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 Brass 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 tailor its content to meet the needs of your unique classroom.

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

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. Check to ensure student understanding of the idea of adjectives. Preview a couple of key vocabulary words that will be included in the brass video:
“amplify,” “resonant,” and “timbre.” If these are new vocabulary for the students, spend a little time on definitions and usage.

2. 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>

Make a second chart specific to brass instruments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HORN</th>
<th>TRUMPET</th>
<th>TROMBONE</th>
<th>TUBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>buttery</td>
<td>regal</td>
<td>mellow</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Listen to a wide variety of brass music. In addition to the brass instruments most commonly included in the orchestra, such as trumpet and trombone, include more obscure brass instruments, like the flugelhorn. Comparing and contrasting a wide variety of brass instruments helps build sound differentiation skills. Continue to use adjectives in classroom discussions before, after, and during viewing/listening.

a. **Bugle**
   This instrument has been used for centuries in the military to send signals. Here is a bugler playing *Taps*. Notice that he doesn’t press any valves yet the pitch still changes.
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yQFvZsN43A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yQFvZsN43A)

b. **Trumpet**
   Here’s the amazing Wynton Marsalis playing a piece that requires a lot of technical skill, the *Carnival of Venice*.
   [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-jDld11jhw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-jDld11jhw)
Here’s Wynton Marsalis again, this time playing some jazz.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAwQ-fHYnYY

The trumpet is very similar—almost indistinguishable—from the cornet. In many cases they are interchangeable. The cornet is slightly more compact, has a conical bore, and is slightly mellower in tone or sound. Here’s a cornet performing *Napoli* with an orchestra. Can you see and hear a difference?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elo0SPMo6qg

c. **Flugelhorn**
   Here’s an arrangement of Piazzola’s *Oblivion* for piano, bass, and flugelhorn. Though the flugelhorn isn’t used a lot in classical music, listening to it is a good exercise in comparing and contrasting the sounds of various brass instruments.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6RN4SiLxls

d. **French Horn**
   This cadenza from the Mozart Horn Concerto showcases the wide range and beautiful sound of the French horn.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_0xhMEZ1Cg

e. **Trombone**
   Before watching a video of the trombone, tell students that there is one very significant difference in the way that the trombone changes pitch. Ask them to be prepared to explain the difference after watching.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQB7oXLt898

f. **Euphonium/baritone**
   The euphonium and the baritone are larger brass instruments most frequently used in brass ensembles, and concert and marching bands instead of the larger orchestra. The differences between the two instruments are slight, and they can be played somewhat interchangeably. Hear both instruments on this arrangement from *Pirates of the Caribbean*.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_279731997&feature=iv&src_vid=w9LH5aExI-Q&v=_7wOm4NzeAg
g. **Tuba**

The tuba is the largest and lowest member of the brass family. There are various kinds and sizes of tubas. If you see a marching band, you might see a type of tuba called a sousaphone. In the orchestra, a tuba looks more like a larger euphonium. Here’s a tuba playing the beautiful melody on “Bydlo” from Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

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

Here’s another orchestra playing the same piece. Both show different perspectives and angles of the tuba player, as well as great shots of the entire orchestra and conductor. Watch and see how many things you can identify—instruments or techniques (there’s some great pizzicato on the double bass at the very end.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx6Eol6liyCg

Continue and extend this exercise by finding combinations of brass instruments playing together, or with additional instruments that fall outside the traditional symphony orchestra.

4. Discuss the way a brass player makes sound on an instrument. Explain the need for the player to “buzz” his or her lips instead of just blowing. This is a key difference when comparing brass instruments to woodwinds. The “buzzing” vibrations with woodwinds is created by reeds. Explain that the buzzing creates the vibration necessary for musical sound. If you have access to a brass mouthpiece, let students experiment with tight and loose buzzing and compare the sound. Look online at the mouthpieces of various brass instruments.

**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 brass instruments to align with video content.

(Orchestra chart follows on the next page.)
1. Explore the mechanism and science of a brass instrument. Creating your brass instruments is a great, hands-on way to understand and experience how brass instruments work. This website will give you a detailed, easy-to-understand explanation, followed by directions on how to make your own. [http://www.nyphilkids.org/lab/make_trumpet.html](http://www.nyphilkids.org/lab/make_trumpet.html)

2. Play Brass Charades. Students think of one of the brass instruments and “act it out.”

3. There is a wealth of great repertoire for brass quartets and brass quintets. Search and listen to some of well-known favorites, such as the Canadian Brass, or the Twin Cities-based Summit Hill Brass Quintet.
EXTEND LEARNING WITH PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Explore the wide world of mutes on brass instruments. Scroll through some images of various mutes while commenting on size and shape. Together with students, guess which instrument might go with each mute.
   https://www.google.com/search?q=brass+mutes&biw=984&bih=636&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=rLymVIHVF8aoyATU7IKwAw&ved=0CAcQUAoAg

   Listen and watch to hear how the sound changes when a player uses a mute.

   Here is a tutorial on the fun, interesting plunger mute on the trumpet:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVrB5CfDZE4

   Compare it with this one, using a plunger mute on a trombone:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEhgXrtKljc

   This one, for French horn, is short and sweet. Just pay attention to the way the mute looks and sounds in the instrument:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB3yrYrnp1w

   High quality, professional videos of a tuba playing with mute are harder to find, though it’s worth looking at pictures of a tuba mute, simply because of its sheer size.

2. Interview a brass 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 Brass 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.