



Chapter Five: The Elements of Music

What Students Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts



Education Reform, Standards, and the Arts — Summary Statement to the National Standards - <http://www.menc.org/publication/books/summary.html>

There are many routes to competence in the arts disciplines. Students may work in different arts at different times. Their study may take a variety of approaches. Their abilities may develop at different rates. Competence means the ability to use an array of knowledge and skills. Terms often used to describe these include creation, performance, production, history, culture, perception, analysis, criticism, aesthetics, technology, and appreciation. Competence means capabilities with these elements themselves and an understanding of their interdependence; it also means the ability to combine the content, perspectives, and techniques associated with the various elements to achieve specific artistic and analytical goals. Students work toward comprehensive competence from the very beginning, preparing in the lower grades for deeper and more rigorous work each succeeding year. As a result, the joy of experiencing the arts is enriched and matured by the discipline of learning and the pride of accomplishment. Essentially, the Standards ask that students should know and be able to do the following by the time they have completed secondary school:

- They should be able to communicate at a basic level in the four arts disciplines dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. This includes knowledge and skills in the use of the basic vocabularies, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of each arts discipline.
- They should be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.
- They should be able to develop and present basic analyses of works of art from structural, historical, and cultural perspectives, and from combinations of those perspectives. This includes the ability to understand and evaluate work in the various arts disciplines.
- They should have an informed acquaintance with exemplary works of art from a variety of cultures and historical periods, and a basic understanding of historical development in the arts disciplines, across the arts as a whole, and within cultures.
- They should be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines. This includes mixing and matching competencies and understandings in art-making, history and culture, and analysis in any arts-related project.

As a result of developing these capabilities, students can arrive at their own knowledge, beliefs, and values for making personal and artistic decisions. In other terms, they can arrive at a broad-

based, well-grounded understanding of the nature, value, and meaning of the arts as a part of their own humanity.

These National Standards for Arts Education are a statement of what every young American should know and be able to do in four arts disciplines—dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. Their scope is grades K–12, and they speak to both content and achievement.

The National Standards for Music

- Standards - <http://www.menc.org/publication/books/standards.htm>
- Look through "The School Music Program: A New Vision: The K-12 National Standards, PreK Standards" and locate the standards for the age group you are teaching - <http://www.menc.org/publication/books/prek12st.html>

If you have never studied music, how can you promote your students' musical learning? As a classroom teacher, are you able to....

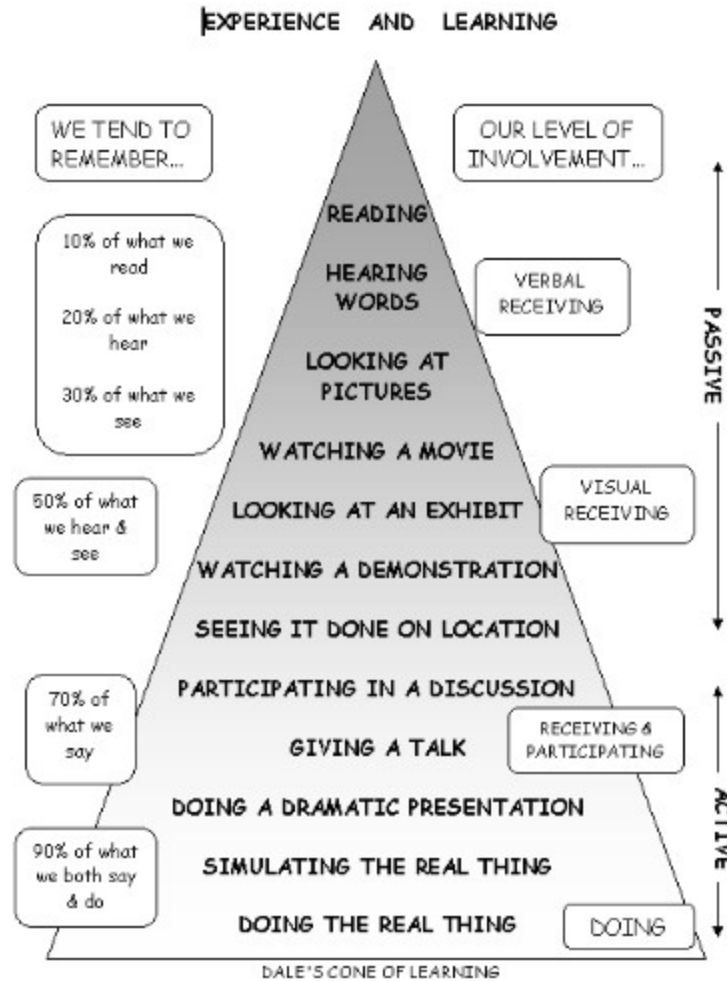
- Sing alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music?
- Perform on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music?
- Improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments?
- Compose and arrange music within specified guidelines?
- Read and notate music?
- Listen to, analyze, and describe music?
- Evaluate music and music performances?
- Understand relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts?
- Understand music in relation to history and culture?

California Visual and Performing Arts Standards

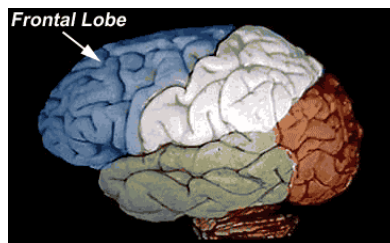
To meet the standards for music in the classroom, you need to define the elements and explore these key processes....

- *Are you able to read, notate, analyze, and describe music using the terminology of music?*
- *Are you able to compose and arrange music, improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments?*
- *Are you able to critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and performance of musicians according to the elements of music, aesthetic qualities, and human responses?*

Many teachers use background music or have children listen to music. They may even sing along with a tape or CD, but the student involvement tends to be passive. But...we know that the more actively involved we are doing the real thing, the more we learn and remember! So...let's make the music ourselves - not just listen passively!



How can you involve the whole brain in musical activity?



Frontal Lobe - judgment, creativity, problem solving, and planning

Parietal Lobe - higher sensory and language functions

Temporal Lobe - hearing, memory, meaning, and language

Occipital Lobe - vision

Students are most successful in music when all three traditional learning styles are used.

- **Auditory learners:** benefit most from traditional teaching techniques. Auditory learners succeed when information is presented and requested verbally. Auditory learners are tuned in to the sounds of music. They can hear melodies and rhythms easily.
- **Visual learners:** Some students rely upon a visual learning style: "Show me and I'll understand." Visual learners benefit from diagrams, charts, pictures, films, and written directions. Visual learners will be more successful with visual cues, musical notation, watching a performance, and looking at instruments as they are played.
- **Kinesthetic learners:** Most students excel through kinesthetic means: touching, feeling, experiencing something with hands-on activities. "Children enter kindergarten as kinesthetic and tactual learners, moving and touching everything as they learn. By second or third grade, some students have become visual learners. During the late elementary years some students, primarily females, become auditory learners. Yet, many adults, especially males, maintain kinesthetic and tactual strengths throughout their lives." ([*Teaching Secondary Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles*](#), Rita Stafford and Kenneth J. Dunn; Allyn and Bacon, 1993). Kinesthetic learners are most successful when totally engaged with the learning activity. They acquire information fastest when participating in a science lab, drama presentation, skit, field trip, dance, or other active activity. Because of the high numbers of kinesthetic learners, education is shifting toward a more hands-on approach; manipulatives and other "props" are incorporated into almost every school subject, from physical education to language arts. Hands-on teaching techniques are gaining recognition because they address the challenging needs of kinesthetic learners, as well as the diverse needs of auditory and visual learners. (From FamilyEducation.com - <http://www.familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,3-605,00.html>)

But the only time I sing is in the shower!



How can you meet these standards in the classroom if you are not a trained musician?

Step One: Let's begin by defining the elements of music.

Step Two: Let's learn how the language of music is written in symbols called notation.



What is Music?

The Constituent Elements of Music - the Basic Building Blocks of Music

- **Rhythm** - The combinations of long and short, even and uneven sounds that convey a sense of movement. The movement of sound through time. Concepts contributing to an understanding of rhythm are:
 - regular vs. irregular
 - strong vs. weak
 - long vs. short,
 - equal vs. unequal
- **Melody** - A logical succession of musical pitches arranged in a rhythmic pattern. An important part of melody is rhythm. The notes vary in pitch and duration. Form also applies to melody. Melodies include repetition as well as contrast. Pitch characteristics of melodies include:
 - Direction - up, down, stay the same
 - Range - wide or narrow spectrum of notes ranging from low to high
 - Position - Maybe use notes of high pitches or transposed to low pitches, but as long as the intervals between notes is consistent, the melody can be placed with the total pitch continuum.
 - Intervals - The distance between the pitches of the melody may be steps from one note to an adjacent note, or skips where pitches leap from one to another skipping a tone or tones.
- **Harmony** - The vertical blocks of different tones that sound simultaneously; a progression of chords.
 - Vertical structure - homophonic with chords connected to and supportive of the melody
 - Horizontal structure - polyphonic with chords created by simultaneously sound melodies.
- **Form** - The design of music, incorporating repetition, contrast, unity, and variety. The organization of music, its shape or structure.

The Expressive Elements of Music - Add variety and contrast to music

- **Timbre** - The distinctive quality of tone of a sound.
- **Dynamics** - The volume of sound; the loudness or softness of a musical passage.
- **Tempo** - The pace at which music moves, based on the speed of the underlying beat.

See Morton Subotnick's Creating Music CD - <http://www.creatingmusic.com/>



The Symbols of Music - Music Notation

A good way to learn more about the elements of music is to learn the symbolic system of musical notation. How do composers of music write down on paper what they hear or want the musician to play?

Howard Gardner stated that the musical intelligence qualifies as an independent and separate intelligence because music has a symbolic system in the form of music notation. He states that "symbol use has been key in the evolution of human nature, giving rise to myth, language, art, science: it has also been central in the highest creative achievements of human beings, all of which exploit the human symbolic faculty." He states that the 20th century philosophers focused on the "symbolic vehicles of thought. Thus, much of contemporary work in philosophy is directed toward an understanding of language, mathematics, visual arts, gestures, and other human symbols."

Go through each musical element. I have included a basic explanation of each and some examples of the types of activities you can do with your students.

1. Rhythm

2. Melody

3. Harmony and Form

4. Timbre, Dynamics, and Tempo

Once you have read through the material, examine the activities.. You will be creating your own lesson activities for your students based on each of these elements. Your lesson activity will need to incorporate all three learning styles - auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. You will be designing a hands-on musical activity for a small group, classroom, or individual. A sample template is at the bottom of this page. Examine the national standards (or state music frameworks) and specify which music standard/s are being met with this activity. Included below are the National Music Standards for Grades K-4. For other grade levels, go to the standards page at MENC - <http://www.menc.org/publication/books/prek12st.html>



Select an activity that you can use with your students that involves all three learning styles and meets the first seven national standards.

- **Auditory**
- **Visual**
- **Kinesthetic**

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.



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 parts while other students sing or play contrasting parts

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. 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 means



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 guidelines
- 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 24 , 34 , and 44 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 movement 4 to selected prominent music characteristics 5 or to specific music events 6 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



Lesson Planning for Teaching the Elements of Music

- Rhythm
- Melody
- Harmony and Form
- Timbre, Dynamics, and Tempo

Think of different activities you might do with your students focus on each element of music. Include an auditory, visual, AND kinesthetic component to each lesson. Engage the student with hands-on activities that promote singing and/or playing an instrument AND reading musical notation. You may also include playing accompaniments with harmonic chord progressions, improvising with instruments and/or voices, dancing, or dramatizing the music.

Lesson Activity for Teaching the Elements of Music

Title:

Musical Elements Addressed:

- Rhythm
- Melody
- Harmony/Form
- Timbre/Dynamics/Tempo

Music Content Standard Met: (Include Subject Matter and Grade Level):

Classroom Environment and Musical Materials/Supplies Needed:

Lesson Sequence:

Learning Styles: How does this activity meet each of the following learning styles?

Auditory:

Visual/Spatial:

Bodily/Kinesthetic

Assessment:

Reflection: