THE OK FACTOR

LESSON PLANS

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THESE MATERIALS ARE MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY THE MINNESOTA LEGACY AMENDMENT’S ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND.
THE OK FACTOR
KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE LESSON

LEARN about the violin and cello. Create cue cards for violin and cello. (See PRINT PAGES at the end of this guide for pictures to use in your classroom.)

• Using these visuals, introduce each instrument and explain how sound is produced. Use the text and pictures from the MEET THE INSTRUMENTS section of this curriculum for sample language.

• Spend time noticing features of each instrument. Compare and contrast the violin and the cello. Ask guiding questions, such as:
  › Which instrument is bigger?
  › How does size affect each instrument’s sound?
  › How does the thickness of each string affect the sound it makes?
  › Use three words to describe the violin. Use three words to describe the cello.

• Explain that every instrument—including the voice—has its own unique sound. We call this timbre (TAM-ber) or tone color. Explain that we will learn to recognize the special timbre of the violin and cello. For an in-depth exploration of timbre and tone color, watch the Class Notes Video Color in Music: Germaine Tailleferre.

LISTEN

• To the violin. Scroll down to the VIOLIN section of the The OK Factor Playlist.

• To the cello. Scroll down to the CELLO section of the The OK Factor Playlist.

• To the violin and cello together. Scroll down to the VIOLIN AND CELLO section of The OK Factor Playlist.

• To the whole string family in a string quartet. Scroll down to the STRING QUARTET section of The OK Factor Playlist.

• To The OK Factor Playlist. They will pay a visit to your school for a Class Notes Artists concert.

PLAY

• Violin or Cello?
  1. Print copies of your violin and cello cue cards (see PRINT PAGES at the end of this guide).
  2. Ask for a student volunteer to be a “violin and cello listener.” His or her job is to listen to a clip of music, decide if the music is played by a violin or a cello, and hold up the corresponding card accordingly. Vary the game by placing both cue cards in front of the group and have all listeners point to the correct card after listening or project the images on a smartboard. Use the VIOLIN and CELLO sections of The OK Factor Playlist for audio examples.
• Violin, Cello, Both or Neither?

1. Create additional cue cards, including one of a violin and cello together, and a different instrument or instruments. (See PRINT PAGES at the end of this lesson.)

2. Ask for an “expert listener” volunteer. This time, the listener must distinguish whether the music is played by violin, cello, both or neither, and then hold up the corresponding cue card. Use audio examples from the VIOLIN, CELLO, and VIOLIN and CELLO sections of The OK Factor Playlist, and pepper in selections of your own for “neither.”

**LEARNING CHECKLIST**

- I can identify a cello by sight and sound.
- I can explain how a musician makes sound on a cello.

**KEY WORDS** violin, cello, duo, listen, timbre
LEARN about the violin and cello. Create cue cards for violin and cello. (See PRINT PAGES at the end of this guide for pictures to use in your classroom.)

- Using these visuals, introduce each instrument and explain how sound is produced. Use the text and pictures from the MEET THE INSTRUMENTS section of this curriculum for sample language.
- Spend time noticing features of each instrument. Compare and contrast the violin and the cello. Ask guiding questions, such as:
  - Which instrument is bigger?
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LISTEN

- To the violin. Scroll down to the VIOLIN section of the The OK Factor Playlist.
- To the cello. Scroll down to the CELLO section of the The OK Factor Playlist.
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- To the whole string family in a string quartet. Scroll down to the STRING QUARTET section of The OK Factor Playlist.
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CREATE MELODIES

• Violins and cellos can play melodies because they can make high and low notes, and move from high to low, or low to high. We can do that too, using our voices, a slide whistle or a kazoo.

• Using paper or a board, draw a variety of lines with different shapes (see samples below). Ask students to trace a finger in the air, creating that shape. Model with your own finger, moving from left to right. Then ask students to use their voice to follow that line as well.

• Repeat, varying the tempo. Repeat a shape two times in a row and notice that it’s a pattern. Ask a volunteer to be the “tracer” and pick a tempo.

• Extend to using kazoos, slide whistle or classroom mallet instruments such as glockenspiels to explore a new timbre.

LEARNING CHECKLIST

☐ I can identify the violin and cello by sight and sound.
☐ I can explain how a violinist or cellist makes a sound on their instrument.
☐ I can recognize high and low sounds and create melodic patterns.

KEY WORDS violin, cello, timbre, melody
THE OK FACTOR
FOURTH, FIFTH, and SIXTH GRADE LESSON

LEARN about the violin and cello. Create cue cards for violin and cello. (See PRINT PAGES at the end of this guide for pictures to use in your classroom.)

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LISTEN
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• To the cello. Scroll down to the CELLO section of the The OK Factor Playlist.
• To the violin and cello together. Scroll down to the VIOLIN AND CELLO section of The OK Factor Playlist.
• To the whole string family in a string quartet. Scroll down to the STRING QUARTET section of The OK Factor Playlist.
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IMPROVISE
• Introduce or reinforce the word improvise. Explain that in music, improvisation means making up music on the spot. When we improvise, we don’t read music off a page. There are some different kinds of improvisation, and sometimes musicians use some symbols to help them remember or recreate certain improvised passages.
• Explain to students that one of the great things about improvisation is there is no right or wrong notes! Improvisation is a skill, and you get better at it by practicing, or doing it a lot.
• Remind students that even though it sounds easy to just make something up, sometimes it’s hard to know where to start. The following games help develop on-the-spot thinking and sound
generation. Do these activities in this sequence to move from low-risk, easy-to-implement ideas to more advanced work.

- Play “2 Taps, 2 Claps, 2 Snaps, Share!”
  - Form a circle and set a steady pulse by slightly moving your shoulders or tapping your foot. Teach the group the following pattern: two taps (hands on thighs), two claps, two snaps with the left hand, two snaps with the right hand.
  - After the pattern is learned, explain that everyone will repeat the pattern—or ostinato—over and over, and on the second set of snaps, you will all take turns sharing a favorite food, your favorite color, favorite animal, etc. A really easy way to start is to simply take turns saying names on the second set of snaps.
  - Extend the activity by using a metronome to help keep the pulse (it’s easy to speed up!) or by varying the tempo.
  - Extend even further by adding a melodic component. Encourage students to sing their answers. Model something easy like alternating between two pitches, such as sol-mi. Then model something a little more elaborate.

- Play “Boom Kat.”
  - Teach the following rhythmic ostinato to students:
    - Drum the pattern while you say it. Use your lap for the BOOM and clap or snap for the KAT. Or use bucket drums or other hand drums, playing a low bass sound for the BOOM and a slap on the rim for the KAT. Play the “Boom, Kat, Boom-Boom, Kat” pattern three times, then a BOOM and rest for the remainder of the measure. Counting “two, three, four” aloud helps a lot, especially when repeating over and over. Starting together after the three beats of rests might take a little practice.
  - Once the ostinato is successfully learned, take turns filling in the rests with a rhythmic improvisation.
  - Vary the activity by encouraging a vocal improvisation in the rest spot. Some students will feel comfortable freestyling, while others might need more guidance and support. Demonstrate a variety of melodic improvisations. Suggest ideas such as holding one long pitch, toggling back and forth between two pitches, or singing an ascending or descending slide of notes or a scale.
• Play “Add-a-Sound.”
  › Start in a circle. Explain that you will begin a simple, easy pattern. Everyone in the circle should listen and focus on the pulse. Then explain that you will walk around the circle, make eye contact with each individual, and give them a nod, one by one. When you nod at them, they should add a different pattern on top of yours. By the end, you will all hear a lovely layering of many different rhythmic patterns that all connect to the same pulse.
  › This activity can be played using auxiliary instruments, bucket drums, body percussion, found objects, or some combination of all these things.
  › Before beginning, mention a few helpful tips:
    › Keep your pattern simple, since you will repeat it many times.
    › Nothing should be too loud, so you can hear everyone else’s patterns and so that everyone can keep hearing and feeling the pulse.
    › Encourage students to listen for “space” to put their beat into. If the original ostinato plays on beats one, three and four, a nice second layer would be something on beat two.
    › Suggest using various timbres. If the entire group is using body percussion, brainstorm a number of ways you could create very different sounds. The different timbres create a nice texture where the layers of sound are more easily heard.
• Play “Rhythm Machine” (a variation of “Add-a-Sound”).
  › Participants go into the middle of the circle one by one and make a repeated physical movement and create a sound to go along with their motion. This variation is more difficult to play with a large group.

**LEARNING CHECKLIST:**
- I can identify the violin and cello by sight and sound.
- I can explain how a violinist or cellist makes a sound on their instrument.
- I can recognize high and low sounds and create melodic patterns.

**KEY WORDS** violin, cello, timbre, melody, improvise
THE OK FACTOR
ADDITIONAL LISTENING EXERCISE

LISTEN, CONNECT & COMPARE

The following exercise works well for any grade level. Adjust and modify the questions and activities to reflect and integrate content from your own classroom.

• Listen to *Up in the Air* from The OK Factor Playlist. Use a listening journal to describe the emotions you feel while listening. Relate those emotions to a personal experience. Afterward, share responses in a group discussion or with a partner.

• Repeat the exercise with *Liz’s Porch* from The OK Factor Playlist.

• Notice similarities and differences in the two pieces. Since the instrumentation is the same, students will need to dig a little deeper to look for differences. Consider questions such as:
  › When do you think each piece was written? Give evidence to support your answer.
  › What style, or genre, is this music? How do you know? What things inside the music (tempo, other instruments, certain rhythms) give you clues?
  › How does the cello player produce sound? Does the violin produce different kinds of sounds? How?
  › What musical traditions does the composer draw upon? What styles influenced them?

• Use the grid below to structure and organize your observations. (A full-page grid is included in the PRINT PAGES.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I notice in <em>Up in the Air</em></th>
<th>Things I notice in <em>Liz’s Porch</em></th>
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THE OK FACTOR
PRINT PAGES
VIOLIN CUE CARD

- Peg
- Scroll
- Neck and fingerboard
- Tailpiece
- Peg Box
- Tip
- Hair
- Stick
- Eyelet
- End screw
- Bow grip
- Strings
- F-holes
- Bridge
- Chin rest
VIOLIN AND CELLO CUE CARD
OTHER INSTRUMENTS CUE CARD
# LISTENING GRID

Name: __________________________________________

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