section describe the cumulative skills and knowledge expected of all students upon exiting grade 4. Students in the earlier grades should engage in developmentally appropriate learning experiences designed to prepare them to achieve these standards at grade 4. Determining the curriculum and the specific instructional activities necessary to achieve the standards is the responsibility of states, local school districts, and individual teachers.

1. Content Standard: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. sing independently, on pitch and in rhythm, with appropriate timbre, diction, and posture, and maintain a steady tempo
- b. sing *expressively, with appropriate dynamics, phrasing, and interpretation
- c. sing from memory a varied repertoire of songs representing *genres and *styles from diverse cultures
- d. sing ostinatos, partner songs, and rounds
- e. sing in groups, blending vocal timbres, matching dynamic levels, and responding to the cues of a conductor

2. Content Standard: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. perform on pitch, in rhythm, with appropriate dynamics and timbre, and maintain a steady tempo
- b. perform easy rhythmic, melodic, and chordal patterns accurately and independently on rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic *classroom instruments
- c. perform expressively a varied repertoire of music representing diverse genres and styles
- d. echo short rhythms and melodic patterns

e. perform in groups, blending instrumental timbres, matching dynamic levels, and responding to the cues of a conductor

f. perform independent instrumental parts¹ while other students sing or play contrasting parts

3. Content Standard: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. improvise “answers” in the same style to given rhythmic and melodic phrases

b. improvise simple rhythmic and melodic ostinato accompaniments

c. improvise simple rhythmic variations and simple melodic embellishments on familiar melodies

d. improvise short songs and instrumental pieces, using a variety of sound sources, including traditional sounds, nontraditional sounds available in the classroom, body sounds, and sounds produced by electronic means²

4. Content Standard: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. create and arrange music to accompany readings or dramatizations

b. create and arrange short songs and instrumental pieces within specified guidelines³

c. use a variety of sound sources when composing

5. Content Standard: Reading and notating music

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. read whole, half, dotted half, quarter, and eighth notes and rests in 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 meter signatures

b. use a system (that is, syllables, numbers, or letters) to read simple pitch notation in the treble clef in major keys

c. identify symbols and traditional terms referring to dynamics, tempo, and articulation and interpret them correctly when performing

d. use standard symbols to notate meter, rhythm, pitch, and dynamics in simple patterns presented by the teacher

6. Content Standard: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. identify simple music forms when presented aurally

b. demonstrate perceptual skills by moving, by answering questions about, and by describing aural examples of music of various styles representing diverse cultures

c. use appropriate terminology in explaining music, music notation, music instruments and voices, and music performances

d. identify the sounds of a variety of instruments, including many orchestra and band instruments, and instruments from various cultures, as well as children's voices and male and female adult voices

e. respond through purposeful movement⁴ to selected prominent music characteristics⁵ or to specific music events⁶ while listening to music

7. Content Standard: Evaluating music and music performances

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. devise criteria for evaluating performances and compositions

b. explain, using appropriate music terminology, their personal preferences for specific musical works and styles

8. Content Standard: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. identify similarities and differences in the meanings of common terms⁷ used in the various arts

b. identify ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music⁸

9. Content Standard: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. identify by genre or style aural examples of music from various historical periods and cultures

b. describe in simple terms how *elements of music are used in music examples from various cultures of the world⁹

c. identify various uses of music in their daily experiences¹⁰ and describe characteristics that make certain music suitable for each use

d. identify and describe roles of musicians¹¹ in various music settings and cultures

e. demonstrate audience behavior appropriate for the context and style of music performed

Notes:

1. E.g., simple rhythmic or melodic ostinatos, contrasting rhythmic lines, harmonic progressions and chords.

2. E.g., traditional sounds: voices, instruments; nontraditional sounds: paper tearing, pencil tapping; body sounds: hands clapping, fingers snapping; sounds produced by electronic means: personal computers and basic *MIDI devices, including keyboards, sequencers, synthesizers, and drum machines.

3. E.g., a particular style, form, instrumentation, compositional technique

4. E.g., swaying, skipping, dramatic play

5. E.g., meter, dynamics, tempo

6. E.g., meter changes, dynamic changes, same/different sections

7. E.g., form, line, contrast

8. E.g., foreign languages: singing songs in various languages; language arts: using the expressive elements of music in interpretive readings; mathematics: mathematical basis of values of notes, rests, and meter signatures; science: vibration of strings, drum heads, or air columns generating sounds used in music; geography: songs associated with various countries or regions

9. E.g., Navajo, Arabic, Latin American

10. E.g., celebration of special occasions, background music for television, worship

11. E.g., orchestra conductor, folksinger, church organist

GRADES 5-8

The period represented by grades 5-8 is especially critical in students' musical development. The music they perform or study often becomes an integral part of their personal musical repertoire. Composing and improvising provide students with unique insight into the form and structure of music and at the same time help them to develop their creativity. Broad experience with a variety of music is necessary if students are to make informed musical judgments. Similarly, this breadth of background enables them to begin to understand the connections and relationships between music and other disciplines. By understanding the cultural and historical forces that shape social attitudes and behaviors, students are better prepared to live and work in communities that are increasingly multicultural. The role that music will play in students' lives depends in large measure on the level of skills they achieve in creating, performing, and listening to music.

Terms identified by an asterisk (*) are explained in the glossary. Except as noted, the standards in this section describe the cumulative skills and knowledge expected of all students upon exiting grade 8. Students in grades 5-7 should engage in developmentally appropriate learning experiences to prepare them to achieve these standards at grade 8. These standards presume that the students have achieved the standards specified for grades K-4; they assume that the students will demonstrate higher levels of the expected skills and knowledge, will deal with increasingly complex music, and will provide more sophisticated responses to works of music. Every course in music, including performance courses, should provide instruction in creating, performing, listening to, and analyzing music, in addition to focusing on its specific subject matter. Determining the curriculum and the specific instructional activities necessary to achieve the standards is the responsibility of states, local school districts, and individual teachers.

1. Content Standard: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. sing accurately and with good breath control throughout their singing ranges, alone and in small and large ensembles

b. sing with *expression and *technical accuracy a repertoire of vocal literature with a *level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6, including some songs performed from memory

c. sing music representing diverse *genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed

d. sing music written in two and three parts Students who participate in a choral ensemble

e. sing with expression and technical accuracy a varied repertoire of vocal literature with a level of difficulty of 3, on a scale of 1 to 6, including some songs performed from memory

2. Content Standard: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. perform on at least one instrument¹ accurately and independently, alone and in small and large ensembles, with good posture, good playing position, and good breath, bow, or stick control
- b. perform with expression and technical accuracy on at least one string, wind, percussion, or *classroom instrument a repertoire of instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6
- c. perform music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed
- d. play by ear simple melodies on a melodic instrument and simple accompaniments on a harmonic instrument

Students who participate in an instrumental ensemble or class

- e. perform with expression and technical accuracy a varied repertoire of instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 3, on a scale of 1 to 6, including some solos performed from memory

3. Content Standard: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. improvise simple harmonic accompaniments
- b. improvise melodic embellishments and simple rhythmic and melodic variations on given pentatonic melodies and melodies in major keys
- c. improvise short melodies, unaccompanied and over given rhythmic accompaniments, each in a consistent *style, meter, and tonality

4. Content Standard: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. compose short pieces within specified guidelines,² demonstrating how the elements of music are used to achieve unity and variety, tension and release, and balance
- b. arrange simple pieces for voices or instruments other than those for which the pieces were written
- c. use a variety of traditional and nontraditional sound sources and electronic media when composing and arranging

5. Content Standard: Reading and notating music
Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. read whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, and dotted notes and rests in 2/4 , 3/4 , 4/4 , 6/8 , 3/8 , and alla breve meter signatures
- b. read at sight simple melodies in both the treble and bass clefs

c. identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression

d. use standard notation to record their musical ideas and the musical ideas of others

Students who participate in a choral or instrumental ensemble or class

e. sightread, accurately and expressively, music with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6

6. Content Standard: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. describe specific music events³ in a given aural example, using appropriate terminology

b. analyze the uses of *elements of music in aural examples representing diverse genres and cultures

c. demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of meter, rhythm, tonality, intervals, chords, and harmonic progressions in their analyses of music

7. Content Standard: Evaluating music and music performances

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. develop criteria for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of music performances and compositions and apply the criteria in their personal listening and performing

b. evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their own and others' performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations by applying specific criteria appropriate for the style of the music and offer constructive suggestions for improvement

8. Content Standard: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. compare in two or more arts how the characteristic materials of each art⁴ can be used to transform similar events, scenes, emotions, or ideas into works of art

b. describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music⁵

9. Content Standard: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Achievement Standard:

Students

a. describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures⁶

b. classify by genre and style (and, if applicable, by historical period, composer, and title) a varied body of exemplary (that is, high-quality and characteristic) musical works and explain the characteristics that cause each work to be considered exemplary

c. compare, in several cultures of the world, functions music serves, roles of musicians,⁷ and conditions under which music is typically performed

Notes:

1. E.g., band or orchestra instrument, keyboard instrument, fretted instrument, electronic instrument
2. E.g., a particular style, form, instrumentation, compositional technique
3. E.g., entry of oboe, change of meter, return of refrain
4. I.e., sound in music, visual stimuli in visual arts, movement in dance, human interrelationships in theatre
5. E.g., language arts: issues to be considered in setting texts to music; mathematics: frequency ratios of intervals, sciences: the human hearing process and hazards to hearing; social studies: historical and social events and movements chronicled in or influenced by musical works
6. E.g., jazz, mariachi, gamelan
7. E.g., lead guitarist in a rock band, composer of jingles for commercials, singer in Peking opera

GRADES 9-12

The study of music contributes in important ways to the quality of every student's life. Every musical work is a product of its time and place, although some works transcend their original settings and continue to appeal to humans through their timeless and universal attraction. Through singing, playing instruments, and composing, students can express themselves creatively, while a knowledge of notation and performance traditions enables them to learn new music independently throughout their lives. Skills in analysis, evaluation, and synthesis are important because they enable students to recognize and pursue excellence in their musical experiences and to understand and enrich their environment. Because music is an integral part of human history, the ability to listen with understanding is essential if students are to gain a broad cultural and historical perspective. The adult life of every student is enriched by the skills, knowledge, and habits acquired in the study of music.

Terms identified by an asterisk (*) are explained in the glossary. Two levels of achievement, "proficient" and "advanced," have been established for grades 9-12. The proficient level is intended for students who have completed courses involving relevant skills and knowledge for one to two years beyond grade 8. The advanced level is intended for students who have completed courses involving relevant skills and knowledge for three to four years beyond grade 8. Students at the advanced level are expected to achieve the standards established for the proficient as well as the advanced levels. Every student is expected to achieve the proficient level in at least one arts discipline (that is, music, dance, theatre, visual arts) by the time he or she graduates from high school.

The standards in this section describe the cumulative skills and knowledge expected of students exiting grade 12 who have enrolled in relevant music courses. They presume that the students have achieved the standards specified for grades 5-8; they assume that the students will demonstrate higher levels of the expected skills and knowledge, will deal with increasingly complex music, and will provide more sophisticated responses to works of music. Every course in music, including performance courses, should provide instruction in creating, performing, listening to, and analyzing music, in addition to focusing on its specific subject matter. Determining the curriculum and the specific instructional activities necessary to achieve the standards is the responsibility of states, local school districts, and individual teachers.

1. Content Standard: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. sing with *expression and *technical accuracy a large and varied repertoire of vocal literature with a *level of difficulty of 4, on a scale of 1 to 6, including some songs performed from memory
- b. sing music written in four parts, with and without accompaniment
- c. demonstrate well-developed ensemble skills

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- d. sing with expression and technical accuracy a large and varied repertoire of vocal literature with a level of difficulty of 5, on a scale of 1 to 6
- e. sing music written in more than four parts
- f. sing in small ensembles with one student on a part

2. Content Standard: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. perform with expression and technical accuracy a large and varied repertoire of instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 4, on a scale of 1 to 6
- b. perform an appropriate part in an ensemble, demonstrating well-developed ensemble skills
- c. perform in small ensembles with one student on a part

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- d. perform with expression and technical accuracy a large and varied repertoire of instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 5, on a scale of 1 to 6

3. Content Standard: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. improvise stylistically appropriate harmonizing parts
- b. improvise rhythmic and melodic variations on given pentatonic melodies and melodies in major and minor keys
- c. improvise original melodies over given chord progressions, each in a consistent *style, meter, and tonality

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- d. improvise stylistically appropriate harmonizing parts in a variety of styles
- e. improvise original melodies in a variety of styles, over given chord progressions, each in a consistent style, meter, and tonality

4. Content Standard: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. compose music in several distinct styles, demonstrating creativity in using the *elements of music for expressive effect
- b. arrange pieces for voices or instruments other than those for which the pieces were written in ways that preserve or enhance the expressive effect of the music
- c. compose and arrange music for voices and various acoustic and electronic instruments, demonstrating knowledge of the ranges and traditional usages of the sound sources

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- d. compose music, demonstrating imagination and technical skill in applying the principles of composition

5. Content Standard: Reading and notating music

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. demonstrate the ability to read an instrumental or vocal score of up to four staves by describing how the elements of music are used

Students who participate in a choral or instrumental ensemble or class

- b. sightread, accurately and expressively, music with a level of difficulty of 3, on a scale of 1 to 6

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- c. demonstrate the ability to read a full instrumental or vocal score by describing how the elements of music are used and explaining all transpositions and clefs

- d. interpret nonstandard notation symbols used by some 20th- century composers

Students who participate in a choral or instrumental ensemble or class

- e. sightread, accurately and expressively, music with a level of difficulty of 4, on a scale of 1 to 6

6. Content Standard: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. analyze aural examples of a varied repertoire of music, representing diverse *genres and cultures, by describing the uses of elements of music and expressive devices¹

- b. demonstrate extensive knowledge of the technical vocabulary of music

- c. identify and explain compositional devices and techniques used to provide unity and variety and tension and release in a musical work and give examples of other works that make similar uses of these devices and techniques

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- d. demonstrate the ability to perceive and remember music events by describing in detail significant events² occurring in a given aural example
- e. compare ways in which musical materials are used in a given example relative to ways in which they are used in other works of the same genre or style
- f. analyze and describe uses of the elements of music in a given work that make it unique, interesting, and expressive

7. Content Standard: Evaluating music and music performances

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. evolve specific criteria for making informed, critical evaluations of the quality and effectiveness of performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations and apply the criteria in their personal participation in music
- b. evaluate a performance, composition, arrangement, or improvisation by comparing it to similar or exemplary models

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- c. evaluate a given musical work in terms of its aesthetic qualities and explain the musical means it uses to evoke feelings and emotions

8. Content Standard: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. explain how elements, artistic processes³, and organizational principles⁴ are used in similar and distinctive ways in the various arts and cite examples
- b. compare characteristics of two or more arts within a particular historical period or style and cite examples from various cultures⁵
- c. explain ways in which the principles and subject matter of various disciplines outside the arts are interrelated with those of music⁶

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- d. compare the uses of characteristic elements, artistic processes, and organizational principles among the arts in different historical periods and different cultures
- e. explain how the roles of creators, performers, and others involved in the production and presentation of the arts are similar to and different from one another in the various arts⁷

9. Content Standard: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Achievement Standard, Proficient:

Students

- a. classify by genre or style and by historical period or culture unfamiliar but representative aural examples of music and explain the reasoning behind their classifications
- b. identify sources of American music genres,⁸ trace the evolution of those genres, and cite well-known musicians associated with them
- c. identify various roles⁹ that musicians perform, cite representative individuals who have functioned in each role, and describe their activities and achievements

Achievement Standard, Advanced:

Students

- d. identify and explain the stylistic features of a given musical work that serve to define its aesthetic tradition and its historical or cultural context
- e. identify and describe music genres or styles that show the influence of two or more cultural traditions, identify the cultural source of each influence, and trace the historical conditions that produced the synthesis of influences

Notes:

1. E.g., rubato, dynamics
2. E.g., fugal entrances, chromatic modulations, developmental devices
3. E.g., imagination, craftsmanship
4. E.g., unity and variety, repetition and contrast
5. E.g., Baroque, sub-Saharan African, Korean
6. E.g., language arts: compare the ability of music and literature to convey images, feelings, and meanings; physics: describe the physical basis of tone production in string, wind, percussion, and electronic instruments and the human voice and of the transmission and perception of sound
7. E.g., creators: painters, composers, choreographers, playwrights; performers: instrumentalists, singers, dancers, actors; others: conductors, costumers, directors, lighting designers
8. E.g., swing, Broadway musical, blues
9. E.g., entertainer, teacher, transmitter of cultural tradition

GLOSSARY

Classroom instruments. Instruments typically used in the general music classroom, including, for example, recorder-type instruments, chorded zithers, mallet instruments, simple percussion instruments, fretted instruments, keyboard instruments, and electronic instruments.

Elements of music. Pitch, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture, *form.

Expression, expressive, expressively. With appropriate dynamics, phrasing, *style, and interpretation and appropriate variations in dynamics and tempo.

Form. The overall structural organization of a music composition (e.g., AB, ABA, call and response, rondo, theme and variations, sonata-allegro) and the interrelationships of music events within the overall structure.

Genre. A type or category of music (e.g., sonata, opera, oratorio, art song, gospel, suite, jazz, madrigal, march, work song, lullaby, barbershop, Dixieland).

Level of difficulty. For purposes of these standards, music is classified into six levels of difficulty:

- Level 1-Very easy. Easy keys, meters, and rhythms; limited ranges.
- Level 2-Easy. May include changes of tempo, key, and meter; modest ranges.
- Level 3-Moderately easy. Contains moderate technical demands, expanded ranges, and varied interpretive requirements.
- Level 4-Moderately difficult. Requires well-developed *technical skills, attention to phrasing and interpretation, and ability to perform various meters and rhythms in a variety of keys.
- Level 5-Difficult. Requires advanced technical and interpretive skills; contains key signatures with numerous sharps or flats, unusual meters, complex rhythms, subtle dynamic requirements.
- Level 6-Very difficult. Suitable for musically mature students of exceptional competence. (Adapted with permission from NYSSMA Manual, Edition XXIII, published by the New York State School Music Association, 1991.)

MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface). Standard specifications that enable electronic instruments such as the synthesizer, sampler, sequencer, and drum machine from any manufacturer to communicate with one another and with computers.

Style. The distinctive or characteristic manner in which the *elements of music are treated. In practice, the term may be applied to, for example, composers (the style of Copland), periods (Baroque style), media (keyboard style), nations (French style), *form or type of composition (fugal style, contrapuntal style), or *genre (operatic style, bluegrass style).

Technical accuracy, technical skills. The ability to perform with appropriate timbre, intonation, and diction and to play or sing the correct pitches and rhythms.