

Reading Public Schools

Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow



Fine and Performing Arts Curriculum Guide

Course: Mixed Choir

Course Description

Mixed Choir is a full-year course open to all students. It is a foundational choral ensemble of mixed voices (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) that performs a wide variety of choral music, including classical, world music, American folk songs, spirituals, musical theater, popular music, and works by contemporary composers. Particular emphasis is placed on improving students' music literacy, sight-singing ability, vocal production, and ensemble skills. Prior experience singing in a choir is beneficial, but not necessary. Mixed Choir performs at major concerts, including Winter Songfest, ArtsFest, and Spring Into Song.

Sequential Development of Singing Skills: Grades 9-12

Approximate Range: Sing in the typical range of a soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, or bass.

Scale Systems: Learn a wide variety of tonal and atonal song and choral repertoire.

Tone Matching: Sing in multiple parts, maintaining accurate intonation and vocal blend, a wide variety of styles of choral music such as: rounds and canons, composed songs (classical, jazz, and pop), authentic folk song arrangements, and pieces authentically representing a wide range of cultures, genres, and historical periods.

Vocal Production: Learn proper use of all physiological parts of the singing apparatus and how they may be used to produce a beautiful, healthy, and expressive sound. Develop stylistically advanced, nuanced ensemble singing skills.

Source: MA Arts Curriculum Framework 2019, page 70

Content Standards for a Foundation Ensemble

Creating:

1. Explore ideas for interpreting a work (e.g. improvise embellishments to musical passages).
2. Record decisions about interpreting written music (e.g. adding dynamics or accents to a score).
3. Refine musical interpretations exploring different phrasing (e.g. incorporating tension and release).

Performing:

4. Identify advanced strategies musicians use to practice and employ them in readying a musical work for performance.
5. Perform with accuracy and expression works from the vocal literature with a level of difficulty of 3 out of 6.
6. Describe how decisions about a performance are connected to what students want to express, evoke, or communicate.

Responding:

7. Analyze the style a musician uses and how it manifests itself in a given musical work.
8. Identify elements from a work that connect it to a specific genre or style.
9. Compare and contrast different rubrics or criteria for evaluating music to identify advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Connecting:

10. Describe what has influenced changes in one's own musical style and musical preferences.
11. Identify the connections between historical and cultural contexts and defining stylistic elements of multiple musical movements (e.g. Aaron Copland's quest for an American sound).

Source: MA Arts Curriculum Framework 2019, page 46



Concepts	Essential Questions
Music Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is music communicated in written form? • How do composers use markings and symbols to create expression? • How does learning to read and notate music allow students to see what they hear and hear what they see?
Aural Skills and Sight-Singing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the relationship between rhythm and beat? • Why is identifying the time and key signature significant to the sight-singing process? • Why does knowing Kodaly solfege syllables aid in learning new music? • Why does developing my listening and aural skills improve the quality of my contributions to the overall ensemble?
Vocal Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What criteria should be used to evaluate vocal production? • Why are proper body alignment and breath support considered to be the foundation of healthy vocal technique? • What is the relationship between vowel formation and intonation? • How do musicians improve the quality of their performance?
Musicianship and Ensemble Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there such thing as good harmony and bad harmony? • How does understanding the structure and context of musical works inform performance? • What does it mean to sing with expression? • How does performing music provide a means for artistic growth? • What is my role within the ensemble? • What is the importance of the conductor of the ensemble?
Performance Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the creation of music relate to the human experience? • What is the role of the artist in societies past and present? • When is a performance judged ready to present? • Does a performance have to be public to be meaningful? • How does following established ensemble decorum contribute to a quality performance?

Structures for Learning

During a typical ensemble rehearsal, students and teachers may be engaged in...

- Physical and vocal warm-up exercises
- Technical drills
- Performance tasks (e.g. analyzing choral scores, rhythmic counting, sight-singing notated music, and pronouncing foreign language texts)
- Whole class instruction
- Student-led small group rehearsals
- Formative assessments in the form of independent part checks
- Preparing for summative assessments in the form of concerts and other performances for an audience
- Listening to and watching exemplar performances of choral music
- Written self-evaluations

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Fine and Performing Arts Curriculum Guide Overview

Curriculum Guide

Curriculum guides are public documents aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks. They outline and highlight the set of standards that students will learn within certain disciplines at each grade level. Curriculum guides are intended for teachers, parents, and the wide school community to provide an overview of the course of study for the year.

Curriculum Map

Curriculum maps are internal documents utilized as planning tools for teachers and administrators. Curriculum maps keep a focus on the end-of-year standards and chart a course for teaching and learning over the year. They are typically organized by month and/or marking period and may include: genres/topics or units of study, methods of assessment, and major content resources. Maps are fluid documents that are revised and revisited regularly to ensure students' needs are being met.

Content Standards

The standards used as the foundation of our curriculum come directly from the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework. State standards may be viewed here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/>

Sequential Development of Singing Skills

Singing provides an essential learning process for music students of all ages. It should be a foundational centerpiece in all general music classes and ensembles from preschool through high school. To that end, the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Arts includes a singing skill sequence, included in this guide. The singing skill sequence provides benchmarks showing how to develop both in-tune singing as well as healthy vocal technique and habits. It delineates the specific range, scale, tone matching, and vocal production standards that should be met or exceeded by the majority of students at the end of each grade span (PreK-K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, and 9-12).

Essential Questions

Essential questions are questions that are not answerable with an easy answer or a simple instruction. The purpose of essential questions is to provide opportunities for inquiry into learning and act as an umbrella to anchor the unit/lesson.

Structures for Learning

Structures for learning are examples of the instructional contexts and activities that students and teachers *might* be engaged in during arts instruction. Those listed represent a sampling and the list is in no way exhaustive. The list is not intended to mandate or require certain types of instruction at any given time, merely to suggest best practices.