

Bentonville West High School

AP Music Theory Syllabus (2026–2027)

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Course Description

AP Music Theory is equivalent to an introductory college-level music theory course. Students develop skills in music literacy, analysis, part writing, sight-singing, melodic and harmonic dictation, and listening. The course emphasizes the music of the common-practice period while incorporating a variety of musical styles.

Course Objectives

- Analyze performed and notated music.
- Develop fluency in music notation, scales, intervals, chords, and harmonic function.
- Apply principles of voice leading and part writing.
- Perform sight-singing in major and minor keys.
- Complete melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic dictation tasks.
- Prepare for success on the AP Music Theory Exam.

Year-at-a-Glance Scope and Sequence

First Six Weeks (Aug. 11 – Sept. 18)

AP Units 1–2: Music Fundamentals

- Pitch notation
- Rhythm and meter
- Major and minor scales
- Key signatures
- Modes
- Intervals
- Melody
- Texture and timbre

Second Six Weeks (Sept. 21 – Oct. 30)

AP Unit 3: Triads and Seventh Chords

- Triad construction
- Triad quality
- Inversions
- Seventh chords
- Roman numerals
- Figured bass
- Harmonic function

Third Six Weeks (Nov. 2 – Dec. 18)

AP Units 4–5: Harmony and Voice Leading

- Part writing
- Voice leading
- Cadences
- Phrase structure
- Predominant function
- Cadential 6/4
- Functional harmony

Fourth Six Weeks (Jan. 5 – Feb. 13)

AP Unit 6: Embellishments, Motives, and Melodic Devices

- Non-chord tones
- Suspensions
- Sequences
- Motives
- Phrase expansion
- Diatonic modulation

Fifth Six Weeks (Feb. 16 – Apr. 3)

AP Units 7–8: Secondary Function and Form

- Secondary dominants
- Secondary leading-tone chords
- Binary form
- Ternary form
- Rounded binary
- Sonata
- Rondo
- Modes

Sixth Six Weeks (Apr. 6 – May 21)

AP Review and Post-Exam Enrichment

- AP practice exams
- FRQ review
- Dictation review
- Sight-singing review
- Modal mixture
- 20th-century techniques
- Composition project

Daily Skill Development

- Sight-singing practice every block

- Rhythmic reading every block
- Melodic dictation every block
- Weekly harmonic analysis
- Weekly AP-style free-response practice
- Regular listening and score analysis activities

Assessment

Assessments may include quizzes, unit exams, AP-style free-response questions, dictation exercises, sight-singing evaluations, projects, and practice AP examinations.