

EXAMPLE CURRICULUM MAP (6-8): Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School

The music program at the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School is entirely project-based, with all projects linked loosely to a larger grade-wide expedition (labeled “E1” etc.) and several projects linked closely to another subject (ex. Little Rock 9). Music meets for 65 minutes, twice a week at the middle school level. While most students learn a main string instrument, it is clear to students they are not simply learning the instrument, but rather *using* the instrument to solve a series of projects. All projects aim to develop not only performance skills, but also creativity, critical musical literacy, and group leadership skills.

The curriculum map below is not intended for use as an exemplar (it is only two years old!), but rather as an example of how a project-based curriculum that teaches performance skill on an instrument might be structured. Many of these projects are in various stages of major revision. For example, beginning next year formal notation will not be taught until the second year.

SIXTH GRADE

E1: Me To We	E2: Food Glorious Food	E3: Building Cities	E3: Building Cities	E4: Invaders	E4: Invaders
<p>Ensemble Students rotate and learn a tune on each instrument before selecting an instrument. In small groups, students construct a process for rehearsing and performing a unison tune.</p>	<p>“Just Eat It” Why don’t we write songs about food anymore? What does this say about our society? After studying songs such as “Bile Em Cabbage Down” and “Eat It,” students notate their own simple songs about food in today’s society, based on information from other classes.</p>	<p>Brandenburg: Song and City Students use the elements of music to describe how different classical composers have attempted to capture the character of cities in music. In a large-ensemble, students learn 2-part independence through Bach’s <i>Brandenburg Concerto No. 5</i> (arr. Phillips).</p>	<p>New York City Soundscape With Steve Reich’s <i>City Life</i> as a model, students record city sounds using mp3 recorders, and compose 2-part, 8-bar pentatonic riffs. These riffs and samples are mixed in GarageBand to create a city soundscape.</p>	<p>Devious Students examine Latin Rock as an example of a hybrid musical form resulting from a mix of musical cultures. Sabien & Phillips’ <i>Devious</i> and <i>Latin Doll</i> provide opportunities to study natural notes, rhythmic ostinati, and syncopated rhythms.</p>	<p>The Top 100 Why is the Top 100 chart overwhelmingly comprised of U.S. hits? Students explore the power of the U.S. in global media and write persuasive essays on its desirability (or lack thereof). Subsequently, students either cover a U.S. or non-U.S. pop hit (in 2-3 parts) in small groups.</p>

SEVENTH GRADE

<p>E1: Encounters</p>	<p>E1: Encounters</p>	<p>E2: It's Revolutionary</p>	<p>E2: It's Revolutionary</p>	<p>E3: Price of Progress</p>
<p>Welikia In conjunction with Social Studies and ELA, students excavate the culture of the Lenape Indians through archived musical recordings. Students write descriptions of the music, including the elements of music, as well as transcribed melodies and rhythms.</p>	<p>"Mockingbird" Using Eminem's "Mockingbird" as an example, students create a melodic variation of an American Folk Song, including changes in pitch, rhythm, and key. Variations are notated and performed live.</p>	<p>Yankee Doodle In conjunction with Social Studies, students study the role of song in the Revolutionary War in creating revolutionary conditions. Students select and research songs of the War individually, and perform 3-part versions of these songs in small groups.</p>	<p>"... and I can't be satisfied" Students learn to improvise on the blues scale, and individually record Sabien & Phillips' "De Blues" (including the head and 2 improvised choruses) over a backing track. In conjunction with ELA, students subsequently write and record blues songs from the perspective of book characters that have lived through revolution.</p>	<p>Bob Dylan vs. Black-Eyed Peas What makes a song effective? Students select protest songs, research them, and write critical analyses of their effectiveness. Subsequently, students divide into bands to cover protest songs (including vocals), using a mix of transcription and reading from a one-page blueprint. Bands rewrite lyrics to address current environmental issues.</p>

EIGHTH GRADE

<p>E1: Fight For Our Rights</p>	<p>E1: Fight For Our Rights</p>	<p>E2: Origins</p>	<p>E3: War</p>
<p>The Taliban and the Guitar Students read excerpts from Salman Ahmad's <i>Rock and Roll Jihad</i>, and discuss the implications of Article 27 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Students transcribe and perform a number of banned songs, including "Another Brick in the Wall."</p>	<p>Little Rock 9 In conjunction with Social Studies, students learn (from notation) and record a range of songs from the Civil Rights Movement. Using GarageBand, they remix their recordings alongside the live testimony of the Little Rock 9 students.</p>	<p>Carnegie Hall Students excavate the origins of their own musical preferences based on their social identities, after charting initial reactions to a visit to Carnegie Hall. Additionally, students form an orchestra, learning how to follow a conductor and perform a concert of classical Grade 2 music (including a piece by hip-hop composer DBR).</p>	<p>A Battle of the Bands In "garage bands" of 4, and with access to guitars, drumsets, and vocal mics, students are given a series of songwriting challenges. These include writing riffs on particular chord progressions, covering songs, and creating a full song. Much of the curriculum is derived from the United Kingdom's <i>Musical Futures Project</i> (available online).</p>