Glossary

The Arts Years 0–10

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

DANCE	
Word or phrase	**Description**
Canon	A phrase of movement that is repeated at different times by two or more dancers.
Compose	To create a work of art by exploring, choosing, and ordering movements.
Contemporary dance	A style of expressive dance that blends elements of modern, ballet, jazz, and lyrical styles. It focuses on free movement, floor work, and personal emotion rather than strict rules.
Contrast	When dancers perform contrasting movements that highlight differences and create interest.
Echoing	A movement or phrase repeated shortly after the original, sometimes with small alterations in timing, intensity, or spacing.
Elements	The building blocks or ingredients of dance, grouped under headings of body, space, time, energy, and relationships.
Energy	The dynamic quality, force, and effort used to execute movement.
Folk dance	Traditional dances that reflect the culture and way of life of people living in a certain country or region. They are performed at social gatherings by untrained dancers and are passed down through generations.
Freeze-frame	A convention in which the members of a group use their bodies to make an image capturing an idea, theme, or moment in time.
Genre	A category or style of art, music, dance, drama, or literature that shares common features.
Hip Hop dance	A range of street dance styles with roots in African American and Latino communities. Dancers perform movements primarily to Hip Hop music. The style emphasises rhythm, personal expression, and a grounded posture.

Kapa haka	A group or team performing and practising Māori performing arts.
Kawa	Protocols and customs that guide expected behaviour and practices during certain ceremonies.
Level	Refers to the height of a movement. Low level is from the knees to the floor, medium level is from above the knees to the top of the head, and high level is above the head.
Locomotor movement	A travelling movement in which the body is moved from one place to another.
Mnemonics	Memory aids used to remember musical concepts, often involving phrases, patterns, or rhymes.
Non-locomotor movement	Movement that is done while staying in one place.
Pathways	The trails created as the body moves through space. Air pathways are made when a body part moves through the air. Floor pathways are the paths made as the body travels from one place to another. Pathways can be straight, curved, or zigzag.
Phrase	A short sequence of connected movements. It is a building block of choreography.
Poi	Songs performed, usually by women, in which the poi is swung in various movements to accompany the singing. ‘Poi’ can refer to the physical objects, the choreography itself, or the accompanying music. Poi are tethered weights swung in circular pathways and patterns. They may be on short or long strings.
Relationship	Describes the connection between dancers. They may be time relationships (e.g. echo, unison, canon), movement relationships (e.g. mirroring, copying, shadowing, contrasting), space relationships (e.g. towards, away, above, below), or groupings and formations.
Repetition	The use of the same movement or phrase more than once. A movement may be repeated immediately after first use, repeated in another part of a sequence, or repeated throughout a sequence.
Sāsā	A Sāmoan dance in which rows of (often seated) dancers perform rapid body percussion movements such as clapping, slapping, tapping, and snapping.
Sequence	A series of movements, longer than a phrase but shorter than a section of a dance.
Setting	The context of a performance, including situation, environment, and audience.

Shape	The shape made with one or more body parts, the whole body or formation of dancers. Shapes may be curved, round, straight, angular, or twisted.
Soundscape	A sequence of sounds, created by performers or other technologies, shaped to enhance action and mood in a drama or dance.
Space	Describes where the body is moving and includes elements such as pathways, level, focus, direction, facing, place, and range.
Style	More specific than genre (e.g. the waltz, tango and foxtrot are styles within the ballroom dance genre). It is often associated with a particular performer, performance group, choreographer, or period.
Techniques	Practised movement skills used to perform dance safely and expressively, including control, balance, coordination, and use of energy.
Tempo	The speed of movement in a dance.
Time	When movement happens. Time includes elements such as tempo, beat, rhythm, duration, and accent.
Variation	When movements that have already been established in a dance are repeated in a different way.

DRAMA	
Word or phrase	**Description**
Action	What each person in role is doing and thinking; the physical and emotional movement that drives the story forward.
Annotate	To make notes on a script about performance choices such as interpretation, movement, blocking, or vocal delivery.
Audience interpretation	The way an audience understands and makes meaning from a performance, influenced by context and dramatic choices.
Body	Communication through posture, gesture, facial expression, and eye contact, rather than words.
Chorus	A group of performers who comment on action and themes through collective voice or movement.
Contrast	Differences between characters or elements that heighten tension or meaning.
Conventions	Established dramatic practices used to explore meaning (e.g. freeze-frame, narration, soliloquy).
Costume	Clothing and accessories that communicate character, period, status, and personality.
Devise	To create drama collaboratively through improvisation and exploration rather than from a script.
Dialogue	Spoken words exchanged between characters.
Direct address	When a performer speaks directly to the audience, breaking the fourth wall.
Dramatic structure	The organisation of drama into structure with scenes and sequencing (e.g. beginning, middle, end)
Elements	Core components of drama including action, role, situation, time, place, focus, and tension.
Emphasis	Stress placed on specific words to shape meaning.
Ensemble	A group of performers working collaboratively with shared focus and responsibility.
Flashback / Flashforward	A convention where action shifts backward or forward in time.
Focus	Directing audience attention to what is most important in a moment.

Freeze frame	Pressing pause on a scene of live action, marking the moment and highlighting a specific intense point in a scene.
Gesture	A movement of the body or limbs that expresses meaning.
Hot seating	A process convention where a character in role is questioned to reveal thoughts and background.
Improvisation	Spontaneous performance without a script or preparation.
Inquiry drama	Drama structured around investigation and questioning through being in role.
Lighting	The use of an artificial light source to control mood, focus, time, and atmosphere.
Manaakitanga	A Māori value of showing care, trust, and mutual respect.
Mantle of the Expert	An inquiry-based drama approach where learners take on expert roles with responsibility and status.
Mime	Theatre without spoken words, using movement and gesture to communicate meaning.
Mood	The emotional feeling of a scene or performance.
Movement	Physical expression that shows a character's intentions and emotional state.
Narration	A convention where action is explained or commented on, often by a narrator in or out of role.
Objective	What a character wants or is trying to achieve in a scene or situation.
Out of character	Being out of role is stepping out of character and acting as self.
Parallel play	Playing alongside others in a shared imagined context without direct interaction.
Pause	A deliberate silence used for meaning or emphasis.
Place	The physical location where the action occurs.
Props	Portable objects used by actors to support action and realism.
Role	The identity adopted by a performer in drama.
Role-play	Acting out situations from a character's perspective to explore experience.
Sequence	A series of connected actions or scenes in order.

Set	The physical stage environment constructed for a performance.
Setting	The time and place in which the action occurs.
Situation	The circumstances characters face that shape their actions and decisions.
Slow motion	Performing actions very slowly to heighten tension or detail.
Sound	Audio elements used in performance, including effects and music.
Space	How performers use distance, levels, and positioning on stage.
Split stage	Dividing the stage to show simultaneous or contrasting action.
Status	A character's level of power or influence shown through behaviour and space.
Subtext	The underlying meaning beneath what is said or done.
Symbol / Symbolism	Using actions, images, or sounds to represent deeper meanings.
Tableau	A carefully created dramatic image. Made with bodies to capture a moment, idea, or relationship.
Teacher-in-role	A convention where the teacher takes on a role to guide learning from within the drama.
Techniques	The tools and devices used to develop characters, advance the plot, and immerse the audience in a story.
Theatre Form	The overall structure or style of a dramatic work (e.g. puppetry, physical theatre, Greek theatre).
Technologies	Tools and equipment used to support drama (e.g. lighting, sound, props).
Tension	Emotional or mental pressure that heightens interest and focus.
Text	Any expressive work using words, images, or sound.
Thought-tracking	A process convention in which the action stops while an actor describes the thoughts and feelings of their character
Time	The historical period or time of day in which the action takes place.
Tone	The emotional quality of the voice.
Transitions	How drama moves from one moment or scene to another.

Voice	An actor’s use of pitch, pace, pause, volume, and tone.

MUSIC content still under development	
Word or phrase	**Description**
Accent	A musical symbol indicating that the beginning of a note should be emphasised.
Accelerando	A tempo marking that tells the performer to gradually get faster**.**
Accidentals	Symbols which, when written directly in front of a note, raise or lower its pitch, usually by a semitone. The main accidentals are sharp (♯)**,** flat (♭)**,** and natural (♮)**.**
Adagio	A tempo marking that indicates music should be performed slowly.
Allegro	A tempo marking that indicates the music should be performed quickly.
Andante	A tempo marking that indicates music should be performed at a walking pace.
Articulation	The way a note is started, sustained, and finished, for example, short and detached (staccato) or long, smooth, and connected (legato).
Automation	The use of computer controls to change sound settings (e.g. volume, effects) automatically during playback without needing to adjust them live.
Baroque	A style of European music from c.1600–1750, known for its elaborate detail, dramatic contrasts, and the use of basso continuo. Composers include Bach, Handel, and Vivaldi.
Blues	A musical genre and form originating among African Americans. It often features a repeating 12-bar chord progression, blue notes, and highly emotive vocal lines, subjects, and themes.
Body percussion	The use of the human body to produce rhythmic sounds through actions such as clapping, stomping, patting, and finger snapping.
Brass instruments	A family of instruments (e.g. trumpet, trombone, tuba) that are made of metal, have long coiled tubes, a flared bell, and are played by buzzing the lips against a cup-shaped metal mouthpiece.
Call-and-response	A structural device where one group or individual performs or plays a musical phrase, and a second group or individual performs in response to the first.
Choral music	Music written for and sung by a choir.
Chord	A group of notes played simultaneously forming harmony.

Chorus	A section of a song that occurs several times and usually contains the main musical and lyrical ideas.
Classical	1. A term used generally to refer to a broad genre of music, generally referring to art music from the Western world, often characterised by formality and complex forms. 2. A style of European music from c.1750–1820, known for its elegance, use of homophonic texture and reliance on tonic/dominant harmonies. Composers include Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven.
Clef	A symbol which must appear on the leftmost side of any notated line of music. Different types of clefs show which notes are assigned to specific lines or spaces. The treble clef is used for high sounds, and the bass clef is used for low sounds.
Composition	1. The art and process of creating an original piece of music. 2. A piece of original music such as a song or instrumental work.
Compound time	A type of musical metre where each beat of the bar divides into three equal parts. All compound time signatures have a minimum of two strong beats.
Contemporary	Recently written music of any style, including pop, rock, dance, and contemporary classical music.
Contrast	Musical interest created through the use of clear differences within musical elements (e.g. sudden changes or differences in dynamics, tempo, or texture).
Conventions	Established practices in creating, performing, and interpreting musical works.
Crescendo	A gradual increase in volume.
Crotchet	A musical note equal to one beat in a bar of 4/4 time. Also known as quarter note.
Decrescendo	A gradual decrease in volume.
Drone	A single continuous note or chord that sounds all the way through a piece of music or a large part of it.
Dominant chord	A chord built on the fifth note of a scale. It is important in harmony and often leads back to the tonic chord (the main ‘home’ chord built on the first note of the scale).
Dynamics	The volume of music (e.g. piano, forte).
Elements	The components that make up music (e.g. pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, texture, tone colour/timbre, form/structure, harmony).

Flat	A symbol that means a note should be played one semitone (half step) lower than its usual sound.
Folk music	Traditional music that originates within communities, often passed down aurally, reflecting the cultural stories, values, and everyday experiences of a people or region.
Form	The overall structure and organisation of a piece of music.
Forte	A dynamic marking that indicates music should be played loudly. It is represented in written music with the symbol f**.**
Fortissimo	A dynamic marking that indicates music should be played very loudly. It is represented in written music with the symbol ff**.**
Genre	A category or style of art, music, dance, drama, or literature that shares common features. Genres help group creative works based on similarities in form, content, or tradition.
Harmony	The musical effect of pitches sounding together, harmony can remain static, or progress over time to create tension, resolution, and a sense of movement.
Hip Hop music	A music genre with roots in African American and Latino communities. It often features rhythmic vocal rhyming called rapping, and can be accompanied by DJing, scratching, beatboxing, and synthesised electronic beats or sampled loops.
Homophonic	Describes music with one clear, dominant melody, supported by other parts (instruments or voices) to create a harmonic accompaniment.
Improvisation	Creating and playing music spontaneously, in the moment, without relying on a pre-written score.
Instrumentation	The selection and combination of instruments.
Interval	An interval is the distance in pitch between two notes. An interval is expressed by number (e.g. 2nd, 3rd) and by quality (e.g. major, minor, perfect).
Kōauau	A traditional Māori flute-like wind instrument made from wood, bone, or stone.
Legato	An articulation marking that means to connect notes smoothly.
Major	The name given to a scale, key or chord characterised by a major 3rd (four half-steps) between the first and third notes. It is often described as sounding cheerful, bright, or happy.
Melody	A sequence of notes that form a tune in a piece of music.

Metronome	A device that produces a sound at regular time intervals (bpm/beats per minute) to help musicians maintain a consistent tempo when practicing.
Mezzo forte	A dynamic marking that indicates music should be played moderately loud. It is represented in written music with the symbol mf.
Mezzo piano	A dynamic marking that indicates music should be played moderately soft. It is represented in written music with the symbol mp.
Metre	The way a steady beat is organised into groups, some strong (e.g. downbeat) and some weak (e.g. upbeat). It is commonly notated using a time signature. Common metres are duple, triple, and quadruple (groups of 2, 3, 4 beats).
Minim	A musical note equal to two beats in a bar of 4/4 time. Also known as half note.
Minor	The name given to a scale, key or chord characterised by a minor 3rd (three half steps) between the first and third notes. It is often described as sounding sad, dark, or serious.
Monophonic	Describes music with a single melodic line and no harmony or accompaniment.
Motif	A short melodic or rhythmic idea that is repeated and developed throughout a piece of music and provides a basic building block of the piece.
Notation	The system of writing music using symbols.
Octave	An interval that spans eight notes on a musical scale, the upper and lower notes having the same letter name (e.g. A-A, F-F).
Ostinato	The continuous repetition of a short rhythmic or melodic pattern throughout a section of music to create a supportive background layer.
Pātē	A Sāmoan percussion instrument of the slit drum family, used in traditional music and dance.
Pentatonic	Describes a musical scale made up of five notes per octave, such as the major pentatonic scale (built by removing the 4th and 7th notes from a major scale) or the minor pentatonic scale (built by removing the 2nd and 6th notes from a natural minor scale).
Phrase	A short section of music that sounds complete on its own, like a musical sentence.
Pitch	The perceived highness or lowness of sound.

Pitched percussion	Percussion instruments (e.g. timpani, xylophone) on which sounds of definite pitch can be played.
Pianissimo	A dynamic marking that indicates music should be played very softly. It is represented in written music with the symbol pp**.**
Piano	A dynamic marking that indicates music should be played softly. It is represented in written music with the symbol p**.**
Pop music	A music genre designed to have a broad appeal, be highly memorable, and be easy to dance to. It often features a verse–chorus structure with a simple melody and blends elements from a variety of other genres.
Pulse	The steady, regular heartbeat or foot-tap of a piece of music, which anchors and organises all other musical rhythms.
Quaver	A musical note equal to half a beat in a bar of 4/4 time. Also known as an eighth note.
Repertoire	The music available by different composers that is associated with specific voices, instruments, and styles (e.g. flute repertoire, choral repertoire).
Reverb	The lingering wash of sound which occurs when music is performed in a large room (e.g. a cathedral) is called a reverberation. The electronic simulation of this sound is commonly known as reverb and can be applied to live or recorded music using digital effects.
Rhythm	The way musical sounds and silences of different durations are arranged in patterns over time.
Scale	An ordered sequence of notes arranged by pitch, typically ascending or descending. Scales provide the tonal framework for melodies and harmonies.
Score	Written music, containing notes, rhythms, and instructions for different instruments or voices.
Sequence	The repetition of a musical phrase at a higher or lower pitch.
Sharp	A symbol that means a note should be played one semitone (half step) higher than its usual sound.
Soundscape	A ‘sonic landscape’ made up of layered sounds, textures, and tones designed to immerse the listener. The term is often used to describe ambient or rhythmically ambiguous music.
Simple time	A type of musical metre where each beat of the bar divides into two equal parts.

Staccato	A type of musical articulation where each note is produced in a short, crisp way, with a brief silence left before the next note.
Staff / stave	A set of five horizontal lines and four spaces used in written music to show the pitch of notes. Each line and space represent a different musical note depending on the clef used. Notes are placed on the staff to show how high or low they sound.
String instruments	A family of instruments (e.g. violin, viola, cello, double bass, guitar, harp) that produce sound through the vibration of stretched strings, which may be plucked, bowed, or struck.
Stick notation	A system for notating musical rhythms using notes stems only, sometimes with the addition of pitch indications written underneath.
Structure	The arrangement of musical sections.
Subdominant chord	A chord built on the fourth note of a scale. Along with tonic and dominant chords, it is one of the most common chords used in song writing.
Taonga puoro	Traditional Māori musical instruments.
Techniques	Specific methods used to perform or create music, such as how instruments are played or how the voice is used to produce sound.
Technologies	Equipment used to help create, present, document, listen to, analyse, or learn about musical works, including electronic media and production or performance equipment (e.g. mics, amps, effects).
Tempo	The speed of the beat or pulse in music (e.g. slow, medium, fast).
Texture	Describes the variation in sound according to the number of parts or layers in a piece of music (how many instruments or voices are playing at once). Texture can be described using terms like monophonic and homophonic or words like thick, thin, or sparse.
Time signature	Two stacked numbers written on a staff at the start of a score or written part to indicate metre.
Tonality	The organisation of music around a particular tonal centre or key. The key or scale a piece of music is based on.
Tone colour (timbre)	The unique quality of a sound that makes it different from other sounds, even if the pitch and volume are the same. It is what distinguishes a violin from a flute or a voice from a piano.

Tonic chord	A chord built on the first note of a scale (the main ‘home’ chord).
Triad	A three-note chord built by stacking consecutive 3rds. Triads can be formed above any note in a scale (e.g. 1-3-5, 5-7-9).
Unpitched percussion	Percussion instruments (e.g. snare drum, wood block) on which only sounds of indefinite pitch can be played.
Waiata	Traditional or modern Māori songs used to express feelings, support others, teach te reo Māori, and bring people together.
Waiata-ā-ringa	A Māori action song that combines singing with hand and body movements.
Wind instruments	A family of musical instruments (e.g. flute, clarinet, oboe, recorder, saxophone) that produce sound through the vibration of air by blowing across or into a mouthpiece that may contain a reed or reeds.
Variation	A repeated version of a musical theme or motif that has been changed slightly but it still recognisable. This could be through altering the rhythm, pitch, tempo, or the instrumentation.

VISUAL ARTS	
Word or phrase	**Description**
Alignment	The arrangement of elements so they line up visually, either along edges, centres, or paths, to create order, balance, and connection in a design or artwork.
Asymmetry	Where two sides or parts of something do not match.
Balance	The way elements are arranged in an artwork to create a sense of stability, which can be symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial.
Colour	Expresses mood or meaning. Primary colours are red, yellow, and blue. Colours vary in tint (light/dark) and intensity (brightness).
Colour theory	A set of principles used to understand how colours work together, including how they mix, contrast, and create mood or harmony in artwork.
Complementary colours	Colours opposite each other on the colour wheel, a circle which shows relationships between different colours.
Composition	The way shapes, colours, lines, textures, and space are arranged to make an artwork look balanced and interesting.
Contrast	The use of strong differences such as light and dark, smooth and rough, or large and small to make parts of an artwork stand out or create visual interest.
Conventions	Recognised ways of working, representing, or organising visual elements that help communicate meaning in artworks. These may include use of perspective, framing, symbolism, or composition techniques.
Cubism	An art style where objects are broken into geometric shapes and shown from multiple angles at once, rather than from a single viewpoint. It often looks abstract and fragmented.
Elements	The key components used to convey meaning in the visual arts (e.g. line, mark-making, shape, colour, space, scale, texture).
Emphasis	The principle of design that draws attention to a specific area or element in an artwork, making it stand out through contrast, placement, colour, or size.
Fauvism	An art style known for its bold, bright colours and simple shapes. Fauvist artists used colour to express emotion rather than to show things realistically.

Focus	The area or element within an artwork that draws the viewer's attention and is intended to be the centre of interest. Artists use techniques such as contrast, placement, and detail to create focus and guide how the artwork is viewed.
Form	A particular field or genre within the visual arts (e.g. painting, printmaking), or the compositional structure of an artwork.
Interpretation	Analysis or appreciation of meaning in an artwork by a viewer.
Kōwhaiwhai	Painted scroll ornamentation typically used in wharenui. They include flowing, symmetrical designs to represent stories, genealogy, and natural elements like plants and rivers.
Layout	The arrangement of visual elements in a composition.
Line	Defines shapes, suggests movement, or expresses emotion (e.g. long, short, curved, broken).
Mandala	A geometric design, often circular, that represents unity, balance, and harmony; traditionally used in spiritual and ritual contexts, especially in Hindu and Buddhist cultures.
Maquette	A small-scale model or rough version of a sculpture or artwork, used by artists to plan and test ideas before creating the final piece.
Mark-making	The process of creating lines, dots, patterns, or textures using tools and materials (e.g. scribbles, dabs, smudges, strokes).
Media	Material or materials commonly used to make artworks (e.g. graphite, ink, paint, photographic paper, canvas), three-dimensional media (e.g. fibres, clay, wood), and time-based media (e.g. film, videotape).
Motif	A distinct, often repeating idea or feature within a two-dimensional, three-dimensional, or time-based artwork.
Mural	A large artwork painted or applied directly on to a wall, ceiling, or other permanent surface, often created to enhance public spaces or convey cultural, social, or historical themes.
Papier-mâché	An arts and crafts technique that involves using pulped, pasted, or shredded paper and binding substances (e.g. flour, water, glue) to produce three-dimensional objects.
Perspective	A technique used to create the illusion of depth and space in a drawing or painting, making flat images look three-dimensional.

Pop art	A visual art movement originating in the 1950s that uses imagery from popular culture such as advertising, comic books, and consumer goods, often characterised by bold colours and graphic styles.
Portrait	An artwork that shows a person, usually focusing on their face and expression. Portraits can be painted, drawn, photographed, or sculpted and often aim to capture the personality or mood of the subject.
Primary colours	Red, blue, and yellow. These cannot be made by mixing other colours.
Printmaking	An artmaking process that involves the use of premade blocks, stamps, and other printing matrices to transfer ink on to an art medium (e.g. paper, wood, canvas).
Raranga	The traditional Māori art of weaving, typically using harakeke (New Zealand flax), to create items such as mats, baskets, and panels, often rich in cultural meaning and symbolism.
Repetition	The use of the same shape, colour, line, or pattern more than once in an artwork to create rhythm, unity, or emphasis.
Scale	The size of objects in relation to each other.
Secondary colours	Green, orange, and purple. These are made by mixing primary colours.
Self-portrait	An artwork an artist creates of themselves, usually showing their face or body. It is a way for artists to explore their emotions and how they see themselves.
Shape	Organises space, represents form, and can be geometric (e.g. circles, squares, triangles) or organic (e.g. free-form, natural shapes).
Space	The area around, between, or within objects in an artwork, used to create depth, perspective, and a sense of place.
Storyboard	A series of drawings or images arranged to show how a story will unfold. It is used to plan scenes in films, animations, or other visual projects.
Symbolism	The use of movement, imagery, actions, or sound to represent abstract meanings, emotions, or ideas beyond their literal form.
Symmetry	An object or shape that has matching parts that look the same when you fold, flip, or turn it.
Tatau	A traditional Sāmoan tattoo that uses symbolic patterns to express identity, heritage, and social status; often seen as a rite of passage and a visual connection to ancestors, culture, and community.

Techniques	Particular ways or methods of using a tool or materials to achieve a specific effect (e.g. using the point of a pencil to create a fine line, using a pencil sideways to create light and dark tones).
Tension	A sense of visual strain or unease created by contrast, imbalance, or opposing elements. It adds drama and draws the viewer's attention.
Tertiary colours	Colours made by mixing equal amounts of a primary colour and a neighbouring secondary colour.
Texture	The way a surface looks or feels in an artwork. Texture can be real (something you can touch) or implied (created to look like a texture, using lines, shading, or patterns).
Thumbnail sketch	A small, quick drawing used to explore ideas, plan compositions, or test layouts before creating a larger or more detailed artwork.
Tone	The lightness or darkness of a colour, used to create depth, contrast, and mood in an artwork.
Visual arts principles	The guidelines used by artists to organise visual arts elements and create artworks; see balance, harmony, rhythm, tension, and contrast.
Whakairo	Traditional carving which preserves and conveys Māori knowledge, history, and whakapapa.
Whakapapa	Genealogy, lineage, a Māori framework that details genealogy and maps relationships between all things.