Lesson 4: Mindful Listening

from the **Inspire Creativity Together** sequence

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

As presented at the Inspire Creativity Together workshop, Missouri Music Educators Association Conference 2025

Missouri Alliance for Arts Education
Support • Promote • Advocate

Description

Students will learn to engage their active listening skills by focusing on a piece of music while observing their own thoughts, emotions, and physical reactions. This activity helps students connect music to emotions and demonstrates how music is a powerful tool for expressing emotions. Through guided reflection, students will explore how mindful listening enhances their emotional awareness and connection to the music.

This lesson is adaptable for students in grades K–8. Its intentional flexibility allows teachers to modify the content to best suit their students' needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- Engage their active listening skills.
- Connect music and emotions on a fundamental level.
- Demonstrate their understanding that music is a tool for expressing emotions.

Standards

Missouri Music Learning Standards

- MU: Re8A.K-8a
- MU: Cn10A.K-8a

Materials

- Recorded music of your choosing that students are already familiar with. For example, Arturo Márquez's *Conga del Fuego*.

Procedure

- Introduce mindful listening to your students.
  - Mindful listening involves paying close attention to the music and observing one's own thoughts, feelings, and emotions as they occur.
  - Your mind might wander, and that's perfectly okay—just gently bring your focus back to the music.
  - If you feel uncomfortable or sleepy, simply acknowledge it without judgment and continue listening.
- Before you begin, allow students to make themselves as comfortable as possible. They could move onto the floor or use an extra chair to stretch out into a comfortable position.
- Set expectations for the students, including how long the listening example will be. Start with short examples and slowly increase the length of the listening examples over time.
- Take a few deep breaths together to center yourselves before starting the music.
- As you start the music, remind students to listen without judgment and simply observe their thoughts and feelings as they come.

Procedure (continued)

- After the listening example, reflect as a group:
    - What was it like for you to listen mindfully?
    - How did your body respond to the music?
    - Did your emotions shift while listening? How?
    - How did it feel to listen to the music rather than just hearing it?
    - What thoughts or ideas came up while you listened?
        - Who had a similar experience?
        - Who had a different experience?

Evaluation

Using a two-point rubric, assess the following. The student:

- Fully engaged in mindful listening, focusing on the music and staying present throughout the activity (Active listening: 1 point).
- Provided thoughtful reflections during the group discussion, clearly articulating the mindful listening experience and how it impacted their emotional and physical state (Music-emotion connection: 1 point).

If you enjoy this lesson, extend the fun by participating with your students in the SLSO's Picture the Music