

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>

MU.9-12.1.3C.12adv.Cr1a	Compose and improvise musical ideas for a variety of purposes and contexts.
MU.9-12.1.3C.12adv.Cr2a	Select and develop composed and improvised ideas into draft musical works organized for a variety of purposes and contexts.
MU.9-12.1.3C.12adv.Cr3a	Evaluate and refine varied draft musical works based on appropriate criteria, including the extent to which they address identified purposes and contexts.
MU.9-12.1.3C.12adv.Cr3b	Share varied, personally developed musical works (individually or as an ensemble) that address identified purposes and contexts.

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.