

Discover the sounds of your school

Secondary: (ages 11 – 14)

Music

Students are asked to create a composition from sounds that they find and record around their school. Students develop sensitivity to and understanding of music through observation, composition, and performance. They pay careful attention to various organic sound resources and communicate through music the feelings they experience in particular spaces. Students practice using their perception, find the relevance to musicality of what they discover in their environment, and apply this to their creation. Students also explore and reflect on their composition in multiple ways to create and develop musical ideas.

Note: There is also an abridged version of this activity available for use in primary contexts

Time allocation About 6 lesson periods

Subject content Recognize and use musical elements and expressive characteristics
Expand range of musicality
Analyse composition and musical factors

Creativity and critical thinking This unit has a **creativity** focus:

- Make connections between the environment, emotions, and musical concepts
- Play with unusual ideas and sounds in composing and analysing musical pieces
- Compose, perform, and reflect on music with expressive qualities

Other skills Collaboration, Communication

Key words Sound from found objects; rhythm; tempo; composition; music performance

Products and processes to assess

Students observe their sound environment and compose, perform, and appraise musical pieces evoking and reflecting the sounds they hear and the impressions they have in one part of this environment. At the highest level of achievement, their output is highly imaginative, original, and has a meaningful relation to the area it represents and to the emotions that area evokes. Their work process demonstrates a willingness to explore and play with a variety of ideas for their composition, and see connections between their environment, the sounds they hear, and musical ideas. They are able to reflect on the process, articulate how and why they have used musical dimensions such as pitch, duration, tempo and dynamics etc., and perform with musicality.

Teaching and Learning plan

This plan suggests potential steps for implementing the activity. Teachers can introduce as many modifications as they see fit to adapt the activity to their teaching context.

Step	Duration	Teacher and student roles	Subject content	Creativity and critical thinking
1	Lesson period 1	<p>Teacher gives students a mission to choose an area of the school, and find its sounds and use those sounds to compose music that represents that area of the school</p> <p>Teachers guide students to parts of the school they can explore. Teachers give students examples of sounds they can possibly hear in the school (e.g. birds; students' laughing; water; photocopy machine; phones; etc.).</p> <p>Students move around the school, choose a location and observe its music and noises. Students might record sounds with a sound or video recorder if possible.</p> <p>Teachers can ask students to write down their observations and discoveries in their own words or in drawings. Teacher circulates among groups asking them about what sort of sounds and music they associate with that area of the school and why</p>	<p>Listening carefully and identifying the sounds of the school environment and their characteristics</p>	<p>Observing and making appropriate and interesting connections between the environment and music</p>
2	Lesson period 2	<p>Teacher introduces some instruments and objects that students can use for composition and uses them to demonstrate variations of rhythms before providing some time for students to practice creating different rhythms with instruments and objects.</p> <p>Students start to plan and compose a three-minute piece in groups of four using various sound resources: bodies, voices, instruments and objects. The piece should reflect the area of the school.</p> <p>Teacher circulates asking students about the reasoning behind their choices, prompting students to reflect on and improve their compositions and giving feedback</p>	<p>Using various sound resources to build a music structure</p> <p>Combining the sounds and patterns into the piece appropriately</p>	<p>Envisioning expressive qualities, finding solutions in their school environment, and composing a meaningful piece</p>
3	Lesson period 3	<p>Each group performs for the whole class and records their performance. The class guesses what the location is.</p> <p>Teachers reminds the class of appropriate audience and listening behaviour as necessary.</p>	<p>Producing a technically proficient performance (as appropriate to level) and showing awareness of his/her personal contribution to the ensemble</p>	<p>Building expressive qualities into performance</p>

4		<p>Each group appraises another groups' work in terms of how well the location was captured and the quality of composition and musical elements.</p> <p>Teacher leads the discussion asking students to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, why they think the group made those particular choices, and what alternatives might have been.</p>		<p>Reviewing the opinion of others and finding and/or comparing perspectives on expressive qualities and musical elements</p> <p>Appraising and justifying opinion logically and reasonably</p>
5	<p>Lesson periods 4 and 5</p>	<p>Repeat the previous steps. Students focus on different ways to really capture the feeling of the area of the school they are working with.</p> <p>Teachers guide students to focus more deeply on specific characteristics of the environment in terms of sounds and emotions and on incorporating more musical elements into their composition.</p> <p>Teachers may also choose to introduce discussion of pitch, duration, dynamics, tempo, timbre, texture, structure and encourage students to manipulate these to create different emotional effects.</p> <p>Students perform their new/adapted piece and teacher leads a discussion about the changes and how effective they were</p>	<p>Expanding ideas and developing elements of musical knowledge</p> <p>Breaking down elements of music and interpreting and manipulating them to create more expressive compositions</p> <p>Experimenting with pitch, duration, dynamics, and tempo</p>	<p>Developing ability to play with unusual ideas in musical composition</p>
6	<p>Lesson period 6</p>	<p>Students compare their own composition to music pieces that the teacher identifies</p> <p>Teacher guides students as they listen to the music pieces by giving one characteristic of the music, then asking students to name other characteristics. Students are asked to compare their own composition with the music they are listening to and to find differences in terms of tempo, dynamics, rhythm, etc.</p> <p>Teacher leads a discussion – or sets some written work – about what students have learned about how to create associations and emotional effects through different expressive characteristics of music</p>	<p>Listening to the characteristics of the music and finding commonalities and distinctions</p>	<p>Reflecting on composition and creative choices relative to possible alternatives</p>

Resources and examples for inspiration

Web and print

- If desired, teacher could show students videos of pieces composed from found sound for inspiration or comparison. E.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPU3NefyktQ>

Other

- Audio/video: students listen to music to compare with music pieces (to be chosen by teacher as appropriate)
- Sound recorder: record any sounds when students go around the school
- Video recorder: record students' performance
- Any instruments necessary for students to compose

Opportunities to adapt, extend, and enrich

- Could be compressed to a 1-2 lesson warm up activity to a project related to imitative music patterns
- Could be developed into a bigger project, for example, by asking students to make a film to go with their composition or to create the music for a film prospectus for the school
- Students could be asked to notate their piece (as appropriate to level)
- Students could be asked to compare the process and outcomes of creating pieces completely composed of sounds from found objects and creating pieces in which instruments are also used

**Creativity and critical thinking
rubric for music**

	CREATIVITY Coming up with new ideas and solutions	Steps	CRITICAL THINKING Questioning and evaluating ideas and solutions	Steps
INQUIRING	Make connections to other musical styles concepts or conceptual ideas in other disciplines	1,4	Identify and question assumptions and conventional rules in a musical performance, composition or analysis	
IMAGINING	Play with unusual and radical ideas when preparing to perform, compose, orchestrate, or analyse a music piece	2-6	Consider several perspectives on a musical performance, composition, interpretation or analysis	
DOING	Perform, compose, or analyse music with expressive qualities or relating to personally meaningful subject matter	2,3,5	Explain both strengths and limitations of a performance, a composition or an analysis of a music piece	
REFLECTING	Reflect on steps taken to create performances, compositions or analyses of a music piece	4,6	Reflect on the chosen way of performing, composing or analysing a music piece relative to possible alternatives	4,6