Unit 02: Reading, Interpreting, and Expressing Music

Content Area: **Music**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **ongoing**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Continued development of the ability to read, interpret, and express music with independence and artistry is essential to the growth of advanced musicians. Building upon the foundational skills that began in Tenor/Bass and Treble Choruses and that continues in Concert Choir, students in Madrigal Choir will strengthen their musicianship through the study and performance of diverse choral repertoire. Students will engage with increasingly complex musical resources while developing advanced reading, aural, and ensemble skills. Through thoughtful rehearsal and performance, students will explore the relationship between technical precision, musical interpretation, and expressive communication, cultivating the skills and artistry expected of collegiate and professional-level musicians.

Revised: July 2026

Standards

Information Literacy

This unit challenges students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to, digital, visual, media, textual, and technological literacy. Lessons may include the research process and how information is created and produced; critical thinking and using information resources; research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources; the difference between facts, points of view, and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources; the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

New Jersey Diversity and Inclusion Law

In accordance with New Jersey’s Chapter 32 Diversity and Inclusion Law, this unit includes instructional materials that highlight and promote diversity, including diverse cultures, styles, genres, and historical periods.

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-WPvAtENnEgi0EStZXo0uiFYv1Nu4/edit

1.3C.12adv.Cr1	Generating and conceptualizing ideas.
1.3C.12adv.Cr1a	Compose and improvise musical ideas for a variety of purposes and contexts.
1.3C.12adv.Cr2	Organizing and developing ideas.
1.3C.12adv.Cr2a	Select and develop composed and improvised ideas into draft musical works organized for a variety of purposes and contexts.
1.3C.12adv.Cr3	Refining and completing products.
1.3C.12adv.Cr3a	Evaluate and refine varied draft musical works based on appropriate criteria, including the extent to which they address identified purposes and contexts.
1.3C.12adv.Cr3b	Share varied, personally developed musical works (individually or as an ensemble) that address identified purposes and contexts.
1.3C.12adv.Pr4	Selecting, analyzing and interpreting work.
9.3.12.AR-PRF.3	Perform a varied repertoire of vocal and/or instrumental music representing diverse styles, cultures and historical periods.
9.3.12.AR-PRF.4	Demonstrate knowledge of music theory.
1.3C.12adv.Pr4a	Develop and apply criteria to select varied programs to study and perform based on an understanding of theoretical and structural characteristics and expressive challenges in the music, the technical skill of the individual or ensemble, and the purpose and context of the performance.
1.3C.12acc.Pr4a	Develop and apply criteria to select a varied repertoire to study and perform based on an understanding of theoretical and structural characteristics and expressive challenges in the music, the technical skill of the individual or ensemble, and the purpose and context of the performance.
1.3C.12adv.Pr4b	Examine, evaluate, and critique, using music reading skills (where appropriate), how the structure and context impact and inform prepared and improvised performances.
1.3C.12adv.Pr4c	Demonstrate how understanding the style, genre and context of a varied repertoire of music informs prepared and improvised performances as well as performers' technical skills to connect with the audience.
1.3C.12adv.Pr5	Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
1.3C.12adv.Pr5a	Develop, apply, and refine appropriate rehearsal strategies to address individual and ensemble challenges in a varied repertoire of music.
1.3C.12adv.Pr6	Conveying meaning through art.
1.3C.12adv.Pr6a	Demonstrate an understanding and mastery of the technical demands and expressive qualities of the music through prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire representing diverse cultures, styles, genres, and historical periods in multiple types of ensembles.
1.3C.12adv.Pr6b	Demonstrate an ability to connect, engage and respond to audiences through prepared and improvised performances.
1.3C.12adv.Re	Responding
1.3C.12adv.Re7	Perceiving and analyzing products.
1.3C.12adv.Re7a	Use research and personally developed criteria to justify choices made when selecting music, citing knowledge of the music and individual and ensemble purpose and context.

1.3C.12adv.Re7b	Demonstrate and justify how the analysis of structures, contexts and performance decisions inform the response to music.
1.3C.12adv.Re8	Interpreting intent and meaning.
1.3C.12acc.Re8a	Support interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works citing as evidence the treatment of the elements of music, contexts, the setting of the text (when appropriate), and varied researched sources.
1.3C.12adv.Re8a	Justify interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works by comparing and synthesizing varied researched sources, including reference to other art forms.
1.3C.12adv.Re9	Applying criteria to evaluate products.
1.3C.12adv.Re9a	Develop and justify evaluations of music, programs of music, and performances based on criteria, personal decision-making, research, and understanding of contexts.
CRP.K-12.CRP1	Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.
CRP.K-12.CRP1.1	Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.
CRP.K-12.CRP2	Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4	Communicate clearly and effectively and with reason.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.
CRP.K-12.CRP5	Consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of decisions.
CRP.K-12.CRP5.1	Career-ready individuals understand the interrelated nature of their actions and regularly make decisions that positively impact and/or mitigate negative impact on other people, organization, and the environment. They are aware of and utilize new technologies, understandings, procedures, materials, and regulations affecting the nature of their work as it relates to the impact on the social condition, the environment and the profitability of the organization.
CRP.K-12.CRP6	Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
CRP.K-12.CRP6.1	Career-ready individuals regularly think of ideas that solve problems in new and different ways, and they contribute those ideas in a useful and productive manner to improve their organization. They can consider unconventional ideas and suggestions as solutions to issues, tasks or problems, and they discern which ideas and suggestions will add greatest value. They seek new methods, practices, and ideas from a variety of sources and seek to apply those ideas to their own workplace. They take action on their ideas and understand how to bring innovation to an organization.

CRP.K-12.CRP8	Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
CRP.K-12.CRP8.1	Career-ready individuals readily recognize problems in the workplace, understand the nature of the problem, and devise effective plans to solve the problem. They are aware of problems when they occur and take action quickly to address the problem; they thoughtfully investigate the root cause of the problem prior to introducing solutions. They carefully consider the options to solve the problem. Once a solution is agreed upon, they follow through to ensure the problem is solved, whether through their own actions or the actions of others.
CRP.K-12.CRP9	Model integrity, ethical leadership and effective management.
CRP.K-12.CRP9.1	Career-ready individuals consistently act in ways that align personal and community-held ideals and principles while employing strategies to positively influence others in the workplace. They have a clear understanding of integrity and act on this understanding in every decision. They use a variety of means to positively impact the directions and actions of a team or organization, and they apply insights into human behavior to change others' action, attitudes and/or beliefs. They recognize the near-term and long-term effects that management's actions and attitudes can have on productivity, morals and organizational culture.

Essential Questions

- How do performers decide which expressive elements to use when they are not explicitly marked in the score?
- How does one properly interpret musical notation?
- What is the purpose of musical notation?

Enduring Understandings

- Expressive elements must adapt to the specific context of a performance, including the audience, circumstances, and the acoustics of the venue
- Listening is as important as singing when rehearsing and performing in a choral ensemble.
- Rhythmic values of notes might need to be altered in order to be performed with accuracy.
- Studying and understanding the structure and form of a piece of music allows a performer to better interpret the work.
- The expressive elements of a piece might vary for each presentation of the music, depending upon the circumstances of the performance, the audience, and the size and acoustics of the space.
- There is a great deal of information that is not communicated in the musical notation on score.
- Through the course of music history, composers provided more detail and direction to the performer on the score.

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

- Advanced expressive techniques appropriate for a variety of repertoire, including terraced dynamics, extended phrasing and phrase elision, sliding, re-voicing, etc.
- Basic harmonic function, chord structure, inversions, and cadence points in relation to the repertoire being studied.

- Basic musical forms and structure in relation to the repertoire being studied, including binary, sonata, AABA song form, strophic, and through-composed forms.
- How to approach learning a new piece of music.
- How to count and figure out a complex rhythm that is unable to be read at-sight, including dotted rhythms, duplets and triplets, simple, compound, and mixed meters.
- How to interpret and perform all types of musical notation dealing with pitch, rhythm, and expression, presented in a variety of scores, including non-traditional notation.
- How to learn their own musical part without assistance from the teacher.
- How to perform consonant and dissonant harmonies in tune.
- How to utilize solfege to learn a piece with or without writing it in the score and understand when it is appropriate to use or unnecessary.

Learning Plan

- At times, students are asked to prepare a section of music on their own and then tested on it. During the holiday caroling season, students prepare several carols outside of class and are assessed on their accuracy and musicality.
- Preview the essential questions and connect to learning throughout the course.
- Students and teacher examine the form and structure of the pieces they are performing and discuss how the composer created the work. Large harmonic and melodic ideas as well as cadence points are discussed. This informs their expressive decision-making process.
- Students are given the opportunity to run rehearsal, to teach a piece or section of music, and to conduct the choir, bringing their own ideas to the whole ensemble.
- Students are trained to acknowledge their mistakes by raising their hand in the midst of the rehearsal. This allows the class to save time by addressing fewer student mistakes. This promotes a level of conscientization, since the student knows the mistake has been made and he or she has the responsibility to fix the problem. The teacher does not need to address it unless the mistake is made repeatedly.
- Students assist teacher in determining how to approach each piece, whether to use solfege or neutral syllable to learn, where to begin, what rhythmic and pitch, and harmonic issues should be isolated and practiced separately.
- Students debate expressive elements of repertoire as they appear in the repertoire selected. Once students become more familiar with the notes and rhythms of a given piece, teacher asks students to consider the elements of expression which are not marked in the score. What should the dynamic be in this section? Should these two phrases be connected? Should this section be performed slower? Why?
- Students experience a variety of meters, rhythms, keys, and tonalities within the choral repertoire selected each year. Each piece has its own unique musical characteristics and challenges for students and teacher to explore.
- Students perform repertoire accurately, expressively, and at a high-level for school and community concerts and events.
- Teacher daily engages students in brief warm-up and sight-reading exercises. Students practice solfege, scales, and complex harmonies. Students may be asked to compose short melodies on the spot or improvise harmonies to given melodies. Resources could include 31 Bach Chorales for Sight Singing and exercises from the Jensen Sight Singing Series.
- The teacher records various rehearsals and concert performances. The class listens, critiques, and assesses the accuracy of rhythm and pitch, as well as the effectiveness of the expressive elements in the performances.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Performing Arts students demonstrate differentiated proficiency according to their ability to answer the essential questions through formative and summative assessments. Evidence of progression may be demonstrated in divergent ways through the Artistic Processes of Creating, Performing/ Presenting/ Producing, Connecting, and Responding.

- Debate, experiment with, and determine the appropriateness of using rubato in the repertoire and changing or being flexible with the tempo or pulse for interpretational purposes.
- Determine if and how a note should be rhythmically altered to create an accurate and uniform sound.
- Explore and reflect on the essential questions through discussions and journaling.
- Identify basic musical forms within choral repertoire.
- Improvise and compose accurate melodies and harmonies within a given key and meter.
- Improvise and compose harmonies to a given melody.
- Lead a rehearsal, a warm-up, and/or conduct the ensemble singing a piece of choral repertoire.
- Practice and perform a somewhat disjunct and primarily diatonic melody at-sight accurately and in tune.
- Practice and perform chromatic, whole-tone, and modal scales as a class and individually, as utilized in repertoire.
- Practice and perform complex pitches and rhythms as a class and individually, at-sight and rehearsed, with accuracy.
- Practice and perform notated dynamics and articulations accurately at sight.
- Prepare and perform complex repertoire that includes divisi with one or two singers on a part.
- Recognize and acknowledge musical mistakes within rehearsal, including poor intonation, incorrect rhythm or pitch, neglecting an articulation or dynamic.

Materials

The materials used in this course allow for integration of a variety of instructional, supplemental, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

- 31 Bach Chorales for Sight Singing - Edited by John Leavitt
- A variety of advanced high school choral repertoire, including but not limited to recommendation lists from the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), and the NYSSMA Manual
- Jensen Sight Singing Series - Volumes 1, 2, 3 - Hal Leonard

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

This link includes content specific accommodations and modifications for all populations: Performing Arts Accommodations & Modifications

Course-specific modifications include:

- Allow students to choose from several journal, essay, or discussion prompts and allow for multiple methods of response.
- Offer choice to the class on which pieces they would like to prepare, and which pieces they are most comfortable performing.
- Provide ample space for all students to participate and respond during class discussions.
- Provide individual attention and peer assistance to those needing more help with sight-reading.