

Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School

Course: *Creating Hit Songs*

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Section I: Course Description

Creating Hit Songs is a course designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of songwriting, as well as the fundamentals of music technology. Students will examine the building blocks of songs including lyrics, melody, and harmony. Students will also be introduced to beginner music technology concepts such as MIDI, plug-ins, mixing, and editing. Students will leave the class with a wide array of completed covers and original music spanning different genres and attitudes.

Section II: NJSLs: New Jersey Student Learning Standards/Learning Objectives

1. **2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards – Visual and Performing Arts**
 - The NJSLs-VPA reflect the National Core Arts Standards and emphasize the process-oriented nature of the arts and arts learning by: defining artistic literacy through a set of overarching philosophical foundations and lifelong goals that clarify long-term expectations for arts learning; placing artistic processes and anchor standards at the forefront of the work; identifying creative artistic practices as the bridge for the application of the artistic processes and anchor standards across all learning; and specifying enduring understandings and essential questions that provide conceptual through lines and articulate value and meaning within and across the arts discipline.
2. **Standard 8.1 (Computer Science) and 8.2 (Design Thinking) of the 2020 NJSLs:**
 - “The ‘Intent and Spirit of the Computer Science and Design Thinking Standards’ is to focus on deep understanding of concepts that enable students to think critically and systematically about leveraging technology to solve local and global issues. Authentic learning experiences that enable students to apply content knowledge, integrate concepts across disciplines, develop computational thinking skills, acquire and incorporate varied perspectives, and communicate with diverse audiences about the use and effects of computing prepares New Jersey students for college and careers.”
3. **Standard 9.4 (Life Literacies and Key Skills) of the 2020 NJSLs:**
 - “This standard outlines key literacies and technical skills such as critical thinking, global and cultural awareness, and technology literacy* that are critical for students to develop to live and work in an interconnected global economy.”
 - **Climate Change:** The state of New Jersey has mandated instruction in, “Climate Change across all content areas, leveraging the passion students have shown for this critical issue and providing them opportunities to develop a deep understanding of the science behind the changes and to explore the solutions our world desperately needs.”
4. **LGBT and Disabilities Law: N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35:**
 - A transformative approach to the inclusion of lessons and resources/texts on the contributions and issues concerning the LGBTQ+ population and people with disabilities will be implemented across all core subjects in accordance with state law: “A board of education shall include instruction on the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, in an appropriate place in the curriculum of middle school and high school students as part of the district’s implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (N.J.S.A.18A:35-4.36). A board of education shall have policies and procedures in place pertaining to the selection of instructional materials to implement the requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35.”
5. Acquisition/development/refinement of the higher-order critical thinking skills aligned with the *Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives*

Section III: Curriculum Modifications

The *Creating Hit Songs* Curriculum is subject to case-by-case modifications to support/advance the needs of all students, including special education students, English language learners, gifted students and those at risk of school failure. These modifications are based on Individualized Learning Programs (IEPs), recommendations made by the district’s English Language Learners (ELL) coordinator, feedback from members of the Intervention & Referral Services Team (*I&RS*) for at-risk students, and 504 Plans.

Coursework and assessments will be modified individually for students when necessary. Modifications may include but are not limited to:

- Small group instruction

- One-on-one instruction
- Independent work stations
- Use of graphic organizers
- Interest inventories and questionnaires
- Audio resources to complement written texts and concepts
- Visual resources to complement written texts and concepts
- Extra time on assessments and large scale projects
- Reduced length of written assignments
- Large projects broken into smaller tasks and timelines
- Tiered Instruction
- Individual help during practice
- Diagrams and color coding for visual learners
- Verbal and written directions for visual and auditory learners
- Provided class notes
- Preferential seating
- Spelling not penalized
- Varied supplemental activities
- Assessments delivered orally

Section IV: Preparation for Standardized Testing

This *Creating Hit Songs* curriculum is aligned with the requirements of state and national standardized assessments, including the *NJSLA*, the *ACT*, the *PSAT* and the *SAT*.

Section V: Curriculum Pacing Guide

Curriculum Pacing Guide	
Course Title: <i>Creating Hit Songs</i>	Grade Level: 9-12
Unit I: How to Make Hit Songs-Lyrics	Weeks 1-4
Unit II: How to Make Hit Songs-Arrangements	Weeks 5-9
Unit III: What Makes Hit Songs-Samples	Weeks 10-14
Unit IV: What Makes Hit Songs-Production	Weeks 15-20
Unit V: Releasing a Hit Song	Weeks 36-40

Section VI: Primary Texts and Year Long Instructional Resources

The following texts and instructional resources are employed in *Creating Hit Songs*:

- *Common Sense Education* (www.commonsense.org)
- Google Classroom

- MIDI Keyboards
- Headphones
- Microphones
- Pro Tools
- Logic

Section VII: Grading Formula and Assessment Modes

Marking period grades in *Creating Hit Songs* are determined via a percentage weighting model. The specific grading categories and weightings of each will be determined prior to the start of each academic year and will be published in the posted/distributed course syllabi.

Section VIII: Unit Templates

The following unit templates have been established for the *Creating Hit Songs* curriculum:

Unit I: How to Make Hit Songs-Lyrics		
Unit Summary		
Students will build upon the previous <i>Songwriting</i> and/or <i>Recording</i> course and review songwriting fundamentals like lyrics, melody, harmony, form, and style. Students will now take a deeper look at songwriting techniques and brain storm methodical approaches to expressing themselves lyrically. This methodical approach will include a look at descriptive verbs and adjectives, as well as challenging lyrical exercises. Students will also look at hit song lyrical tropes to incorporate into their own songs. After this review, students will have two weeks to complete their first project, in which the instructor will offer a lyrical songwriting prompt for students to complete.		
Standards/Core Ideas/Performance Expectations		
The state standards outlined below, and established by New Jersey Department of Education, will guide instruction throughout this unit in <i>Creating Hit Songs</i> :		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 <i>New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Visual and Performing Arts: 9-12</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1.3B-Music Composition and Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1.3B.12prof.Cn10a, 1.3B.12acc.Cn10a, 1.3B.12adv.Cn10a ■ 1.3B.12prof.Cn11a, 1.3B.12acc.Cn11a, 1.3B.12adv.Cn11a ○ 1.3E-Music Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1.3E.12prof.Cr1a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr1a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr1a ■ 1.3E.12prof.Cr2a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr2a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr2a ■ 1.3E.12prof.Pr6a-6b, 1.3E.12acc.Pr6a-6b, 1.3E.12adv.Pr6a-6b ■ 1.3E.12prof.Re8a, 1.3E.12acc.Re8a, 1.3E.12adv.Re8a ■ 1.3E.12prof.Re9a, 1.3E.12acc.Re9a, 1.3E.12adv.Re9a • 2020 <i>New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 9.4.2.CI.1-2, 9.4.12.CT.2, etc. 		
Unit Essential Questions	Unit Enduring Understandings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is “Destination Writing”? • Why is an emphasis on verbs and adjectives so important when writing lyrics? • What is the lyrical theme of most hit songs? • Why is melody the most immediate aspect of a song? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive verbs and adjectives allow us to convey deeper lyrics that would otherwise be bland. • Destination writing involves beginning one’s lyrics with a place, any place at all, that one can derive meaning from. • The melody is what the audience sings along to and relates to. This means melody should be one of the top priorities. • Simple is almost always better. The audience should be able to sing along or play along to ideas on an instrument. • At the end of the day, songwriters should enjoy what they write. If someone creates a song that they themselves would listen to, they are likely to find success with audiences. 	
Evidence of Learning		
Formative Assessment:	Summative Assessment:	Resources Needed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 minute “Destination Songwriting” assignment • Finding common lyrical themes in hit artist’s lyrics assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 1 Project: Writing a song based on a defined lyrical prompt according to the rubric provided by the instructor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers • MIDI Keyboards • Audio Interface • Pro Tools

● Playing a pop vocal melody on an instrument assignment	● Microphones
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Unit II: How to Make Hit Songs-Arrangements

Unit Summary

Hit songs are commonly created with similar instrumentation. This instrumentation changes decade to decade, and in our current decade many instruments are synthesized. It is important for students to recognize different acoustic instruments, but also different types of synths. Students will be asked to find hit songs using different types of acoustic configurations and synthesizer configurations. Students will build their own synths from scratch using a DAW and use this synth to write a song of their own.

Standards/Core Ideas/Performance Expectations

The state standards outlined below, and established by New Jersey Department of Education, will guide instruction throughout this unit in *Creating Hit Songs*:

- 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Visual and Performing Arts: 9-12
 - 1.3B-Music Composition and Theory
 - 1.3B.12prof.Cn10a, 1.3B.12acc.Cn10a, 1.3B.12adv.Cn10a
 - 1.3B.12prof.Cn11a, 1.3B.12acc.Cn11a, 1.3B.12adv.Cn11a
 - 1.3E-Music Technology
 - 1.3E.12prof.Cr1a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr1a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr1a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Cr2a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr2a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr2a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Pr4a-4c, 1.3E.12acc.Pr4a-4c, 1.3E.12adv.Pr4a-4c
 - 1.3E.12prof.Pr5a, 1.3E.12acc.Pr5a, 1.3E.12adv.Pr5a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Pr6a-6b, 1.3E.12acc.Pr6a-6b, 1.3E.12adv.Pr6a-6b
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12acc.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12adv.Re7a-7b
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re8a, 1.3E.12acc.Re8a, 1.3E.12adv.Re8a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re9a, 1.3E.12acc.Re9a, 1.3E.12adv.Re9a
- 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills
 - 9.4.2.CI.1-2, 9.4.12.CT.2, etc.

Unit Essential Questions

- What does it mean to create music outside of one's comfort zone?
- What is an arrangement?
- How are hit songs usually arranged?
- What sounds are found in hit song arrangements?
- What are the three fundamental types of synth waves?

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Commercial songwriters are constantly asked to create music styles outside of their immediate understanding. Successful songwriters should be able to work in different genres.
- Do not bore the listener; get to the catchy hook within a minute.
- Keep songs under 4:15 and make sure that the verse-chorus cycle is broken up by something (solo, bridge, etc.).
- Synthesizers have three different wave types. These waves are saw, triangle, and square.
- Many DAW's offer their own synthesizer, like Logic does with Alchemist, or a songwriter may buy their own, like Omnisphere.

Evidence of Learning

Formative Assessment:

- Acoustic instrument listening checks
- Synthesizer vocabulary check
- Synthesizer listening checks

Summative Assessment:

- [Unit 2 Project: Create an original song that utilizes synthesizers, including a synthesizer that you built from scratch.](#)

Resources Needed:

- Computers
- MIDI Keyboards
- Audio Interface
- Pro Tools
- Microphones

Unit III: How to Make Hit Songs-Samples

Unit Summary

Sampling is such an important part of current day pop music. Students will be introduced to the different applications of sampling, as well as popular methods of using it. Much of the synth vocabulary from Unit II will be called upon for this unit when using a sampler. Much like how students created a song with a synth they made from scratch in Unit II, they will put their new learned sampling skills to the task by creating a song all based on their own samples.

Standards/Core Ideas/Performance Expectations

The state standards outlined below, and established by New Jersey Department of Education, will guide instruction throughout this unit in *Creating Hit Songs*:

- 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Visual and Performing Arts: 9-12
 - 1.3E-Music Technology
 - 1.3E.12prof.Pr4a-4c, 1.3E.12acc.Pr4a-4c, 1.3E.12adv.Pr4a-4c
 - 1.3E.12prof.Pr5a, 1.3E.12acc.Pr5a, 1.3E.12adv.Pr5a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12acc.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12adv.Re7a-7b
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re8a, 1.3E.12acc.Re8a, 1.3E.12adv.Re8ea
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re9a, 1.3E.12acc.Re9a, 1.3E.12adv.Re9a,
- 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills
 - 9.4.2.CI.1-2, 9.4.12.CT.2, etc.

Unit Essential Questions	Unit Enduring Understandings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are musical samples? ● Why does the most appropriate sampling software vary depending on the DAW? ● Why is synth vocabulary so important when using sampling software? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sampling has been a vital part of American Pop music since the 1980s. In order to sample like a professional, a working knowledge of various sampling software is essential. ● Logic Pro uses a newly designed sampler called the Quick Sampler. This is a useful tool for composing songs. ● Hit producers have their own unique sample library. They use this library to create an artistic pallet, the same way some visual artists use certain colors to express themselves. 	
Evidence of Learning		
Formative Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal Sampling library Check 	Summative Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Unit III Project: Create an original song based entirely on your own samples library (you may sing over it if you want)</u> 	Resources Needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Computers ● MIDI Keyboards ● Audio Interface ● Pro Tools ● Microphones

Unit IV: What Makes Hit Songs-Production

Unit Summary

Hit songs commonly use similar formulas for their sound mixes, however getting the reverb, compression, EQ, and other details in place is still a daunting task. Students will be given a methodical approach to mixing their songs and adding that final polish that is found in pop music before it is released. Students will be introduced to other various effects and techniques that are added to hit songs in the post production stage. Some of these effects include vocal layering, panning techniques, added harmonies, added aux percussion, and transitions.

Standards/Core Ideas/Performance Expectations

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 - 1.3B.12prof.Cn11a, 1.3B.12acc.Cn11a, 1.3B.12adv.Cn11a
 - 1.3E-Music Technology
 - 1.3E.12prof.Cr1a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr1a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr1a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Cr2a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr2a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr2a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Pr5a, 1.3E.12acc.Pr5a, 1.3E.12adv.Pr5a
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12acc.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12adv.Re7a-7b
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re8a, 1.3E.12acc.Re8a, 1.3E.12adv.Re8ea
 - 1.3E.12prof.Re9a, 1.3E.12acc.Re9a, 1.3E.12adv.Re9a
- 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills
 - 9.4.2.CI.1-2, 9.4.12.CT.2, etc.

Unit Essential Questions	Unit Enduring Understandings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does vocal layering effect a piece? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocal layering is an essential aspect of hit songs. Any home recording producer should know how to properly layer and pan their vocals to get a thick pop sound.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the three main audio effects? • How are reverb, EQ, and compression used specifically in hit pop music? • What is stereo panning? • What other effects and techniques are commonly utilized by pop stars in the post production stage? • What stock plugins are best for adding final touches to our songs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different effects and techniques are utilized in verses and choruses to delineate the song form and add interest. Students should always pay close attention to what techniques are used in delineating song form when actively listening to a track. • Any producer or vocalist should learn how to layer vocals and add effects to improve sound. • Logic Pro and other recording software have hundreds of stock plugins, but students will only need a few in order to get a polished sound.
Evidence of Learning	
Formative Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening verse-chorus delineation method assignment 	Summative Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit IV Project: Mix Someone else's project from Unit 1, 2, or 3 (randomly assigned) You may also produce it how you want.
Resources Needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers • MIDI Keyboards • Audio Interface • Pro Tools • Microphones 	

Unit V: Releasing a Hit Song	
Unit Summary	
<p>So you have an incredible song, now what? This unit offers students a look at the fundamentals of the ever growing music industry. In order to release a song on a streaming platform, students should know about services such as Distrokid and Tunecore. There are also services available to students not ready to pay for these professional options just yet. Students will also want to understand the current climate in which they will be releasing their song.. Streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music; social networks such as Tik-Tok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter; and video streaming services like Amazon Prime, Netflix, Hulu, and Plex are revolutionizing the music industry everyday. This is creating not only new styles of music, but many new career paths for students to venture into. This can be an exciting unit for students looking for careers in the music industry who previously saw no viable options for themselves.</p>	
Standards/Core Ideas/Performance Expectations	
<p>The state standards outlined below, and established by New Jersey Department of Education, will guide instruction throughout this unit in <i>Creating Hit Songs</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Visual and Performing Arts: 9-12</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>1.3B-Music Composition and Theory</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>1.3B.12prof.Cn10a, 1.3B.12acc.Cn10a, 1.3B.12adv.Cn10a</i> ■ <i>1.3B.12prof.Cn11a, 1.3B.12acc.Cn11a, 1.3B.12adv.Cn11a</i> ○ <i>1.3E-Music Technology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>1.3E.12prof.Cr1a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr1a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr1a</i> ■ <i>1.3E.12prof.Cr2a, 1.3E.12acc.Cr2a, 1.3E.12adv.Cr2a</i> ■ <i>1.3E.12prof.Pr5a, 1.3E.12acc.Pr5a, 1.3E.12adv.Pr5a</i> ■ <i>1.3E.12prof.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12acc.Re7a-7b, 1.3E.12adv.Re7a-7b</i> ■ <i>1.3E.12prof.Re8a, 1.3E.12acc.Re8a, 1.3E.12adv.Re8a</i> ■ <i>1.3E.12prof.Re9a, 1.3E.12acc.Re9a, 1.3E.12adv.Re9a</i> • <i>2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>9.4.2.CI.1-2, 9.4.12.CT.2, etc.</i> 	
Unit Essential Questions	Unit Enduring Understandings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What platforms are viable options for releasing your music? • What new music careers have been created through music and video streaming services? • What new music careers have been created through new social media apps? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The music industry is in a state of rapid change, and it is important to know where to turn for new information on the music industry. • Services such as Soundcloud and Bandcamp are great homes for music before getting put onto Spotify or Apple Music. • For small fees, DistroKid and Tunecore will put music on Spotify or Apple Music. • Once music is out, making connections is the most important thing a songwriter can do. This can be through social media, playing shows on tour, putting on your own shows, or sharing music on Reddit.

Evidence of Learning		
Formative Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make your own music industry slide show presentations 	Summative Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Project: Pick Your Own Project from Units I-IV 	Resources Needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers • MIDI Keyboards • Audio Interface • Pro Tools • Microphones

Section IX: Unit Reflection

The *Creating Hit Songs* instructional team must confer upon the completion of each instructional unit in the *Creating Hit Songs* curriculum and rate the degrees to which the instructional units meet performance criteria established by the New Jersey Department of Education using the Unit Reflection Form. Completed unit reflection forms must be submitted to the Department Supervisor for approval upon completion of curriculum implementation with a complementing list of suggested modifications to the *Creating Hits Songs* curriculum.

Unit Reflection Form: <i>Creating Hit Songs</i>			
Lesson Activities:	Strongly	Moderately	Weakly
Foster student use of technology as a tool to develop critical thinking, creativity and innovation skills;			
Are challenging and require higher order thinking and problem-solving skills;			
Allow for student choice;			
Provide scaffolding for acquiring targeted knowledge/skills;			
Integrate modern, global perspectives, especially those regarding diversity, genocide, global issues, and historical ones regarding racial relations;			
Integrate 21 st century skills;			
Provide opportunities for interdisciplinary connection and transfer of knowledge and skills;			
Are varied to address different student learning styles and preferences;			
Are differentiated based on student needs;			
Are student-centered with teacher acting as a facilitator and co-learner during the teaching and learning process;			
Provide means for students to demonstrate knowledge and skills and progress in meeting learning goals and objectives;			
Provide opportunities for student reflection and self-assessment;			
Provide data to inform and adjust instruction to better meet the varying needs of learners.			