

Lesson Plan

Assessment	observation
Cross-curricular	Arts, music

Learning Goals

- To explore what kinds of objects can be used to make music
- To find natural products that make a “great” sound.

Overall Expectations

- demonstrate an awareness of the natural and built environment through hands-on investigations, observations, questions, and representations of their findings
- use problem-solving strategies, on their own and with others, when experimenting with the skills, materials, processes, and techniques used in drama, dance, music, and visual arts
- demonstrate an understanding of the natural world and the need to care for and respect the environment

Description

In this lesson we take students outdoors to find things to make musical instruments with. We learn about sounds that we can make with natural things, to just play with things we find in nature, and about what makes a good musical instrument.

Materials

- A natural area with things to pick up.
- Optional: String, Tape, Elastics, Foil wrapping, Paper, Bells, Etc.

Safety Notes

Be careful with the students picking up garbage or sharp objects.

Introduction

- Today we will make our own musical instrument!
- ...With things we find outdoors!
- Let's talk a bit about musical instruments. Who can think of one?
 - Take several examples. Discuss how there are different types of instruments.
 - Some we blow air into – woodwinds and brass instruments - trumpets, flutes, etc.
 - Some we hit – percussion instruments – such as drums, xylophones (and even the piano!)
 - Some we vibrate strings on – like violins and guitars.
- If you have some instruments in your classroom use them to illustrate how they work. Strum some strings, blow into a flute.
- Do you think you can make your own instruments?
 - Yes of course! ☺
 - We will go outside and your job will be to find something (or several things) that you can use as an instrument!

Action

Finding Materials

- The idea is to really let the kids be creative. Take them to an area where there are lots of things to choose from. For example a forest with a riverbed, or just an area of bush. The schoolyard will also do if no other places are available or if you have a fairly wild space in it.
- You can decide if you want to let them use any human made items they may find (like lids, cans, etc.).
- If you are worried that there aren't enough good things to use to make an instrument you can always strategically place some items in the area the children will explore.
- Children can find something that can immediately be used as an instrument, or they can find a few things that can be fashioned into an instrument back in class.
- Let the children discover for themselves what could make an instrument. Encourage them to try hitting objects together, blow through them, strum them, etc. They can keep trying things until they find a favourite.

Examples of what to look for

- Plants that make a sound when you shake them, like a rattle.
- Sticks to tap together
- Rocks to tap together
- A blade of grass that can used to whistle (by squeezing it between the palms of the hands while you blow air through - see Reference Image.
- Things that can be strummed (pine cones, some branches)
- Shells that can be tapped together or even blown through. Anything from nuts to seashells!
- Pebbles in a container (e.g. coconut shell, birch bark shaped into a ball and taped together)
- A piece of bark that you can roll pebbles down.

Let the children run around and try different things. At first they may not be sure where to start but once they get the hang of it they may come up with very creative musical instruments. If you can see that some things need some crafting in class you can suggest that they bring the materials back with them to finish the instrument in class.

The instruments do not at all have to be perfect but just make an interesting sound.

Consolidation/Extension

Wrap-Up

- Get the children to all do a “concert” together. They can take turns playing their instrument or all play together.
- Discuss particularly successful instruments or just how creative the children may have been. Maybe you get a chance to point out:
 - Longer things make lower notes (e.g. a long stick will resonate on a lower note than a short one)
 - Hollow bodies act as amplifiers

Variations:

- Work on making a specific type of instrument together. It will allow you to guide the students a bit more and give them some additional materials to work with. For example:
 - Find a stick outside. Everyone then stretches a string from one end to the other to make a “guitar”.
 - Find something that you can stretch an elastic band across (e.g. a y-shaped branch). Hand out elastics to finish their “guitar”.
 - Find something that can be used to make a drum. Give the students something like foil wrap to use as a skin for the drum. The drum body could be several branches that are tied together into a circle, or something that naturally comes in a round shape (a special piece of bark for example).
 - Find a branch outside that you can attach bells to. Give each student a few bells and string to attach to their branch.
- Xylophone:
 - Instruct students to find nice thick branches that can be cut to different lengths. Attach them to two “base” branches to make a xylophone (see Reference Images).