**Music Vocabulary**

**A cappella.** Unaccompanied choral singing.

**Accompaniment.** A vocal or solo part that supports or is background for a solo part.

**Articulation.** In performance, the characteristics of attack and decay of tones and the manner and extent to which tones in sequence are connected or disconnected.

**Atonal.** Music in which no single tone is the home base or key center.

**Bar.** A unit of music, such as 12-bar or 8-bar, denoting length.

**Beat.** A unit of measure in rhythmic time.

**Binary.** A musical form consisting of two main sections.

**Cadence.** A group of notes or chords at the end of a phrase or piece of music that gives a feeling of pausing or finality.

**Cadenza.** A parenthetic flourish in a solo piece commonly just before a final or other important cadence.

**Canon.** A musical form in which melody is imitated exactly in one or more parts, similar to a round.

**Chord.** Three or more tones played simultaneously.

**Classroom instruments.** Instruments typically used in the general music classroom, including, for example, recorder-type instruments, chorded zithers, mallet instruments, simple percussion instruments, fretted instruments, keyboard instruments, and electronic instruments.

**Coda.** A "tail" or short closing section added at the end of a piece of music.

**Compose.** To create original music by organizing sound. Usually written down for others to perform.

**Composition.** A single, complete piece of music, (also, piece and work).

**Compound meter.** Meter characterized by 3:1 relationship of the beat to the subdivided beat (the note receiving the beat in compound meter is always a dotted note.).
Concert. A program by a chamber ensemble, orchestra, band, or chorus; there are also rock, jazz, and pop concerts.

Diction. The use of pure and uniform vowel sounds and the execution of crisp and energetic consonants as appropriate for the musical style being sung.

Duple meter. The grouping of beats into sets of two.

Dynamic levels, dynamics. Degrees of loudness.

Elements of music. Pitch, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, timbre, texture, form.

Embellishment. Notes that are added to ornament a melody (melodic embellishment) or rhythmic pattern (rhythmic embellishment).

Ensemble. Any group of performers, but it is most commonly used for smaller groups. A large group would be referred to as an orchestra, chorus, or band.

Expression, expressive, expressively. With appropriate dynamics, phrasing, style, and interpretation and appropriate variations in dynamics and tempo.

Form. The overall structural organization of a music composition (e.g., AB, ABA, call and response, rondo, theme and variations, sonata-allegro) and the interrelationships of music events within the overall structure.

Genre. A type or category of music (e.g., sonata, opera, oratorio, art song, gospel, suite, jazz, madrigal, march, work song, lullaby, barbershop, Dixieland).

Harmony. The simultaneous sounding of two or more tones of relative tone.

Improvise. To spontaneously compose music.

Melody. A rhythmic succession of single tones organized into a cohesive or aesthetic whole.

Meter. The grouping in which a succession of rhythmic pulses or beats is organized; indicated by a meter signature at the beginning of a work.

Meter signature. An indicator of the meter of a musical work, usually presented in the form of a fraction, the denominator of which indicates the unit of measurement and the numerator of which indicates the number of units that make up a measure.

MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface). Standard specifications that enable electronic instruments such as the synthesizer, sampler, sequencer, and drum machine from any manufacturer to communicate with one another and with computers.

Modal tonalities. Music based on scales other than major, minor, or pentatonic.
**Notation.** Written documentation of musical notes indicating pitch and rhythm for performance.

**Obbligato.** An elaborate melodic part accompanying a solo or principal melody.

**Ostinato.** A short musical pattern that is repeated persistently throughout a composition.

**Pentatonic scale.** Music based on a five-tone scale using tones, Do, Re, Mi, Sol and La.

**Performance.** The actual act of making music; sometimes used to mean a musical presentation.

**Phrase.** A musical idea comparable to a sentence or a clause in language; may be complete or incomplete.

**Pitch.** The location of a note in related to its highness or lowness.

**Program.** (1) An entire concert or recital (2) The printed booklet given to audience members at a concert, opera, recital, etc. (3) A literary text, a place, an event, or the like, on which a musical composition is based.

**Recital.** A program by a soloist or by 2 performers (soloist and accompanist, or a duo).

**Rhythm.** Ordered flow of music through time. Combinations of long and short, or even or uneven sounds that establish a musical continuum and convey a sense of movement.

**Rondo.** A musical form in which the A section alternates with contrasting sections (ABACA)

**Score.** The organized notation of all of the instrumental and/or vocal parts of a composition.

**Simple meter.** Meter characterized by a 2:1 relationship of the beat to the subdivided beat (the note receiving the beat in simple meter is always an eighth note, quarter note, or half note.).

**Staff/Staves.** The horizontal lines on and between which notes are written.
Style. The distinctive or characteristic manner in which the elements of music are treated. In practice, the term may be applied to, for example, composers (the style of Copland), periods (Baroque style), media (keyboard style), nations (French style), form or type of composition (fugal style, contrapuntal style), or genre (operatic style, bluegrass style).

Symbols of musical expression. Commonly accepted written symbols for expressive elements such as dynamics, tempo, articulation, phrasing and style.

Syncopation. An arrangement of rhythm that places emphasis on weak beats or weak parts of beats.

Technical accuracy, technical skills. The ability to perform with appropriate timbre, intonation, and diction and to play or sing the correct pitches and rhythms.

Technique. The mechanical skill required to play an instrument or sing.

Tempo. The pace at which music moves according to the speed of the underlying beat.

Ternary. A musical form consisting of three main sections.

Texture. The character of the different layers of horizontal and vertical sounds.

Theme and variation. A compositional form in which a theme is clearly stated and is followed by a number of variations.

Timbre. The color or quality of a musical tone.

Time Signature. A sign used in music to indicate meter, usually written as a fraction with the bottom number indicating the kind of note to be played as a unit of time and the top number indicating the number of units in each measure.

Tone. A musical sound that has the properties of pitch, duration, volume, and timbre.

Triple meter. The grouping of beats into sets of three.

Twelve-bar blues. A chord pattern often used in blues music based on the 1st, 4th, and 5th chords and the blues scale in specific order within twelve bars.

Vocal production. (Also referred to as vocal technique) A singer's vocal tone as determined by the combination of correct posture, effective breathing, raised soft palate, tonal placement and diction.

Vocal, vocalist. Vocal means of the voice; vocalist is a synonym for singer.