

The National Core Music Standards are designed to guide music educators as they help their students achieve the goal of independent music literacy. The structure of the standards organizes outcomes by Artistic Process, thereby facilitating sequential instruction while also authentically reflecting the way musicians think and work.

The music standards are organized and presented as follows:

- All music performance standards are grouped under the Artistic Processes of Creating, Performing, or Responding.
- Because music connections are an essential part of each Artistic Process, open-ended Connecting outcomes cross-reference users to Creating, Performing, and Responding performance standards.
- Music performance standards are organized and coded according to the process components or “steps” of the Artistic Processes. The process components for each Process are as follows:
 - Creating: Imagine; Plan and Make; Evaluate and Refine, and Present
 - Performing: Select; Analyze; Interpret; Rehearse, Evaluate, and Refine; and Present
 - Responding: Select; Analyze; Interpret; and Evaluate
- Performance standards are provided for each grade level from Prekindergarten through grade eight.
- Four distinct “strands” of high school performance standards are provided, reflecting the increasing variety of music courses offered in American secondary schools.
 - Ensemble, Harmonizing Instrument (guitar, keyboard, etc.), Composition/Theory, and Music Technology performance standards are provided for three levels: Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced.
 - Because many students become involved in Ensemble and Harmonizing Instrument classes before they enter high school, performance standards for these strands also include two preparatory levels: Novice (nominally assigned to the fifth grade level) and Intermediate (nominally the eighth grade level).
- To clarify the progression of performance standards across grade and high school levels, *italic type* is used to indicate changes from one grade level to the next.
- Similarities across the arts disciplines are highlighted in the eleven Common Anchors, which are shared by all five sets of discipline-specific standards. Each Anchor includes one or more process components.
- The standards are based on the assumption of quality resources, including instructional time, spanning PreK-8 and continuing at the high school level.

Draft Model Cornerstone Assessments provide protocols to help music educators develop measures of student achievement. These assessments will be piloted in a diverse array of classrooms across the United States, refined for use in varied settings, and used to generate student work that will eventually be made available online to illustrate the standards.

Many additional tools are available on this National Coalition for Core Arts Standards web site. More detailed explanations of the organization and implications of the Core Music Standards can be found at <http://nafme.org/standards>. The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) site will present Opportunity-to-Learn Standards, outlining the resources needed to deliver quality instruction; advocacy resources for explaining standards-based education to decision-makers and the public; and links to available professional development, as well as advice on making the standards a reality in schools across the nation.