Meet the Families

Primary (PK – 2nd Grade)
Intermediate (3rd - 5th grade)

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS
Language Arts – Math – Music

MUSIC: Music highlighting the families: strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion

MATERIALS: Internet for www.sfskids.org; CD of Britten’s Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra; Britten’s illustrated book by same name; M is for Melody by Kathy-Jo Wargin; posters of instruments families and orchestra seating chart; actual instruments (or visual representation) and live performances, if possible; chart paper, paper and pencils

Connections to Pathways for Integration:
This lesson is currently in the Third Column - Music content merged with other content areas and First Row – M.

LESSON OVERVIEW: Every orchestra is made up of families – four to be exact. This lesson invites you to meet these wonderfully diverse families and the members who make up the voice we hear at the symphony.

THE LEARNING SEQUENCE: Day 1: Begin by eliciting prior knowledge of an orchestra, instruments, and their families with a KWL Chart. Read M is for Melody, and visit the sfskids.org website to introduce students to the instruments, their family and their voice. Day 2: Review what was learned at sfskids.org. Introduce Britten’s book and listen to the CD. Help students identify the instruments on the posters. Discuss how the instruments in each family are “related” and what that means in terms of how each produces sound. If real instruments can be brought in to the classroom, let the students study how each is made and how each produces sound. Whether real instruments or visual representations of each are available, mix them up and have students group them by the families as they become familiar with each one. Day 3: Create connections with other content areas by asking students to create a Venn diagram to compare various instruments/families; write a descriptive paragraph on each family; create and illustrate a class poster of instrument families; or delve deeper into the construction of each instrument to extend this information into math (length, mass, etc) and science (pitch, frequency).

VOCABULARY: woodwinds, strings, brass, percussion, instruments, metal, wood, mouthpiece, tubing, valves, slides, symphony, orchestra, names of the instruments of the orchestra

ASSESSMENT: Students will master the names of the instruments of the orchestra, the families of each and understand to some degree how each family creates a voice in an orchestra.
INCLUSION / EL: EL students have difficulty with these new words and generating descriptors. Listing everything on the board or on charts makes the vocabulary easily accessible. I found all students were referred to the lists while doing their writing.

TEACHER TO TEACHER: At first, this seemed to be a stand-alone lesson on musical instruments. I was surprised by how many entry points were there to extend this into other content areas.