

Ira Carranza
Grade Level: 7

Middle School Unit Plan Outline

Unit Title: Introduction to DAWs in Music Production

National Standards: MU:Cr1.1.6b; MU:Cr2.1.6a; MU:Pr4.1.6a; MU:Pr5.1.6a; MU:Re7.1.6a

Rationale:

This unit introduces middle school students to the foundations of music production using digital audio workstations (DAWs). Students will learn how different audio elements can be manipulated through different processes, including sound creation, editing, arrangement, and mixing. By the end of the unit, students will have foundational experience with digital music production and understand how a DAW operates as a creative tool.

Enduring Understanding:

- Digital tools like GarageBand provide accessible platforms for music creation.
- DAWs combine creativity with technology to allow for layered, structured compositions.
- Music production involves both artistic decisions and technical problem-solving.

Essential Questions:

- What is a digital audio workstation (DAW), and how is it used to create music?
- How can GarageBand help us turn musical ideas into complete tracks?
- What are the main tools and features in GarageBand that support music production?

Student Learning Objectives:

- Identify the main components of a DAW and explain their functions.
- Create a short song using loops, virtual instruments, and audio tracks in GarageBand.
- Arrange and edit musical elements logically and creatively within a DAW.

Proposed Assessment/Evaluation:

- Informal:
 - Observation of student participation in loop creation and track arrangement.
 - Reflection questions and partner discussions during work sessions.
- Formal:
 - Quiz on DAW terms and GarageBand functions.
- Long-range project:
 - Collaborative group project to create a complete track.

Prior Knowledge and Skills:

- Basic understanding of musical concepts (beats, loops, melody).
- Familiarity with general computer software.
- Basic understanding of sequencing and pattern recognition in music.

Teaching Strategies:

- Visual: Live demonstration of GarageBand tools and processes via projector.
- Auditory: Listening to sample projects and identifying layers and arrangement.
- Kinesthetic: Hands-on creation and editing of music using GarageBand on individual devices.

Connections:

- Technology: Understanding software-based music production.
- Math: Applying pattern recognition and timing in sequencing beats and loops.
- Literacy: Explaining creative choices and describing workflow in digital projects.
- Creativity: Encouraging students to express themselves through musical arrangements and effects.

Activator:

Group discussion: “Have you ever wondered how songs are made?” followed by a short video showing music being created in GarageBand and a guided conversation about what students noticed.

Repertoire:

- GarageBand tools:
- Track types (software instruments, audio, drummer)
- Loop Browser
- Track Controls (mute, solo, volume, pan)
- Arrangement and editing functions
- Sample loops and instruments for beat making

Materials:

iPads or computers with GarageBand installed

Headphones for each student

Projector or display system for demos

Notebook or digital doc for student notes and reflections

Whiteboard for vocabulary and visual breakdown of DAW structure

Lesson Outlines:

Lesson 1: What is a DAW? Introduction to GarageBand

- Main Learning Objective: Identify the purpose and basic functions of a DAW and navigate the GarageBand interface.
- Lesson Sequence:
 - Opening (6m): Welcome and class discussion on how music is made; watch a short video of a song being built in a DAW.
 - Learning Activities (33m): Guided tour of GarageBand’s interface (loops, tracks, tools); students explore interface with headphones.
 - Closing (6m): Class review of key GarageBand terms; exit ticket: “One thing I learned about GarageBand today.”

Lesson 2: Using Loops and Building a Beat

- Main Learning Objective: Create a simple beat using Apple Loops and arrange it in GarageBand.
- Lesson Sequence:
 - Opening (8m): Recap of previous class; live demo of adding loops and creating a beat.
 - Learning Activities (31m): Students drag and drop loops to build a basic beat, experiment with arrangement and tempo.
 - Closing (6m): Peer sharing in small groups and class reflection on how loops are organized and layered.

Lesson 3: Recording and Editing Sounds

- Main Learning Objective: Record audio and edit clips in GarageBand using basic tools.
- Lesson Sequence:
 - Opening (6m): Intro to software instrument and audio tracks; discuss recording options.
 - Learning Activities (33m): Students record short melodies or rhythms using on-screen keyboards or microphones; edit for timing and balance.
 - Closing (6m): Share and reflect on challenges and discoveries in the editing process.

Lesson 4: Arranging a Full Song

- Main Learning Objective: Combine loops, recordings, and effects to build a multi-section song in GarageBand.
- Lesson Sequence:
 - Opening (6m): Listen to a short GarageBand composition and identify song structure.
 - Learning Activities (33m): Students arrange intro, verse, and chorus using prior elements and explore adding effects and volume automation.
 - Closing (6m): Exit ticket: "What part of your song are you most proud of so far?"

Lesson 5: Project Showcase and Assessment

- Main Learning Objective: Demonstrate understanding of DAW functions through a completed GarageBand project.
- Lesson Sequence:
 - Opening (4m): Review project rubric and expectations; students prepare to present final tracks.
 - Learning Activities (35m): Students complete and export projects; present to peers with short explanations of their process and choices.
 - Closing (6m): Written reflection: "How did GarageBand help you express your musical ideas?"