

# COMMUNITY MUSIC PROJECT

## Lesson Plan



For the Center for the Arts' first-ever Community Music Project, PK-12 students are invited to engage in a hands-on music-making project focusing on sustainability and creativity. Using only recycled/found materials, students will design and build unique, early childhood musical instruments that are not only functional, but artistic. These instruments will be displayed at the center, showcasing the intersection of art, music, and environmental consciousness. In addition to this instrumental display, students whose instruments demonstrate high levels of creativity, musical functionality, and innovative use of recycled plastics will receive recognition from the Global Change Center at Virginia Tech for successfully highlighting the issue of plastic waste and promotion of sustainable practices within the community.

### Objectives:

- Students will make an instrument that produces functional sound out of only recycled or repurposed materials.
- Students will transform the recycled materials into a piece that is not only functional, but aesthetically and artistically pleasing to view.
- Students will learn the definition of an early childhood instrument.
- Students will share ideas and work collaboratively in creating and scavenging items.

### Materials Needed:

- Recyclables/found materials
- Scissors
- Glue
- Tape
- Optional: *Another Band's Treasure: A Story of Recycled Instruments* by Hua Lin Xie

### Lesson Procedures:

#### Early Childhood Instrument

- Ask students for the definition and/or examples.
- Explain that while any instrument can be learned in early childhood, an early childhood instrument typically refers to a musical instrument a child can easily strike, shake, or blow without written notation (whistle or kazoo, shaker, triangle, or tambourine are all excellent examples).
- Encourage your students to list a variety of early childhood instruments and write them on the board.
- Ask whether they see these instruments beyond the preschool or kindergarten classrooms (in band, orchestra, within popular music groups, etc.). Explain that while these instruments are intended for one audience, they can be recycled through reuse in many different music genres. Early childhood instruments are the ultimate music example of sustainability!

## *Reduce, Reuse, Remix: A Trash to Treasure Contest*

- Making music can be tricky, but by using our imagination and sustainable thinking, we can make an instrument out of anything!
- Optional: Read *Another Band's Treasure: A Story of Recycled Instruments* by Hua Lin Xie to further illustrate that even in real life/non-fiction scenarios, music can truly be made anywhere from anything.
- Explain that using only recycled/found materials, students will design and build unique early childhood musical instruments that are not only functional but also artistic. This promotion of sustainability and creativity underscores the importance of an artistic imagination. Instruct students on whether they are bringing in collections of recycled materials from home, utilizing recycled materials in their classroom or around the school, or going on a class walk to collect materials as a group (this could be a nature walk or a trip to a recycling center). Items that can be easily utilized for this project include:
  - Microplastics
  - Cardboard tubes
  - Office supplies
  - Metal cans
  - Glass containers
  - Kitchen utensils
  - Pebbles, beans, rice, or dried pasta for shakers
- Walk your students through the guidelines regarding the submission deadline, instrument dimensions, and the Global Change Center's recognition rubric.
- While your students are creating, encourage the use of color and clean lines (often a signifier of early childhood instruments). Be sure to have students test their instruments along the way, ensuring the functional sound that should be emitted from the item.

## *Recycled Orchestra*

- When your student's instruments are complete, explain to your students the parts of the orchestra. If desired, utilize these educational online resources according to your students' age group:
  - PK-K: [Instruments of the Orchestra Song](#)
  - 1-5: [Instrument Families](#)
  - 6-12: [The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra](#)
- Assist your students as they split into sections of an orchestra based on their instrument. Practice indicating when students should enter into the song or be silent. Choose whether you want your students to simply play on the beat or advance in complexity by following a particular rhythm pattern or song of choice.
- Allow students to take the lead as the conductor of the Recycled Orchestra, guiding their peers through the activity. After the orchestra has concluded, have your students take a bow before collecting their instruments to send to the Center for the Arts, where they will be on display from October 31 to November 22, 2025. Making music can be tricky, but by using our imagination and sustainable thinking, we can make an instrument out of anything!