

CURRICULUM PORTFOLIO • SAMPLE LESSON

Music You Can See

Grade 4 General Music

45-minute lesson plan with assessment rubric and opening video script

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Grade 4 General Music: Music You Can See

Sample lesson plan · Jorge Llanos, Music Educator & Curriculum Developer

Lesson Overview

In one 45-minute lesson, fourth graders discover that music can be seen as well as heard. They learn how Deaf and hard-of-hearing people experience music, use American Sign Language (ASL) vocabulary for music, and sing the major scale while showing every pitch with Curwen solfège hand signs, ending with a signed song and a signing dance.

Element	Detail
Grade / Course	Grade 4 General Music
Duration	45 minutes
Placement	Quarter 1
Designed and taught by	Jorge Llanos, Music Educator & Curriculum Developer
Essential question	How can music be seen as well as heard?

Design rationale. Every segment serves one idea: music made visible. The lesson moves from context (how Deaf and hard-of-hearing people experience music) to language (ASL vocabulary) to musical signs (Curwen hand signs for pitch) to performance (singing while signing) and ends in movement (a signing dance). Each step uses the skill learned in the step before it, and each segment closes with a quick check for understanding so the teacher can adjust pacing in real time.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to (SWBAT):

1. Describe at least one way Deaf and hard-of-hearing people experience and make music.
2. Explain that ASL is a complete language with its own grammar, distinct from the sign languages of other countries.
3. Use selected ASL music vocabulary and fingerspelling accurately and respectfully.
4. Perform the Curwen solfège hand signs of the major scale, in order and out of order.
5. Sing the major scale and a short song while signing every pitch, and sing pitches the teacher shows silently with hand signs.

Student-friendly objective ("I can"): I can explain how people can enjoy music without hearing it fully, use ASL signs for music words, and sing while showing every note with my hands.

SMART Goal

Component	Goal
Specific	Describe how music is experienced without full hearing; use selected ASL music signs; perform the solfège hand signs of the major scale; sing while signing.
Measurable	At least 80% of students describe one way Deaf people experience music, perform six selected ASL signs, perform all eight solfège hand signs in sequence, and sing back at least three of four patterns the teacher signs silently.

Component	Goal
Achievable	Students receive a documentary-style video, an illustrated hand-sign reference sheet, teacher modeling, mirroring, echo practice and immediate feedback.
Relevant	The lesson connects music to language, culture and inclusion, and gives students a visual way to read and show pitch.
Time-bound	Skills are demonstrated within the 45-minute lesson and the closing exit ticket.

Standards Alignment

The lesson is aligned to both the National Core Arts Standards in Music (NAfME) and the Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) for Grade 4.

Framework	Code	Standard	Addressed in
NAfME	MU:Pr4.2.4a	Demonstrate understanding of the structure and elements of music in music selected for performance.	Major scale with hand signs
NAfME	MU:Pr6.1.4a	Perform music, alone or with others, with expression, technical accuracy and appropriate interpretation.	Sing-and-sign song
NAfME	MU:Re7.2.4a	Demonstrate and explain how responses to music are informed by structure, musical elements and context.	Documentary discussion
NAfME	MU:Cn11.0.4a	Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts and daily life.	Deaf culture, ASL
Florida NGSSS	MU.4.H.2.2	Identify ways in which individuals of varying ages and cultures experience music.	Documentary discussion
Florida NGSSS	MU.4.H.3.1	Identify connections among music and other contexts, using correct music and other relevant content-area vocabulary, and explore how learning in one academic area can help with knowledge or skill acquisition in a different academic area.	ASL vocabulary
Florida NGSSS	MU.4.S.2.1	Apply knowledge of musical structure to aid in sequencing and memorization and to internalize details of rehearsal and performance.	Major scale with hand signs
Florida NGSSS	MU.4.F.1.1	Create new interpretations of melodic or rhythmic pieces by varying or adding dynamics, timbre, tempo, lyrics and/or movement.	Sing-and-sign song, signing dance

Materials and Resources

- **Technology:** projector or interactive display, speakers
- **Handout:** illustrated Curwen hand-sign reference sheet, one per student (original illustrations of the hand position for each pitch, do through high do)
- **Visual aids:** ASL music-vocabulary cards, large Curwen hand-sign chart
- **Classroom setup:** personal-space floor markers

Media (described by type, so any licensed equivalent can be used):

- A captioned, documentary-style video (5 minutes) in which a host fluent in English and ASL meets Deaf and hard-of-hearing musicians, produced from the original script in Appendix B
- A solfège sing-along song built on the do-re-mi syllables, suitable for signing each pitch

- A follow-along movement song that pairs dance moves with simple signs

Lesson Sequence

Seven segments fill the 45 minutes, moving from context to language to musical signs to performance, with movement at the end to keep energy high.

#	Min	Segment	Procedure	Check for understanding
1	5	Hook: Music you can see	Students watch the captioned documentary-style video (script in Appendix B), in which a host talks with Deaf and hard-of-hearing people about how they experience music, for example through vibration, visual rhythm and signed performance.	Each student shares one way a person can experience music without hearing it fully.
2	5	Discussion: ASL is a language	Teacher explains that ASL is a complete language with its own grammar, that each country has its own sign language, and that "Deaf" with a capital D refers to a community with its own culture. Class agrees on respectful vocabulary.	Students answer: "Is sign language the same everywhere?" and explain why not.
3	10	Hands that speak: ASL music vocabulary	Teacher introduces six music signs (for example: music, sing, song, dance, again, stop) and fingerspells "DO RE MI." Students mirror each sign, combine signs into a short sentence, and respond silently to signed directions.	Students perform the six signs accurately when cued.
4	10	Hands that show pitch: Curwen hand signs	Transition: "ASL signs show words; music has its own signs that show how high or low a note is." Using the illustrated reference sheet, the teacher models do through high do. Students practice the signs in order, then out of order, and sing the major scale ascending and descending while signing.	Teacher observes hand position, sequence and pitch direction for each student.
5	8	Sing and sign	Students sing a solfège song, signing each syllable. Then the roles flip: the teacher signs short patterns silently and students sing the pitches they see.	Students sing back at least three of four silent-signed patterns.
6	4	Signing dance	Students follow a movement song that pairs dance moves with simple signs, keeping safe personal space.	Students freeze, restart and change movements with control.
7	3	Closure	Students return to the essential question: "How can music be seen as well as heard?" Exit ticket: sign one ASL music word, show one solfège sign, and write one sentence answering the question.	Exit ticket shows one correct ASL sign, one correct hand sign and a relevant answer.

Differentiation and Accommodations

The lesson was designed for an inclusive classroom that included students with documented ESE/IEP accommodations; supports are built into every segment rather than added afterward.

Learner need	Supports in this lesson
Students with ESE/IEP accommodations	Preferential seating near visuals, chunked directions, extended response time, a visual schedule of the seven segments, and alternative ways to show mastery (pointing, signing or matching instead of verbal answers).
Students who are Deaf or hard of hearing	Captioned video, all directions also given visually, a seat close to the speaker so vibrations can be felt, and an open invitation (never a requirement) to share signs they already know.

Learner need	Supports in this lesson
Attention and self-regulation	Short segments of 3 to 10 minutes, a planned movement segment, clear start and stop cues, and frequent positive feedback.
Fine-motor challenges	Approximate hand shapes accepted, the reference sheet kept at each seat, and partner mirroring.
English language learners	Visual vocabulary cards, gestures paired with every new term, ASL and hand signs as language-independent supports, and bilingual (English/Spanish) clarification when needed.
Advanced learners	Lead the silent-sign patterns for the class, add chromatic or lower-octave signs, or sign a longer phrase from memory.

Assessment Plan

The lesson succeeds when at least 80% of students reach "Meets Expectations" or higher on the four performance criteria in the rubric (Appendix A).

- **Formative (throughout):** the check for understanding that closes each segment tells the teacher whether to reteach, slow down or move on.
- **Summative (end of lesson):** the silent-sign echo in segment 5 and the exit ticket, scored with the rubric.
- **Self-reflection (closure):** each student writes one sentence answering the essential question.
- **Data use:** rubric scores and exit tickets identify students who need a hand-sign or ASL review at the start of the next lesson.

Appendix A: Assessment Rubric

Four criteria, scored 1 to 4; a score of 3 ("Meets Expectations") on each criterion matches the SMART goal.

Criterion	4 - Exceeds	3 - Meets	2 - Approaching	1 - Beginning
Understanding of Deaf experience of music	Describes two or more ways Deaf people experience music and explains why ASL is a distinct language.	Describes one way Deaf people experience music and states that ASL is its own language.	Describes one way with prompting.	Responds only with full support.
ASL music vocabulary	Performs all six signs accurately and combines them into a sentence independently.	Performs the six signs accurately when cued.	Performs some signs accurately, others with prompting.	Mirrors signs only with ongoing modeling.
Solfège hand signs	Performs all eight signs in order and out of order, unprompted.	Performs all eight signs in order.	Performs part of the scale or loses the sequence without prompting.	Performs a few signs only with teacher modeling.
Singing while signing	Sings with accurate pitch while signing and sings back all four silent-signed patterns.	Coordinates singing and signing with mostly accurate pitch; sings back three of four patterns.	Loses coordination at times; sings back one or two patterns.	Imitates singing or signing only with modeling.

Participation, safe movement and respectful use of ASL are observed throughout and noted on a separate checklist, not scored here.

Appendix B: Opening Video Script — "Music You Can See"

This script defines the 5-minute documentary-style video that opens the lesson, so the lesson does not depend on finding an outside resource. It is written for production by a curriculum media team.

Element	Specification
Running time	5:00
Audience	Grades 3–5
Purpose	Show students how Deaf and hard-of-hearing people experience and make music, and prepare them to ask "How can music be seen as well as heard?"
Language and access	The host speaks English and signs ASL at the same time; participants communicate in the language they prefer (ASL, spoken English or both), with voice interpretation and open captions throughout
Cast	A host fluent in English and ASL who moderates and explains (for example, a certified ASL interpreter or a CODA, a hearing child of Deaf adults); a Deaf percussionist; a hard-of-hearing young singer; a Deaf ASL music performer
Production principle	"Nothing about us without us": the Deaf and hard-of-hearing participants are the experts on camera, and a Deaf cultural consultant reviews the script and final cut

Script

Time	Visual	ASL / voice interpretation and captions
0:00–0:20	Cold open. Close-ups: bare feet on a wooden stage, hands on a drum, a speaker cone vibrating, a hand resting on a piano lid. No music at first, then a deep drumbeat.	Caption only: "What does music look like? What does it feel like?"
0:20–0:50	The host in a bright music room, speaking and signing directly to camera. Title card: "Music You Can See."	Host: "Hi! I'm a sign language interpreter. My job is to help Deaf and hearing people share music, at concerts and even at the Super Bowl. Many people think you need to hear to enjoy music. Today you'll meet three friends who show that music is something you can feel and see too."
0:50–1:50	The percussionist plays a marimba and a bass drum barefoot. Slow-motion shots of the drumhead and the floor. She places a student's hand on the drum.	Percussionist: "I feel low notes in my feet and legs, and high notes in my hands and face. Every sound has its own vibration. When I play barefoot, the whole stage becomes my ears."
1:50–2:50	The young singer rehearses with a choir. Close-up of a hearing aid; the conductor's hands and a flashing visual metronome.	Singer: "I'm hard of hearing. With my hearing aids I hear some sounds, but my eyes help too. I watch the conductor's hands for the beat, and I watch my friends breathe before we start singing."
2:50–4:00	The ASL music performer signs a short, upbeat song on stage, then repeats one line slowly for the camera. Split screen: the sign, then a caption naming the rhythm or feeling it shows.	Performer: "When I sign a song, my whole body shows the music. Big, fast signs for loud, exciting parts. Small, slow signs for quiet ones. My face shows the feeling. And ASL is a real language with its own grammar; other countries have their own sign languages."
4:00–4:40	Montage of all three participants. The host returns and teaches one sign: MUSIC.	Host: "Music lives in vibrations, in movement and in signs. This is the sign for MUSIC. Try it with me!"
4:40–5:00	The host's hands freeze on the sign. The essential question appears on screen.	Host: "Now it's your turn. How can music be seen as well as heard?" Caption: "Pause the video and talk with your class."

Notes for the media team

- Keep each participant segment under 70 seconds; Grades 3–5 attention favors short, varied shots.
- Captions must be synchronized and high contrast; the ASL signer is never cropped or covered by graphics.
- The final question is a built-in pause point that leads directly into lesson segment 2.