

California Arts Standards

California Arts Standards for Music

“The fact that children can make beautiful music is less significant than the fact that music can make beautiful children.”

—Cheryl Lavender, composer and music educator

The music standards are designed to enable students to achieve music literacy. Unlike the other arts disciplines, there are five sets of performance standards for music:

- PK–8
- Harmonizing Instruments
- Ensembles
- Composition and Theory
- Technology

What Is Literacy in Music?

Developing music literacy means discovering the expressive elements of music, understanding the basic concepts of music, knowing the terminology that is used to comprehend music, developing the skills necessary to produce music, and being able to reflect, critique, and connect personal experience to music.

The standards describe expectations for learning in music regardless of style or genre. The standards impart the breadth and depth of the music experience through art-making processes. The standards can and should be the impetus for music educators to inspire their students to explore the many facets of music and prepare them for a lifelong relationship with music.¹

As in the other artistic disciplines, the four artistic processes are addressed linearly in the written music standards but are envisioned to occur simultaneously in the actual practice of music. From the first day, the music student gives voice to an instrument and makes music come alive, often from a written score, by singing, listening, playing, moving, reading, and/or composing music individually or together with peers (creating). The music lesson works toward a synthesis—when everything they have been working on is brought together (performing). The students analyze and evaluate what they have done (responding), and finally attach meaning not only to a musical concept, but to the experience as it relates to other contexts (connecting). As a result, aspects of multiple standards can be combined within a learning activity: students can learn a skill, apply it to a piece of music, make musical decisions, try and think critically about their ideas, and relate them to other experiences, contexts, and meanings.