

# Colorado Academic Standards: Music Benchmarking Report Summary



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

## Introduction

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The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) remains committed to providing rigorous academic standards to the highest quality. The Colorado Academic Standards in Music were approved by the Colorado State Board in 2009. CDE has requested third-party experts conduct a formal study to identify the quality of the music standards being implemented since the 2009 school year, and to determine how and to what degree Colorado's current music standards compare with the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS), as well as the music standards of higher-performing states and countries.

The Colorado Department of Education engaged the services of the State Education Agency Director of Arts Education (SEADAE) to conduct an external review; benchmarking the Colorado Academic Standards in Music against the National Core Arts Standards, Arizona Academic Standards in the Arts, Delaware Content Standards for Visual and Performing Arts, and the K-12 Create Arts Continuum, a syllabi developed by the Board of Studies, State of New South Wales (Australia).

The Colorado Department of Education approached SEADAE for the review of the Colorado Academic Standards in music because of its history of high-quality work involving arts education standards, assessment, and instruction, as well as the deep content expertise of its members. SEADAE members are those persons at state arts education agencies who are charged with oversight of educational policy and practice in the arts (Dance, Media Arts, Music, Drama/Theatre Arts, and Visual Arts).

### **Methodology** (p. 6-11)\*

The Arts were organized in to grade-band clusters of PK-2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8 and Music High School Generalist and Performance Pathways for the review. The elements of the standards identified for review include: Academic Standards for Music, Prepared Graduate Competencies; High School Expectations; Grade Level Expectations; and Evidence Outcomes. While important to understanding the current CAS standards, the following elements in the standards were not included in the review: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and Readiness Competencies; Inquiry Questions, and the Nature of the Discipline.

Colorado Academic Standards in Music Review: A review of the internal quality of the Colorado Academic Standards in Music with respect to the degree of rigor, depth, breadth, and coherence of the Standards. A four-point rating scale was used (3-Strong, 2-Moderate, 1-Weak, 0-Not Found). Rating were found for each of the following:

- Rigor – “...instruction, schoolwork, learning experiences, and educational expectations that are *academically, intellectually, and personally challenging...*”
  - Active language for learners to demonstrate declarative and procedural knowledge and skills
  - Developmentally appropriate
  - Enable and encourage students to build upon prior knowledge and transfer or adapt appropriate grade-level constructs to new situations, thereby fostering creativity and adaptive innovation
  - Promulgate age appropriate arts literacy and fluency
- Depth – “...robust, well-integrated understandings of fundamental concepts essential to the attainment of literacy and fluency music...”
  - Deep investigation and multiple perspectives
  - Deep investigation of developmentally appropriate literacy and fluency
  - Reinforce and revisit core concepts and transfer of prior knowledge
  - Promote inquiry-based learning



- Specific learning objectives with levels of student mastery
- Breadth – “...a logically scaffolded and sequenced set of standards in which essential content is explored through a wide array of interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives.”
  - Build learner knowledge and skills through a variety of related experiences over time
  - Provide interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives
  - Continuum of knowledge and skills necessary for progressively sophisticated levels of literacy and fluency.
- Coherence – “...a progression of instruction in which each lesson builds on previous lessons, moving students from simpler concepts to more complex and challenging concepts from lower-level thinking to higher-level thinking as they progress through their education.”
  - Systematic, intentional progression of learning that builds on previous Standards, with a logical pathway for learning and mastery
  - Construction parallel to that of other standards and concurrent knowledge and skills required for mastery
  - Cognitive ability increases for content mastery

Arizona, Delaware, National Core Arts Standards, and State of New South Wales (Australia): CDE selected external referents to which the CAS-Music would be compared. Included in the selection criteria was (1) the time of the adoption/adaptation of these standards, as CDE was looking for recently adopted/updated standards, (2) relevance and coherence of the content-area learning objectives, (3) suggestions from the CDE staff, and (4) consist use by other experts in the field. Analyst’s used a four-point rating scale (Very Similar, Similar, Dissimilar, or Very Dissimilar) when comparing CAS-Music to the referent exemplars, along with the lenses of rigor, depth, breadth, and coherence.

## Findings & Recommendations

### OBSERVATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Overall, the GLEs in the Standards for grade bands PK-2, 3-5, and 6-8 need attention in their construction, as they were determined to be “moderate” or “weak.”
- There is a lack of clarity and specificity in the GLEs for what students should be know and be able to do.
- The GLEs do not offer measureable language that was connected to the actual intent of the Standard.
- It was recommended that Evidence Outcomes be incorporated into the GLEs to provide measureable outcomes for student mastery.
- It is recommended that future iterations of the Colorado Academic Standards for Music use consistent language and tense.
- The GLEs for Grades PK-8 and the High School Generalist and Performance Pathways must consistently outline increasingly sophisticated knowledge and skills for learners to master.
- To support future work in refining these Standards, consider investigating the National Core Arts Standards in Music.
- Another suggestion is to consider how the existing Evidence Outcomes (EO) can be integrated within the GLEs to better align learning across grade levels and identify measurable skills and knowledge.

### Expression of Music (p. 54-59)

- **Grades PK-2**
  - There are no Expression of Music GLEs listed for PK level. It is recommended that a GLE for Expression is added at the PK level to facilitate vertical articulation of the standards and to evaluate students’ trajectory toward future learning goals.



- It was recommended that PK Standard 1 be pulled from *Creation of Music* and placed in the *Expression of Music* Standard.
- The skills flow from K to 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade needs realignment in order to appropriately scaffold the learning progressions.
- Some *Expression of Music* GLE wording is experiential, but lacks an indication of music literacy or fluency.
- Instruction and learning based on the GLEs within the PK-2 grade band would benefit from more clarity, articulating the various ways that learners can experience and master skills.
- **Grades 3-5**
  - GLEs listed are nonspecific and do not target skills that are likely to challenge learners.
  - The omission of opportunities for students to identify and discuss components of a piece that highlight music's expressive qualities is a serious shortcoming of these GLEs.
  - More intentionality is needed focusing on ways to include opportunities for students to embrace conscious decisions about musical expression the *Expression* GLEs.
  - The GLEs for *Expression of Music* need to identify *how* students make choices.
- **Grades 6-8**
  - GLEs listed are nonspecific and do not target skills that are likely to challenge learners.
  - The omission of opportunities for students to identify and discuss components of a piece that highlight music's expressive qualities is a serious shortcoming of these GLEs.
  - More intentionality is needed focusing on ways to include opportunities for students to embrace conscious decisions about musical expression the *Expression* GLEs.
  - The GLEs for *Expression of Music* need to identify *how* students make choices.
- **High School**
  - The difference between the High School Generalist GLEs and the High School Performance GLEs is clear for *Expression of Music*.
- **High School Generalist Pathway**
  - GLEs are overly broad and do not stipulate that students demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
  - A more precise definition of “informed music-making activity” is needed, along with what this looks like on a developmental continuum.
- **High School Performance Pathway**
  - While the GLEs are appropriately scaffolded, it is unclear how technology supports learners’ development of the identified skill.
  - Include language that has a variety of options or methods for student to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

#### Creation of Music (p. 59-63)

- **Grades PK-2**
  - PK and K GLEs would benefit from much more specific, measurable language.
  - Overall, the PK-2 grade band GLEs are configured in a manner that supports the building of essential knowledges and skill for the creation of music.
- **Grades 3-5**
  - Attention to the integration and use of these areas in the creation of music for each grade level needs to be consistent to support the building of knowledge and skills.
  - For Grade 3, skills need more specificity and to be articulated in measurable language that increases in difficulty from Grade 2.
  - Grade levels 4 and 5 are not specific as to the skills and knowledge required for mastery, and do not show a progression of skill development from the prior grade levels.

- GLEs could benefit from more specific and challenging objectives that progress in sophistication from prior levels.
- **Grades 6-8**
  - Attention to the integration and use of these areas in the creation of music for each grade level needs to be consistent to support the building of knowledge and skills.
  - Grade level 8 is not specific as to the skills and knowledge required for mastery, and do not show a progression of skill development from the prior grade levels.
  - GLEs could benefit from more specific and challenging objectives that progress in sophistication from prior levels.
- **High School**
  - The GLEs would benefit from more active language in describing what a student should know and be able to do.
- **High School Generalist Pathway**
  - The flow from prior grade levels to the High School Generalist path, whether from 5th or 8th grade, does not offer an increase of skills and knowledge from basic to more rigorous skills in the *Creation of Music*.
  - The technology component provided in the High School Generalist path could better identify how the use of and investigation through technological tools may support student growth in this area of study.
- **High School Performance Pathway**
  - High School Performance articulates a student path to pursue more advanced studies in music, aligning to the graduate competencies.

#### Theory of Music (p. 63-67)

- **Grades PK-2**
  - The level of sophistication for this area is static from earlier to later grade levels. There is a need to articulate a progression of learning challenges and to use more active language in grades PK, 1, and 2.
- **Grades 3-5**
  - The 3rd Grade GLEs target student growth in their knowledge of music theory.
  - The GLEs provides a logical flow from 2nd to 3rd grade in *Theory of Music*.
  - The GLEs for Grades 3-5, however, offer minimal to no change in the level of sophistication. More advanced instructional objectives should be used within the GLEs as students progress through the grades.
- **Grades 6-8**
  - More advanced instructional objectives should be used within the GLEs as students progress through the grades.
- **High School (Generalist and Performance Pathways)**
  - “Discernment” is not measurable and, therefore, lacks clarity as how to measure students’ skills in music theory.
  - It is recommended that future iterations of CAS Music Standards in *Music Theory* incorporate greater specificity in the GLEs to identify what students need to know and be able to do to demonstrate mastery in music theory.
  - The skills addressed in prior grade-band clusters are more sophisticated than those at the High School cluster.
  - Review prior GLEs for skills and build on them to create High School GLEs with increasing challenges to support student advancement in the *Theory of Music*.



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## Aesthetic Valuation of Music (p. 68-73)

- **Grades PK-2**
  - The GLEs in Grades K-2 state that students will demonstrate respect for contributions in a musical setting. This statement is unclear as to how students will demonstrate “respect.”
  - Grade PK-2 GLEs use the term “comprehension,” which is passive and needs specific, actionable language to describe how students will demonstrate their thoughts and knowledge about a given piece of music.
- **Grades 3-5**
  - The 3rd Grade GLEs need better alignment with the previous grades, as well as the inclusion of readily apparent progression of skills that challenge the learner to move from simple to more complex ideas. The misalignment continues from Grade 4 through Grade 5.
  - The GLEs need to require an increased level of sophistication as the grade levels progress and be written in active, measurable language.
  - Use active language for specificity of what students should know and be able to do.
- **Grades 6-8**
  - The GLEs need to require an increased level of sophistication as the grade levels progress and be written in active, measurable language.
  - Use active language for specificity of what students should know and be able to do.
- **High School**
  - Overall, the High School Generalist and High School Performance GLEs for *Aesthetic Valuation of Music* lack specific language to describe what students should know and be able to do.
  - Consider integrating the Evidence Outcomes language, which often uses active and measurable language, for future iterations of the Colorado Academic Standards for Music.
  - Infuse the main intent of the Standard, *Aesthetic Valuation of Music*, within the GLEs. GLEs need to be constructed with active, measurable verbs.