Unit 5: Jazz Composition

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

Brief Summary of Unit

In this unit, students will develop foundational skills in jazz composition by creating original tunes, etudes, and short passages in a variety of jazz styles. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the structural, harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic characteristics that define each style, and applying those concepts creatively in original work.

Revised August 2025

Standards

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

1.3C.12acc.Cr1a	Compose and improvise ideas for arrangements, sections and short compositions for specific purposes that reflect characteristic(s) of music from a variety of historical periods or cultures studied in rehearsal.
1.3C.12acc.Cr2a	Select and develop arrangements, sections, and short compositions for specific purposes that demonstrate understanding of characteristic(s) of music from a variety of cultures studied in rehearsal.
1.3C.12acc.Cr3a	Evaluate and refine draft arrangements, sections, short compositions, and improvisations based on personally developed criteria, including the extent to which they address identified purposes.
1.3C.12acc.Cr3b	Share personally developed arrangements, sections and short compositions (individually or as an ensemble) that address identified purposes.
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.12acc.Pr4b	Document and demonstrate, using music reading skills (where appropriate), how compositional devices employed, and theoretical and structural aspects of musical works, may impact and inform prepared and improvised performances.

Transfer

Essential Questions

- How are melodies constructed?
- What are the defining characteristics of jazz tunes, etudes, and passages?
- What forms are common to various styles and how can they be adjusted to fit a new musical idea?
- How are harmonic characteristics incorporated in compositions?
- What are different styles of Jazz music?
- What methods are used when composing music in various styles?

Essential Understandings

- A musical idea should transfer the original inspiration.
- Rhythmic patterns are often common among specific styles.
- Rhythmic variation and development is essential when composing.
- Technique and skill are the servants to the musical idea.
- Melodies and harmonic backgrounds work together.

Students Will Know

- How chromatic approach can be applied to basic melodies.
- How the creation of music can begin with harmony, melody, or rhythm.
- What a motif is.
- What common song forms (AABA, Blues, AB, etc.) are.
- What melodic adaptations (including sequence, augmentation, diminution, inversion, extension, truncation, rhythmic adaptation, etc.) are.

Students Will Be Skilled At

- Creating music from a given harmonic structure or a given melody.
- Creating their own musical works using common techniques
- Taking a basic idea and expanding on it.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

- discuss the essential questions in a large group.
- discuss the performance of student compositions.
- perform the student compositions.

- self-assess compositions through a class developed rubric.
- write examples of tunes, etudes, and passages.

Learning Plan

- Develop an assessment rubric for the evaluation and self-assessment of student compositions.
- Have the students compose full tunes and perform them in class.
- Have the students create chord progressions to be used as vehicles of class improvisation.
- Have the students create etudes over original and given chord progressions.
- Have the students perform their etudes in class.
- Have the students write short passages over given harmonies, using specific given techniques.
- Preview the essential questions and connect to learning throughout the unit.
- Students will self-assess their compositions following a performance of their work.
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Materials

- Music notation program capable of playback.
- Pencil/pen
- Smartboard
- Staff paper

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

Jazz Band QSAC Accommodations and Modifications

- Allow less experienced students to apply basic techniques only.
- Require different lengths of assignments to match the various levels of learning.
- Require more advanced students to include introductions, transitions, etc. in their own compositions.
- Vary the difficulty level of chord progressions given to students.
- Vary the difficulty level of ideas to be used in the students' full compositions.
- Vary the rhythmic complexity required in their compositions.