The Planets Unit
8th grade

Music Standards Addressed:
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
4. Composes and arranges music with specified guidelines
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Core Curriculum Standards Addressed:

Science:
- Use evidence to generate descriptions, explanations, predictions, and models
- Explain how all objects exert gravitational force and this force is affected by the distance between the masses of the objects.
- Explain how factors (i.e., fronts, winds, air masses, air pressure, humidity, temperature, location) affect weather
- Identify the composition (e.g., stars galaxies) and scale of the universe

Language Arts:
- Use questions to narrow research topic
- Use a variety of primary and/or secondary sources to access information; i.e., computer catalogs, magazines, newspapers, and primary sources
- Evaluate sources that present different perspectives; e.g., by identifying sources of bias and distinguishing between primary and secondary sources.
- Use information from multiple sources when presenting research findings to defined audiences.
- Write a report using a thesis
- Use prior knowledge and experiences to aid text comprehension
- Use a variety of strategies to construct meaning from text; e.g., vocabulary building strategies, skimming, paraphrasing, summarizing, brainstorming, and discussing.
- Compose informative writing, e.g., research, biographies, autobiographies, news articles, interviews
- Write short stories that include story elements; e.g., dialogue, action, physical description, background description, character development
- Use prewriting product to create a first draft emphasizing details and referencing sources
- Incorporate grade-level appropriate vocabulary in writing
• Use organizational patterns; e.g., introduction, body, conclusion or exposition/body/resolution
• Use feedback and multiple drafts to revise text for specific purposes, e.g., clarity of ideas, organization, word choice and fluency
• Edit for grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling
• Incorporate a variety of visual aids in publications
• Use computer technology to present written work
• Speak with purpose using delivery techniques appropriate for different audiences to inform, demonstrate, entertain, or persuade
• Use supporting materials for topic development; e.g., research personal experience, literature, interview
• Speak for different purposes; e.g., group discussions, research presentations and demonstrations
• Use volume, eye contact, rate, pronunciation, and articulation effectively in oral presentation

Standards outside of music education are best taught by those specialized in those areas, however the music teacher alone could still incorporate these standards effectively with guidance and/or proper preparation.
Overview of Unit Plan
This packet contains a sample lesson plan, assignments and assessment rubrics.

In this unit students are introduced to Gustav Holst’s suite *The Planets*. Calvin Custer has arranged *The Planets*, originally composed for orchestra, for developing bands. The suite contains the works *Mars*, *Venus*, *Mercury*, *Jupiter*, *Saturn*, *Uranus*, and *Neptune*.

While learning these pieces musically, students will also research each of the planets as well as interpret how Holst uses music to describe the planets. Students will be required to complete assignments, both musical and non-musical, that deal with each of these planets and will present individual researched information to the class. The presentation will require visual aids and all facts, figures, and other information learned in the research process.
Lesson Plan Example

(Lesson can be used to introduce any of the pieces)

8th grade band

Objective:
Students will individually interpret Holst’s use of melodic line in Jupiter
Students will be able to identify melodic lines within the piece
Students will compare harmony and melody to other pieces in the suite

Materials:
The planets score
Recording of Jupiter

Procedure:
1. Listen to a recording of Jupiter
   On a piece of paper have students write down as many adjectives as they can think of to describe this piece.
2. Have students pick 3 adjectives that they believe describe the piece the best
3. Students listen to the piece a second time and write why they believe those adjectives describe the piece using musical terms (e.g., joyful = the melody line ascends in a bright and accented way.)
4. Students will volunteer their interpretation for the class
5. Students will look at their part for Jupiter to determine who has the melody and when.
   Those students will play their parts
6. Students will identify harmony lines
   Those students will play their parts
7. Compare compositional use of key, simple harmony, and melody to pieces learned thus far.
8. Play melodic and harmonic lines together using volunteered adjectives to dictate the style in which to play the piece.

Assessment:
Students were able to provide insightful and musical interpretations
Students were able to identify melody line
Students were able to compare harmony and melody with other pieces within the suite
Assignments

Assignments can be used in any order provided the proper steps of introduction of pieces have been done prior to assignments.

1. Part A:
In groups of 3-4 students will research one of the seven planets within the suite. Students are responsible to find the following:
   - Orbit, diameter, mass, volume (in metric)
   - Any mythology
   - History (when was it discovered, who discovered it?)
   - Of what materials is the planet made?
   - What does it look like? (Include pictures and descriptions)
   - Are there any words that describe the planet that you don’t know? What are they? Define them.
   - Any other interesting information that you may run across

Use at least 3 resources
Type this material into a paper and list resources
Use proper grammar and spelling

1. Part B
Develop an alien that could inhabit your planet. What would it look like? What does your planet have, or not have, that would contribute to vital alien characteristics?

2. What compositional techniques (melody, harmony, style, contour) does Holst use to convey each planet’s description?
   Higher order thinking: Compare and contrast compositional styles in each piece.

3. If Holst had composed The Earth, what would it sound like? Compose a piece, no more that 40 measures, that conveys your interpretation of the earth musically. Create a melodic line and harmony line that describes earth. Provide a description as to why you wrote what you did and how your piece symbolizes earth. Compose in two-part using Finale or Sibelius
   Higher order thinking: Compose for full band using Finale or Sibelius

4. Students will create a scaled-down solar system based on their combined knowledge of the solar system.

5. (Optional higher order thinking) Compare and contrast this suite to another Holst works for band (i.e., First Suite, Second Suite).
Assessment

Musical elements

Y  N  Performed correct notes
Y  N  Performed correct rhythms
Y  N  Can identify melodic and harmonic lines
Y  N  Able to give an individual interpretation and description of musical elements
Y  N  Composed a melodic and harmonic line using their description of earth
Y  N  Plays in the correct style based on descriptions formed in class

Science Assessment:

Y  N  Correctly develops a scaled down solar system
Y  N  Demonstrates knowledge of planet’s facts and climate

Language Arts Assessment:

Y  N  Student used at least 3 resources in his/her research
Y  N  Student wrote a paper on the topic given
Y  N  Student used proper grammar and spelling
Y  N  Student presented material to class using proper volume, eye contact, rate, pronunciation, and articulation effectively.