

Music Activities for Small Groups

A Collection of Music Games and Activities

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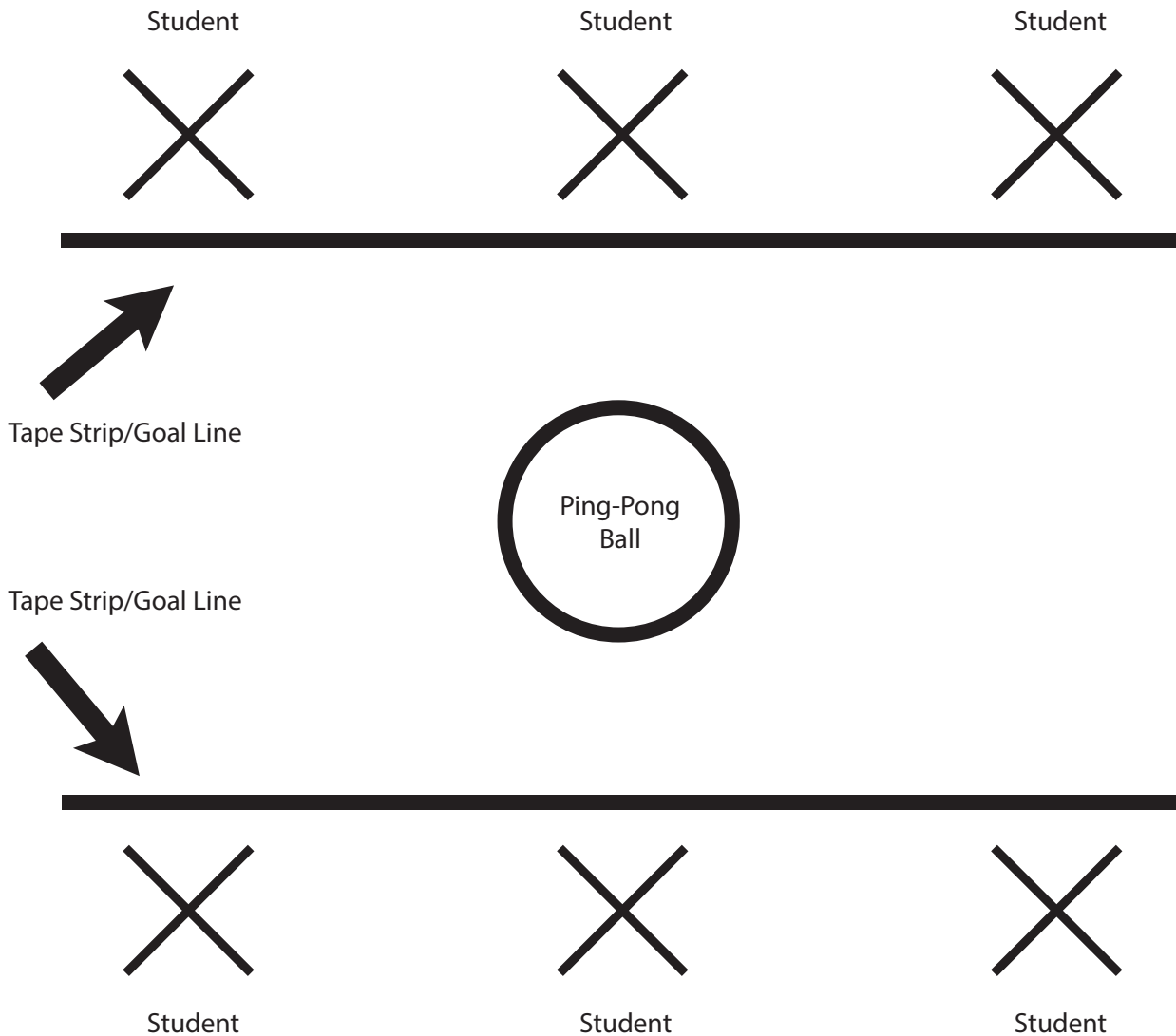


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Breath Control

Breath control is necessary for singers and for musicians who play wind instruments. It lets them sing or play for short or long periods, to raise and lower their volume, and to time taking breaths between words or notes.

Clear plenty of space on the floor in the classroom. Divide the class into groups of at least four students, and distribute the groups in various places in the room. In each group's area, mark the ground with two long strips of masking tape three to four feet apart (it may be beneficial to do this before class begins). Divide each group into two smaller groups, and have each small group kneel down behind one of the tape strips.



Place a ping-pong ball, small balloon, or other lightweight object within the tape strips. Signal the players to start blowing the items across the other team's "goal line." Players cannot use their hands or cross the goal line with their knees. When a goal is scored, place the object back within the tape strips. The side scoring the most goals in five minutes is the winner. This game may also be played with the entire class in two groups.

School Spirit

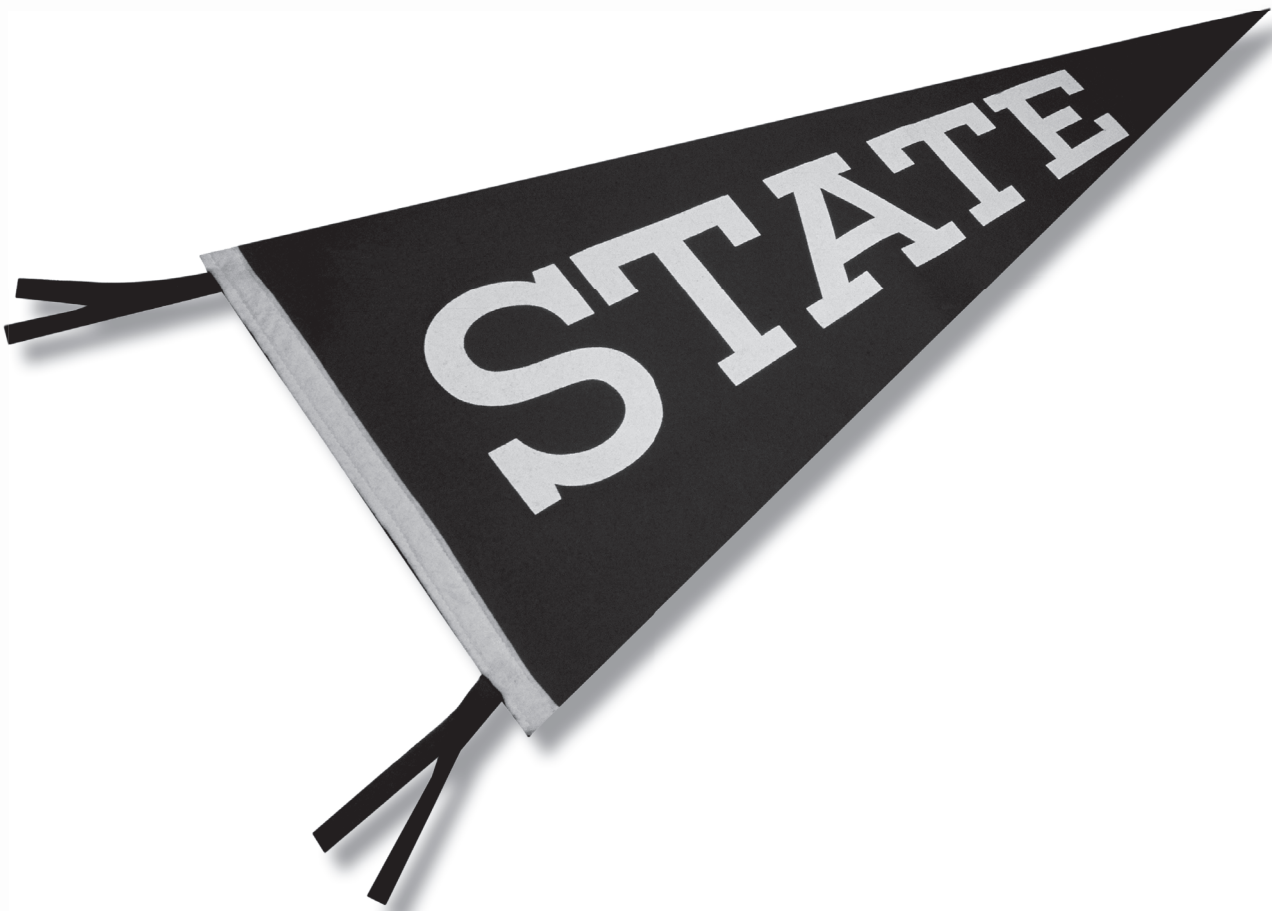
Nations around the world have a national anthem, or song. It typically describes the history and traditions of the nation and its people. Many states also have an official song. Your school may even have its own song!

Talk about the purpose of a national anthem or school song. Have the students heard any before? Do they know the national anthem? Play a variety of national anthems and school songs. You may want to provide a page with lyrics for each group or student (“The Star-Spangled Banner” and “O, Canada” are provided on the next two pages).

What types of characteristics would students want other people to hear about when listening to a song for their own school? Talk about the history, events, or characteristics that could be included, such as when the school was established, the school mascot, classroom subjects, etc.

Let your students’ school spirit shine by having them create their own school song. Divide the class into teams, and provide each team with markers and large sheets of paper. If your school already has a song, share it with the class. You can then have the students write a new verse for the song, or have them write a song about your class.

Ask students to write the song so that it can be hung on the wall. If there is time, have them illustrate their song lyrics on the paper as well. After all teams have finished their songs, display them around the room. Give each team a chance to present and explain their song to the rest of the class.



Who's Who at the Zoo?

Begin a discussion about the ways music can often capture the images and sounds of familiar things, such as a stormy night, a spring day, or even animals in nature. Ask the students, "If you were a composer and you were going to compose a song about fish in the seas, how would that music sound? Would it be loud and fast, or flowing and perhaps soft? Could it be suddenly playful, like a fish jumping around and skipping with the waves?"

Divide the class into small groups. In a container, place the following animal names on separate folded sheets of paper:

ELEPHANT, MONKEY, GIRAFFE, LION, BIRD, SWAN, SEAL, BEAR

Have each group pick one animal and answer the following questions. If possible, have one student take notes for the group.

1. What noise, if any, does my animal make? A roar? A chirp? A unique sound?
2. Is the noise loud or soft?
3. Is the noise long or short, or a quick, repeated pattern?
4. Is the noise a high or low sound – or somewhere in between?
5. Is my animal big, medium-sized, or small?
6. Is my animal fast or slow-moving?
7. Where does my animal live? In big, broad spaces? In the trees? In the water?

Now ask the students to imagine they are composing a piece about their animal. Ask them to answer the following questions:

1. Would my piece be mostly loud or soft?
2. Would my piece be mostly fast, slow, or at a medium speed?
3. Would my piece be playful, dreamy, mysterious, or even scary?

Ask your students to title their song to match the musical picture they would like to paint. For example: *The Laughing Monkeys*, *Elephant Safari*, *The Bellow of the Bear*

BONUS ACTIVITY

Play a recording for the class of Camille Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals*. Ask them to draw a picture of the animal they imagine as they listen to each musical selection.

This can also be paired with the *Carnival of the Animals* Seek and Find on pages 72–73.