

Reading Public Schools

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



Fine and Performing Arts Curriculum Guide

Course: 6-8 Choir

Course Description

Chorus is a full-year, every-other-day course open to all middle school students. Students are placed into separate ensembles based on grade level, and it is assumed that students at the sixth grade level are beginning musicians, with no prior choral experience. Each ensemble rehearses and performs a wide variety of choral music, including classical, world music, American folk songs, spirituals, musical theater, popular music, and works by contemporary composers. Students perform at major school events and concerts throughout the year.

Sequential Development of Singing Skills: Grades 6-8

Approximate Range: Transition from predominantly treble singing to the range of a soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, or bass

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

Tone Matching: Sing multi-part music (rounds, canons, partner songs, and true two- and three-part harmony) to improve intonation, blend, and musical listening skills.

Vocal Production: Develop healthy vocal production, consistent breath support, and appropriate singing posture; develop skillful use of head voice and falsetto; and develop a refined blend of vocal timbres when singing in groups.

Source: MA Arts Curriculum Framework 2019, page 70

Content Standards for a Novice Ensemble

Creating:

1. Improvise short melodic and rhythmic ideas that reflect characteristics of different genres.
2. Record decisions about accuracy of written music (e.g. indicating beat subdivisions).
3. Refine musical interpretations exploring different elements (e.g. dynamics and articulations).

Performing:

4. Identify basic 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 or instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6.
6. Match a musical performance with expressed intent.

Responding:

7. Analyze how cultures are reflected in a diverse range of musical works.
8. Explain how a musical work is connected to the particular cultural and historical context where it was created.
9. Develop criteria for a rubric for evaluating musical works.

Connecting:

10. Describe influences of one's personal musical style and preferences.
11. Identify musical ideas from different cultures studied in history and social science (e.g. American native).

Source: MA Arts Curriculum Framework 2019, page 45



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? • As a developing music reader, how can I study and learn a piece of music without having it sung or played for me?
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 signatures significant to the sight-singing process? • How do Kodaly solfege syllables and Curwen hand signals aid in learning music? • How will developing listening and aural skills improve my ability to read notated music? • What does a musical interval look and sound like?
Vocal Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 tone? • What are some of the causes of poor vocal production? • How does the human voice change and develop during adolescence?
Musicianship and Ensemble Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is my role within the ensemble? • How does understanding the context of a piece inform the performance? • How does performing as part of an ensemble differ from individual performance? • How does performing music provide a means for artistic growth? • How is a choral ensemble a community? • What does it mean to sing with expression? • What is the importance of the conductor of the ensemble?
Performance Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What character traits are learned and practiced when performing for others? • 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
- Performance tasks (e.g. analyzing choral scores, rhythmic counting, sight-singing notated music, and pronouncing foreign language texts)
- Whole class instruction and singing, both accompanied and a cappella
- Formative assessments in the form of individual and small-group part checks
- Preparing for summative assessments in the form of concerts and other performances for an audience
- Listening to, watching, and analyzing exemplar performances of musicians, including vocal, choral, and instrumental music
- Activities to build confidence, self-awareness, and leadership skills

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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.