WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

This Curriculum Guide is designed to prepare, reinforce, and extend learning concepts and ideas from the MPR Class Notes video *Finding the Right Instrument for You: The Strings Family*.

The information and activities in the Guide are intended to make music come alive and to align with Minnesota Standards in Music Education. We hope you will personalize, modify, or adjust content to meet the needs of your unique classroom.

This video is the first of four that introduce and describe the instrument families.

PREPARING TO WATCH THE VIDEO

Just as literacy teachers use pre-reading strategies, music teachers can use pre-listening/pre-watching strategies. This helps students create a mental framework to organize new ideas, relate new content to prior knowledge, and make connections. What you bring to a listening experience will affect what you hear and take away from that experience.

1. Use adjectives to describe the sound of individual instruments. Connect with language arts teachers to incorporate and reinforce content from
literacy units. Create a chart to structure and organize this activity. Use this as an opportunity to introduce unfamiliar instruments. Select instruments for the chart to suit your own needs. Feel free to customize and create one for each instrument family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CELLO</th>
<th>OBOE</th>
<th>HORN</th>
<th>GLOCKENSPIEL</th>
<th>CYMBALS</th>
<th>FLUTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>resonant</td>
<td>mysterious</td>
<td>buttery</td>
<td>glistening</td>
<td>splashy</td>
<td>airy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Listen to strings music. Continue to use adjectives in classroom discussions before, after, and during viewing/listening.

a. Lyre
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHmPNtdSGC0
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=177LRoosZco

b. Zither
   Here are two versions of the same piece. Each video gives a different angle:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8jN1treRKQ
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KKQDotECdg

c. Violin
   Here's a lyrical example:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvlTuBnpKpc

   And the same violinist, Joshua Bell, playing something more aggressive:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laGT9IB2bFo

d. Viola
   As with many of these examples, the featured instrument plays with others, but we can clearly see and hear the unique features and qualities of the instrument:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7a_sZTZnRI

e. Cello
   Here is solo cello playing some virtuosic Paganini:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d26dZGdXnq0
For something a little different and unexpected, here is a multi-cello arrangement of Michael Jackson: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0Ps7zgKs_k

f. Double bass
Some jazz-inflected Edgar Meyer, all pizzicato: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrqq5L96reE

g. Harp
The unique sound of Alice Coltrane:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYlpz2HPk0U

Or the indie rock stylings of Joanna Newsom:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XMJl-HCO7A

Or something a little more traditional:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oIk5V1hU

Continue and extend this exercise by finding combinations of string instruments playing together, or additional string instruments that fall outside the traditional symphony orchestra, such as the mandolin, banjo, or guitar.

REINFORCE IDEAS AND CONCEPTS FROM THE VIDEO THROUGH ACTIVE LEARNING

1. Play “Pin-the-Instrument-on-the-Orchestra.”

Start by posting an orchestra chart, like this one from Wikimedia Commons. Find pictures of individual instruments that students can literally cut and post onto the correct place on the diagram. Focus on string instruments to align with video content.

(Orchestra chart follows on the next page.)
2. Have a *Pizzicato* and *Double Stops* listening party.

Explain that string instruments can perform a special technique—*pizzicato*—which is means that they *pluck* their strings instead of using the bow.

Introduce the double stop technique, which is when string players play two strings simultaneously. Listen to a few examples of each (good examples listed below).
Create these index cards—

- **Pizzicato**
  
  *Pizzicato Polka*, Johann and Josef Strauss:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CAXpuPqfv0

  “Humming Chorus” from Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. Make sure to listen to a version with orchestral accompaniment, like this one:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBO94mJQtY

  The Largo movement of "Winter", from the *Four Seasons*, by Vivaldi. This one is sort of a trick question because the melody is bowed (*arco*) but the accompaniment is *pizzicato*:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNeAbvvmwxI&list=RDGNeAbvvmwxI

  And the very fun *Plink, Plank, Plunk* by Leroy Anderson:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzS2HiV_aUo

- **Double Stops**
  
  *Partita no. 3, “Gavotte en rondeau”, J.S. Bach*:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gb3LAzCABsM

  *Chaconne for Solo Violin*, J.S. Bach:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bVRTtcWmXI

  Fiddle music and bluegrass uses a lot of double stops. Sometimes the music goes so fast it’s hard to pick out the double stops, but this version of *Wayfaring Stranger* by Alison Krauss starts out with a couple of obvious, easy-to-hear double stops:  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brAXHYv-JYc
3. Explore with rubber bands.

Find a wide variety of rubber bands of various thickness and size. Use a piece of cardboard and line up some push pins so that you can stretch the bands to various lengths and levels of tautness. Pluck the bands and listen to the sounds. Adjust the lengths/tautness of the bands, pluck again, and compare.

Extend this by finding a cardboard with all four sides closed off. Cut a hole in the top and “string” the rubber bands across the hole. Pluck and listen to the sound now that a resonator box is in place. Introduce vocabulary words such as “resonate” and “amplify” and use these terms when watching and listening to string instruments.

EXTEND LEARNING WITH PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Play String Charades.

Remind students that string instruments can perform a special technique—pizzicato—which is means that they pluck their strings instead of using the bow. Watch a few examples so that students understand what pizzicato looks and sounds like. Here’s “Allegro Pizzicato” from Béla Bartók’s String Quartet No. 4.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBs53SlEkso

Note that when string players use the bow, it’s referred to as arco. Watch a contrasting example, the American Quartet, by Antonín Dvořák.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pV-kbAycwkw

Create two index cards, labelled pizzicato and arco, respectively. Use them as a prompt for students to act out playing each technique.

Ask students to volunteer to come up and pretend/pantomime playing pizzicato or arco while other students guess.

2. Interview a string player. Find someone in your community who plays a string instrument—a teacher, a student, a parent, a friend. Ask how he or she got started playing an instrument. How often do you practice? What’s fun about playing the instrument? What’s challenging? What’s a favorite piece to play and why?
STANDARDS

The content of *Finding the Right Instrument for You: The Strings Family* deals most directly with identifying tone color/timbre, which aligns with the following Minnesota Standard in Music Education.

1. Grades 4 – 5. 1. Artistic Foundations. 1. Demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of the arts area. Music. 4.1.1.3.1. Describe the elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tone color, texture, for and their related concepts.

The comparison of sounds and pieces of music aligns most closely with the following Minnesota Standard in Music Education.

1. Grades 4 – 5. 4. Artistic Process: Respond or Critique. 1. Respond to or critique a variety of creations and performances using the artistic foundations. Music. 4.4.1.3.1. Justify personal interpretations and reactions to a variety of musical works or performances.