

Overview of Changes Music Standards

Principles of the Standards Review Process

The Colorado Model Content Standards revision process was informed by these guiding principles:

- Begin with the end in mind; define what prepared graduates need in order to be successful using 21st century skills in our global economy.
- Align K-12 standards with early childhood expectations and higher education.
- To be globally competitive, international and national benchmarking strongly informs the new standards.
- Change is necessary.
- Standards will be deliberately designed for clarity, rigor, and coherence.
- There will be fewer, higher, and clearer standards.
- Standards will be actionable.

Notable Changes to the Colorado Model Content Standards in Music

The most evident changes to the Colorado standards are replacing grade-band standards (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12) with grade-level specific expectations. These are explained here in addition to other changes that are apparent upon comparison between the current music standards and the proposed changes.

1. **Two explicit standards for the expression of music and the theory of music have been identified.** These important aspects of music were identified as separate standards to emphasize that theory is not always a prerequisite for expression. Separating expression and theory emphasizes that musicality exists in many forms, through the aural tradition, through differing levels of perception, and through the mechanics of music. Expression also progresses at a faster rate in mastery because students can identify and understand many musical elements before they can developmentally perform them.
2. **Levels of difficulty have been identified.** Once all students attend general music in grades P-5, it becomes important for students to synthesize several skills at a time when performing more complicated compositions. It is necessary to delineate difficulty levels for instruction of Middle School and High School compositions for greater clarity regarding the expectation of mastery in instrumental (band, orchestra) and vocal instruction.

The difficulty rating criteria found in the Colorado Academic Music Standards are located in the appendix and are intended to generally describe the difficulty level of instrumental and vocal music literature students should be expected to use within their respective grade levels. They are based, in part, on the American Band College Music Grading Chart <http://www.bandworld.org/pdfs/GradingChart.pdf> and correspond, more or less, to informal standards applied by music publishers. Instrumental and vocal pitch ranges represent the maximum expected range within a music literature category. The actual pitch range of most literature in a given category will fall within a narrower range.

3. **Western notation skills are found throughout the theory of music and creation of music standards.** The proposed revisions include a more embedded approach of notational concepts across grade levels. Notation skills are found under theory (reading and identification) and creating (writing). Notational concepts develop from elementary through middle school with a rigorous treatment of notational skill in the high school performance pathway.

4. **Connection of music has been expanded.** The proposed revisions include more explicit connection concepts across grade levels found in the “21st Century Skills and Readiness Competencies: Relevance and Application” component of each grade level expectation. The previous standards contain historical and cultural references. The proposed standards have been expanded to include interdisciplinary connections and 21st century application.
5. **Improvisation is more prominent in all levels.** Improvisation was introduced and applied in grades P-12, differing from the previous standards’ introduction in grade seven. This increases rigor and allows more freedom in using music skills and technology in innovative ways.
6. **Standards have been articulated.** The most evident changes to the Colorado music standards result from changing from grade span standards (K-4, 5-8, and 9-12) to grade-by-grade mastery level expectations through eighth grade. High school standards are not articulated by grade level, but by standard to support district decisions about how best to design curriculum and courses, whether through an integrated approach, a traditional course sequence, or alternative approaches such as through career and technical education. The high school standards have been divided into two levels: performance pathway and generalist pathway. This provides districts more options for individualizing course needs and allows more access to students who wish to incorporate musical study into any pathway they choose.
7. **Standards are written for mastery.** The proposed revisions to standards define mastery of concepts and skills. Mastery means that a student has complete expertise of a skill or concept in multiple contexts. This is not an indication that instruction on a grade level expectation begins and only occurs at that grade level. Maintenance of previous concepts and skills and scaffolding future learning are the domain of curriculum and instruction, not standards.
8. **Integration of P-2 Council’s recommendations.** The music subcommittee integrated the *Building Blocks to the Colorado K-12 Content Standards* document into the P-12 music standards, aligning expectations to a great degree. Important music concepts and skills are defined clearly across these foundational years, detailing expectations to a much greater extent for teachers and parents.
9. **Intentional integration of technology use, most notably at the high school level.** The use of appropriate technology gives more students access to concepts and skills in music, and also reflects the 21st century environment and the most contemporary uses and expression of music in society.

Below is a quick guide to other changes in the music standards:

Area	Summary of Changes	
	Previous Standards	Revised Standards
Number of standards	Five standards	Four standards
Names of standards	<p>Standard 1 Students sing or play on instruments a varied repertoire of music, alone or with others.</p> <p>Standard 2 Students will read and notate music.</p> <p>Standard 3 Students will create music.</p> <p>Standard 4 Students will listen to, analyze, evaluate, and describe music.</p> <p>Standard 5 Students will relate music to various historical and cultural traditions.</p>	<p>Standard 1 Expression of Music</p> <p>Standard 2 Creation of Music</p> <p>Standard 3 Theory of Music</p> <p>Standard 4 Aesthetic Valuation of Music</p>
Integration of 21st century skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not deliberately addressed in original document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st century skills are woven throughout all expectations and evidence outcomes through the use of the cross-cutting competencies.
P-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade spans did not accommodate developmentally appropriate skills for P-2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Early Childhood Building Blocks Standards on Creativity and High Scope Music recommendations were incorporated into the expectations and evidence outcomes for P-2.
Number of grade level expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently there are 45 benchmarks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of three grade level expectations per grade level (P-8) with five for high school.