

New York State Learning Standards for the



# Musical

## Glossary

TOGETHER WE • CREATE • PRESENT  
PERFORM • RESPOND • CONNECT  
PRODUCE

New York State Learning Standards for the



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## Glossary

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**New York State Learning Standards for the Arts**

**MUSIC**

# **GLOSSARY**

**of Discipline-Specific Terms & Concepts**



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**NOTES:**

*Italicized text* indicates that either the complete definition, or part of a definition is a New York State addition to those published by the National Core Arts Standards (SEADAE, 2014).

NCAS definitions can be found at <http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/content/glossary>.

**Definitions**

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**A**

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**AB**

Musical form consisting of two sections, A and B, which contrast with each other (binary form).

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**ABA**

Musical form consisting of three sections, A, B, and A; two are the same, and the middle one is different (ternary form).

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**Ability**

Natural aptitude in specific skills and processes; what the student is apt to do, without formal instruction.

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**Academic vocabulary**

Words that traditionally are used in academic dialogue and text.

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**Analog, analog tools**

Category of musical instruments and tools that are non-digital (i.e., do not transfer sound in or convert sound into binary code), such as acoustic instruments, microphones, monitors, and speakers.

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**Analysis** (see **Analyze**)

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**Analyze**

Examine in detail the structure and context of the music.

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**Appraise**

To give your opinion about the condition, quality, or importance of music or musicians that you have studied or examined.

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**Arrangement**

Setting or adaptation of an existing musical composition.

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**Arranger**

Person who creates alternative settings or adaptations of existing music.

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**Articulation**

Characteristic way in which musical tones are connected, separated, or accented; types of articulation include legato (smooth, connected tones) and staccato (short, detached tones).

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**Artistic literacy**

Knowledge and understanding required to participate authentically in the arts.

---

**Artistry**

Expressed characteristics that result from creative ability or skill.

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**Atonality**

Music in which no tonic or key center is apparent.

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**Audiate**

Hear and comprehend sounds in one's head (inner hearing), even when no sound is present.

---

**Audience etiquette**

Social behavior observed by those attending musical performances and which can vary depending upon the type of music performed.

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**B****Beat**

Underlying steady pulse present in most music.

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**Benchmark**

Pre-established definition of an achievement level, designed to help measure student progress toward a goal or standard, expressed either in writing or as an example of scored student work (aka, anchor set).

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**Binary form (see AB)****Body percussion**

use of the human body as an instrument to create percussive/rhythmic sounds such as stomping, patsching (patting thighs), clapping, clicking, snapping.

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**Bordun**

Accompaniment created by sounding two tones, five notes apart, continuously throughout a composition; can be performed in varying ways, such as simultaneously or alternating.

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**C****Chant**

Most commonly, the rhythmic recitation of rhymes, or poems without a sung melody; a type of singing, with a simple, unaccompanied melody line and free rhythm.

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**Chart**

Jazz or popular music score, often abbreviated, with a melody (including key and time signature) and a set of chord changes.

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**Chord progression**

Series of chords sounding in succession; certain progressions are typical in particular styles/genres of music.

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**Collaboration**

*Working together on a common (musical) task or goal.*

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**Collaboratively developed criteria (See Criteria, collaboratively developed)****Collaboratively selected criteria (See Criteria, collaboratively selected)**

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**Complex form, Complex formal structure**

Musical form in which rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and/or other musical materials undergo significant expansion and development, and may be more distantly related across sections while remaining coherent in some way, such as sonata or other novel design with three or more sections.

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**Compose**

*Create and document original musical ideas through generating, improvising, and arranging.*

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**Composer**

One who creates music compositions.

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**Composition**

Original piece of music that can be repeated, is typically developed over time, and is preserved either in notation or in a sound recording.

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**Compositional devices**

Tools used by a composer or arranger to create or organize a composition or arrangement, such as tonality, sequence, repetition, instrumentation, orchestration, harmonic/melodic structure, style, and form.

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**Compositional procedures**

Techniques that a composer initiates and continues in pieces to develop musical ideas, such as fragmentation, imitation, sequencing, variation, aggregate completion, registral saturation, contour inversion of gestures, and rhythmic phrasing.

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**Compositional techniques**

Approaches that a composer uses to manipulate and refine the elements to convey meaning and intent in a composition, such as tension-release, augmentation-diminution, sound-silence, motion-stasis, in addition to noted compositional devices.

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**Concepts, music**

Understandings or generalized ideas about music that are formed after learners make connections and determine relationships among ideas.

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**Connection**

Relationship among artistic ideas, personal meaning, and/or external context.

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**Context**

Environment that surrounds music, influences understanding, provides meaning, and connects to an event or occurrence.

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- **Context, cultural**

Values, beliefs, and traditions of a group of people that influence musical meaning and inform

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culturally authentic musical practice.

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- **Context, historical**

Conditions of the time and place in which music was created or performed that provide meaning and influence the musical experience.

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- **Context, personal**

Unique experiences and relationships that surround a single person and are influenced by personal life, family, habits, interest, and preferences.

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- **Context, social**

Environment surrounding something or someone’s musical creation or intended audience that reflects and influences how people use and interpret the musical experience.

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### **Craftsmanship**

Degree of skill and ability exhibited by a creator or performer in the manipulation of the elements of music in a composition or performance.

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### **Create**

Conceive, generate, improvise, and/or develop new artistic ideas, such as *rhythmic and tonal patterns*, harmonic progressions, or structural organization; often subsequently used as the basis for composition, improvisation, and/or arrangement of larger musical work.

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### **Creative intent**

Shaping of the elements of music to express and convey emotions, thoughts, and ideas.

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### **Creator**

One who originates a music composition, arrangement, or improvisation (such as in folk or vernacular music).

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### **Criteria**

Guidelines used to judge the quality of a student’s performance. (Also see **Rubric**)

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- **Criteria, collaboratively developed**

Qualities or traits for assessing achievement level that have been developed through a process of collective decision-making.

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- **Criteria, collaboratively selected**

*Qualities or traits for assessing achievement level that have been selected from teacher-provided options, through a process of collective decision-making.*

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- **Criteria, established**

Traits or dimensions for making quality judgments in music of a particular style, genre, cultural context, or historical period that have gained general acceptance and application over time.

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- **Criteria, musical**

Traits relevant to assessing musical attributes of a work or performance.

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- **Criteria, personally-developed**  
Qualities or traits for assessing achievement level developed by students individually.
  - **Criteria, teacher-provided**  
Qualities or traits for assessing achievement level that are provided to students by the teacher.
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**Cultural context** (See **Context, cultural**)**Culturally authentic performance**

Presentation that reflects practices and interpretation representative of the style and traditions of a culture.

**Culture**

Values and beliefs of a particular group of people, from a specific place or time, expressed through characteristics such as tradition, social structure, religion, art, and food.

**Cyclical structure**

Musical form characterized by the return or “cycling around” of significantly recognizable themes, motives, and/or patterns across movements.

**D****Demonstrate**

Show musical understanding through observable behavior, such as moving, chanting, singing, or playing instruments.

**Diatonic**

Seven-tone scale consisting of five whole steps and two half steps.

**Digital, digital tools**

Category of musical instruments and tools that manipulate sound by using binary code, such as electronic keyboards, digital audio interfaces, MIDI, and computer software.

**Digital environment**

Simulated place made or created through the use of one or more computers, sensors, or equipment.

**Digital notation**

A visual image of musical sound created by using computer software applications, intended either as a record of sound heard or imagined, or as a set of visual instructions for performers.

**Digital resources**

Anything published in a format capable of being read by a computer, a web-enabled device, a digital tablet, or a smartphone.

**Digital systems**

Platforms that allow interaction and the conversion between and through the audio and digital domains.

**Dynamics**

Level or range of loudness of a sound or sounds.

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**E**

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**Elements of music**

Basic characteristics of sound (pitch, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture, form, and style/articulation) that are manipulated to create music.

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**Emerging ensemble**

Group of individuals organized to perform artistic work collaboratively, such as guitar, rock band, iPad, mariachi, steel drum/pan, or Taiko drumming.

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**Enduring understanding**

Overarching (or “big”) ideas that are central to the core of the music discipline and may be transferred to new situations.

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**Ensemble**

Group of individuals organized to perform artistic work collaboratively, such as bands, orchestras, choirs, duets, trios, or quartets.

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**Essential question**

Question that is central to the core of a discipline – in this case, music – and promotes investigation to uncover corresponding enduring understanding(s).

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**Established criteria**

Traits or dimensions for making quality judgments in music of a particular style, genre, cultural context, or historical period that have gained general acceptance and application over time.

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**Expanded form**

Basic form (such as AB, ABA, rondo, or theme and variation) expanded by the addition of an introduction, transition, and/or coda.

---

**Explore**

Discover, investigate, and create musical ideas through singing, chanting, playing instruments, or moving to music.

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**Express (v.), Expression (n.), Expressive (adj.)**

To convey feeling through music; pertaining to feeling conveyed through music.

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**Expressive aspects**

Characteristics that convey feeling in the presentation of musical ideas.

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**Expressive intent**

The emotions, thoughts, and ideas that a performer or composer seeks to convey by manipulating the elements of music.

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**Expressive qualities**

Qualities such as dynamics, tempo, articulation, which, when combined with other elements of music, give a composition its musical identity.

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**F**

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**Feedback**

*An informed reaction to a creation or performance used as a basis for refinement.*

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**Form**

Element of music describing the overall organization of a piece of music, such as AB, ABA, rondo, theme and variations, and strophic form.

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**Formal design**

Large-scale framework for a piece of music in which the constituent parts form a meaningful whole; encompasses both structural and tonal aspects of the piece.

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**Fret**

Thin strip of material placed across the fingerboard of some stringed instruments, such as guitar, banjo, and mandolin; the fingers press the strings against the frets to determine pitch.

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**Function**

Use for which music is created, performed, or experienced, such as dance, social, recreation, music therapy, video games, or advertising.

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**Fundamentals of music theory**

Basic elements of music, their subsets, and how they interact: rhythm and meter; pitches and clefs; intervals; scales, keys and key signatures; triads and seventh chords.

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**Fusion**

Type of music created by combining contrasting styles into a new style.

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**G**

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**Generate (see Create)**

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**Genre**

Category of music characterized by a distinctive style, form, and/or content, such as jazz, march, and country.

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**Guidance**

Assistance provided temporarily to enable a student to perform a musical task that would be difficult to perform unaided; best implemented in a manner that helps develop that student's capacity to eventually perform the task independently.

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**H**

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**Harmonic sequences**

Series of two or more chords commonly used to support melody(ies).

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**Harmonizing instruments**

Musical instruments, such as guitars, ukuleles, and keyboards, capable of producing harmonies as well as melodies, often used to provide chordal accompaniments for melodies and songs.

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**Harmonization**

Process of applying stylistically appropriate harmony, such as chords, countermelodies, and ostinato, to melodic material.

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**Harmony, Harmonic** (adj.)

Pertaining to chordal structure of a music composition in which the simultaneous sounding of pitches produces chords, and their successive use produces chord progressions.

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**Heterophonic**

Musical texture in which slightly different versions of the same melody sound simultaneously.

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**Historical context** (See **Context, historical**)**Historical periods**

Span of years during which music that was created and/or performed shared common characteristics; historians of Western art music typically refer to the following: Medieval (ca. 500-ca. 1420), Renaissance (ca. 1420-ca. 1600), Baroque (ca. 1600-ca. 1750), Classic (ca. 1750-ca. 1820), Romantic (ca. 1820-ca. 1900), and Contemporary (ca. 1900-).

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**Homophonic**

Musical texture in which all parts move in the same rhythm but use different pitches, as in hymns; also, a melody supported by chords.

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**I****Iconic notation**

Representation of sound and its treatment by using lines, drawings, pictures.

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**Imagine**

Generate musical ideas for various purposes and contexts.

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**Imagination**

Ability to generate in the mind ideas, concepts, sounds, and images that are not physically present and may not have been previously experienced (see **Audiate**).

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**Improvise**

*The act of generating and performing spontaneous musical ideas.*

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**Improvisation**

Music created and performed spontaneously or “in-the-moment,” often within a framework determined by the musical style.

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**Improviser**

One who creates music spontaneously or “in-the-moment.”

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**Independently**

Working with virtually no assistance, initiating appropriate requests for consultation, performing in a self-directed ensemble offering ideas/solutions that make such consulting collaborative rather than teacher-directed.

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**Innovation**

*Referring to something new, or to a change made, to an existing product, idea, or field.*

**Intent**

Meaning or feeling of the music, which is planned and conveyed by a creator or performer.

**Interpret**

Determine and demonstrate music's expressive intent and meaning when responding and performing.

**Interpretation**

Intent and meaning that a performer realizes in studying and performing a piece of music.

**Intervals**

Distance between two tones, named by counting all pitch names involved; harmonic interval occurs when two pitches are sounded simultaneously, and melodic interval when two pitches are sounded successively.

**Intonation**

Singing or playing the correct pitch in tune.

**J****K****Key signature**

Set of sharps or flats at the beginning of the staff, following the clef sign, that indicates the primary pitch set or scale used in the music and provides clues to the resting tone and mode.

**L****Lead-sheet notation**

System symbol used to identify chords in jazz, popular, and folk music; uppercase letters are written above the staff, specifying which chords should be used and when they should be played.

**Lyrics**

Words to a song.

**M****Major scale**

Scale in which the ascending pattern of whole and half steps is whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half.

**Melodic contour**

Shape of a melody created by the way its pitches repeat and move up and down in steps and skips.

**Melodic passage**

Short section or series of notes within a larger work that constitutes a single, coherent melodic idea.

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**Melodic pattern**

Grouping, generally brief, of tones or pitches.

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**Melody, Melodic** (adj.)

Linear succession of sounds (pitches) and silences moving through time; the horizontal structure of music.

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**Meter**

Grouping of beats and divisions of beats in music, often in sets of twos (duple meter) or threes (triple meter).

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**Minor scale**

Scale in which one characteristic feature is a half-step between the second and third tones; the three forms of the minor scale are natural, harmonic, and melodic.

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**Modal**

Music based on a mode other than major or minor.

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**Modes**

Seven-tone scales that include five whole steps and two half steps; the seven possible modes —Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian— were used in the Medieval and Renaissance periods and served as the basis from which major (Ionian) and minor (Aeolian) scales emerged.

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**Model cornerstone assessment**

Suggested assessment process, embedded within a unit of study, that includes a series of focused tasks to measure student achievement within multiple process components.

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**Moderately complex form, Moderately complex formal structure**

Musical form with three or more sections (such as rounded binary, rondo, or other novel design), in which section closure is somewhat nuanced or ambiguous, and the rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and/or other musical materials across sections may be more distantly related while remaining coherent in some way.

---

**Mood**

Over-all feeling that a section or piece of music conveys.

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**Monophonic**

Musical texture consisting of a single, unaccompanied melodic line.

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**Motif/motive**

Brief rhythmic/melodic figure or pattern that recurs throughout a composition as a unifying element.

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**Movement**

Act of moving in non-locomotor (such as clapping and finger snapping) and locomotor (such as walking and running) patterns to represent and interpret musical sounds.

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**Music literacy**

Knowledge and understanding required to participate authentically in the discipline of music by

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independently carrying out the artistic processes of creating, performing, and responding, *using visual using visual and aural skills as appropriate to the musical tradition.*

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**Music theory**

Study of how music is composed and performed; analysis of the elements of music and the framework for understanding musical works.

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**Music vocabulary**

Domain-specific words traditionally used in performing, studying, or describing music (see **Academic vocabulary**).

---

**Musical criteria**

Traits relevant to assessing musical attributes of a work or performance.

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**Musical idea**

Idea expressed in music, which can range in length from the smallest meaningful level (motive or short pattern) through a phrase, a section, or an entire piece.

---

**Musical range**

Span between the highest and lowest pitches of a melody, instrument, or voice.

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**Musical work**

Piece of music preserved as a notated copy or sound recording or passed down through oral tradition.

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**N****Non-pitched instruments**

Instruments, such as woodblocks, whistles, or electronic sounds, that do not have definite pitches or tones.

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**Notation**

Visual representation of musical sounds.

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**O****One-part formal structure**

Continuous form, with or without an interruption, in which a singular instance of formal closure is achieved only at or near the end of the piece; also known as **through-composed**.

---

**Open-ended assessment**

Assessment that allows students to demonstrate the learning of a particular outcome in a variety of ways, such as demonstrating understanding of rhythmic notation by moving, singing, or chanting.

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**Ostinati**

Short melodic phrases repeated throughout a composition, sometimes slightly varied or transposed to a different pitch. A **rhythmic ostinato** is a short, constantly repeated rhythmic pattern.

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**P**

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**Passage**

A short section of a musical composition. (See also **Melodic passage**)

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**Pentatonic scale**

Five-tone scale often identified with the pattern of the black keys of a keyboard, although other five-tone arrangements are possible.

---

**Perform**

Process of realizing artistic ideas and work through interpretation and presentation.

---

**Performance, performing**

Experience of engaging in the act of presenting music in a classroom or private or public venue (see also **Artistic Process of Performing**).

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**Performance decorum**

Aspects of contextually proper behavior, conduct, and appearance for a musical performance, such as stage presence, etiquette, and appropriate attire.

---

**Performance practice**

Performance and presentation of a work that reflect established norms for the style and the social, cultural, and historical contexts of that work.

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**Performance, prepared**

The individual and/or ensemble presentation of musical ideas and repertoire that have been learned and refined through the rehearsal process.

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**Performance technique**

Personal technical skills developed and used by a performer.

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**Personal context** (See **Context, personal**)**Personally-developed criteria** (See **Criteria, personally-developed**)**Phrase**

Musical segment with a clear beginning and ending, comparable to a simple sentence or clause in written text.

---

**Phrasing**

Performance of a musical phrase that uses expressive qualities, such as dynamics, tempo, articulation, and timbre, to convey a thought, mood, or feeling.

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**Piece**

General, non-technical term referring to a composition or musical work.

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**Pitch**

Identification of a tone or note with respect to highness or lowness (i.e., frequency).

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**Plan**

Select and develop musical ideas for creating a musical work.

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**Polyphonic**

Musical texture in which two or more melodies sound simultaneously.

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**Polytonal**

Music in which two or more tonalities (keys) sound simultaneously.

---

**Present, Presenting**

Share artistic work, informally or formally, with others.

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**Presentation**

Artistic work which is shared with others, formally or informally.

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**Program**

Presentation of a sequence of musical works that can be performed by individual musicians or groups in a concert, recital, or other setting.

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**Purpose**

Reason for which music is created, such as, ceremonial, recreational/social, commercial, or generalized artistic expression.

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**Q****R****Recording technology**

Electronic or digital devices, equipment, software, etc. used to create, capture, organize, edit, manipulate, amplify, and/or play audio and video. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century recording technology included acoustic (mechanical) means; these were superseded in turn by electronic, magnetic, and now digital technologies.

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**Refine**

Make changes in musical works or performances to more effectively realize intent through technical quality or expression.

---

**Repertoire**

Body or set of musical works that can be performed.

---

**Respond**

Understand and evaluate how the arts convey meaning.

---

**Rhythm, Rhythmic (adj.)**

Duration or length of sounds and silences that occur in music; organization of sounds and silences in time.

---

**Rhythmic passage**

Short section or series of notes within a larger work that constitutes a single coherent rhythmic idea.

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**Rhythmic pattern**

Grouping, generally brief, of long and short sounds and silences.

---

**Rondo**

Musical form consisting of three or more contrasting sections in which one section recurs, such as ABACA.

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**Rubric**

Established, ordered set of criteria for judging student performance; includes descriptors of student work at various levels of achievement.

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**S****Scale**

Pattern of pitches arranged in ascending or descending order and identified by its specific arrangement of whole and half steps.

---

**Score**

Written notation of an entire music composition.

---

**Section**

One of a number of distinct segments that together comprise a composition; a section consists of several phrases.

---

**Select**

Choose music for performing, rehearsing, or responding, based on interest, knowledge, ability, and context.

---

**Sensitivity**

Skill of a creator, performer, or listener in responding to and conveying the nuances of sound or expression.

---

**Set**

Sequence of songs or pieces performed together by musician(s) and constituting or forming part of a live show or recording.

---

**Setting**

Specified or implied instrumentation, voicing, or orchestration of a musical work.

---

**Setting of the text**

Musical treatment of text as presented in the music.

---

**Share**

Present artistic work (e.g., a composition) to others.

---

**Sight-reading**

First attempt to perform a notated musical work.

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**Simple form, Simple formal structure**

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Musical form with a small number of distinct or clearly delineated sections, (such as simple binary, ternary, or other novel design), using closely related rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic materials across the sections.

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**Social context** (See **Context, social**)

---

**Sonic events**

Individual sounds (or sound masses) and silences whose succession forms patterns and contrasting units that are perceived as musical.

---

**Sonic experience**

Perception and understanding of the sounds and silences of a musical work and their inter-relationship.

---

**Soundscape**

An audio recording or performance of sounds that create the sensation of experiencing a particular acoustic environment, or compositions created using the found sounds of an acoustic environment, either exclusively or in conjunction with musical performances.

---

**Stage presence**

Performer's ability to convey music content to a live audience through traits such as personal knowledge of the repertoire, exhibited confidence, decorum, eye contact, and facial expression.

---

**Staging**

Environmental considerations, such as lighting, sound, seating arrangement, and visual enhancements, that contribute to the effect of a musical performance.

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**Standard notation**

System for visually representing musical sound that is in widespread use in *specific musical traditions*; such systems include staff notation, tablature notation (primarily for fretted stringed instruments), and lead sheet notation.

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**Storyline**

Extra-musical narrative that inspires or explains the structure of a piece of music.

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**Strophic form**

Vocal music in which the music repeats with a new set of text each time.

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**Structure**

Totality of a musical work.

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**Style**

Label for a type of music possessing distinguishing characteristics and often performance practices associated with its historical period, cultural context, and/or genre.

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**Stylistic expression**

Interpretation of expressive qualities in a manner that is authentic and appropriate to the genre, historical period, and cultural context of origin.

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**T**

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**Tablature**

System of graphic standard notation, commonly used for fretted stringed instruments, in which a diagram visually represents both the fret board and finger placement on the fret board.

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**Teacher-provided criteria** (See **Criteria, teacher-provided**)

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**Technical accuracy, technical skill**

Ability to perform with appropriate timbre, intonation, and diction as well as to play or sing the correct pitches and rhythms at a tempo appropriate to the musical work.

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**Technical, Technical aspects**

Characteristics enabling the accurate representation/presentation of musical ideas.

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**Technical challenges**

Requirements of a particular piece of music that stretch or exceed a performer's current level of proficiency in technical areas such as timbre, intonation, diction, range, or speed of execution.

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**Technology, Technological** (adj.)

The use of science in industry, engineering, etc., to invent useful things or to solve problems; a machine, piece of equipment or software, method, etc., that is created by technology.

---

**Tempo**

Rate or speed of the beat in a musical work or performance.

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**Tension/release**

Musical device (musical stress, instability, or intensity, followed by musical relaxation, stability, or resolution) used to create a flow of feeling.

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**Ternary form** (see **ABA**)

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**Texture**

Manner in which the harmonic (vertical) and melodic (horizontal) elements are combined to create layers of sound.

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**Theme and variations**

Musical form in which a melody is presented and then followed by two or more sections presenting variations of that melody.

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**Theoretical** (see **Fundamentals of Music Theory**)

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**Timbre, Timbral**

Tone color or tone quality that distinguishes one sound source, instrument, or voice from another.

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**Tonal pattern**

Grouping, generally brief, of tones or pitches.

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**Tonality**

Tonic or key tone around which a piece of music is centered.

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**Transfer**

Use music knowledge and skills appropriately in a new context.

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**U**

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**Unity**

Presence of structural coherence within a work, generally achieved through the repetition of various elements of music (see **Variety**).

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**V**

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**Variety**

Presence of structural contrast within a work for the purpose of creating and sustaining interest, generally achieved through utilizing variations in the treatment of the elements of music (see **Unity**).

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**Venue**

Physical setting in which a musical event takes place.

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**Vocables**

Audible sounds and/or nonsense syllables used by vocalists to convey musical ideas or intent.

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**Vocalizations**

Vocal exercises that include no text and are sung to one or more vowels.

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**W**

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**X**

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**Y**

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**Z**

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