Environmental Rhythms: Learning in the Outdoors
Course: Elementary Music Grades 3-5
Adapted from Cynthia Brown, Saint Paul Public Schools

Big Ideas:
1. Rhythm is everywhere in the world of nature as well as in our own artistic and biological beings.
2. Artistic expression can be enhanced by combining it with the outdoor environment.
3. Students listen to rhythms in nature and then add their own rhythmic performances.

Materials:
• Outdoor Classroom Area with space to listen for environmental sounds.
• Rhythm Sticks or suitable instruments for playing in ensemble.
• Rhythm Cards with metered notation for students to read, arrange, and play.
• Pencils, worksheets, and clipboards

Place-Based Education: Lesson focus on the students’ observations in the outdoor environment where they live and study.

Prior Learning: Students will have learned to read and play rhythmic notation and values appropriate for their grade level.
Students will know instrumental and ensemble playing techniques.

Long-term learning targets:
2.1 I can read basic music notation (S.2.1)
2.2 I can play classroom instruments with accurate pitch and rhythm (S1.2.2)
2.3 I can create a rhythmic phrase (S2.1.1)

Learning Objectives:
Strand 1: Artistic Foundations
Describe the elements of music: melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tone color, texture, form and related concepts.

Standard 2: Demonstrate knowledge and use of the technical skills of the art form, integrating technology when applicable.
1. Read and notate music using the standard system of notation such as quarter, half, eighth notes, rests, lines and spaces of the treble clef, and time signatures.
2. Sing and play alone and in a group demonstrating proper posture, breathing, technique, age appropriate tone quality, and expressive intent.
Strand III: Artistic Process: Perform or Present

Standard 1: Perform or present in a variety of contexts in the arts area, using the artistic foundations.

1. Sing alone or in groups; music including rounds and part songs, and/or play instruments alone or in a group.

Concepts Needed: Form or structures of music, rhythm, steady beat, environmental sounds, ensemble playing, and composition.

Cross-Curricular Connections: Science (observation skills) and literacy (Rhythmic development is an important skill for reading fluency and comprehension.)

Benchmark Assessments vary across grade levels, this lesson will include a performance assessment as well as a combined written and verbal response assessment.

Target Concepts: Language and Vocabulary: rhythm, steady beat, duration in beats, dynamics, tempo, form or structure of the music.

Skills:
Read and play rhythmic notation, including quarter notes, quarter rests, paired eighth notes, and half notes.
Use correct rhythm stick technique and ensemble playing skills.

Process:

The students will move to an outdoors location where they can listen to and for environmental rhythms. The group listens in silence for environmental sounds and then discusses and names the sounds they hear in the environment, and the types of rhythms they noticed.

The discussion is continued after the worksheets are distributed since worksheet questions will form the basis of discussion ideas. Students are given the worksheets to help them think about the questions although the pencils aren’t distributed until after the Rhythm Ensemble.

Students create a class rhythm ensemble to play outdoors in the environment by selecting grade-level rhythm cards that they arrange into 4 measure phrases according to the musical form that they choose: ABA, ABCA, AABA, etc.

Class discussion: There are places where you will find a steady beat in nature and in our bodies. Rhythms (short and long sounds that happen more distinctly above the quiet steady beat) can also be found in our environment.
Mastery Statements
Performance Assessment:
Students are able to find sounds in the environment and discriminate between rhythms and steady beats.
Students are able to actively participate in the discussion verbally and/or by making notations about their observations on their worksheets.
Students are able to read and perform the rhythms smoothly and in ensemble.

Class Discussion Questions/Follow Up Assignments

What is a steady beat?

Where might you hear a steady beat in nature or in your own body?

What is a rhythm?

Where might you hear a rhythm in nature or in your own body?

Write about city rhythms.

Do you think the Earth or plants or animals create rhythms?

Do you think it will change anything if you perform a rhythm composition outside rather than in the classroom?

Write the rhythm composition we played outside.