Using Garageband to Study Blues Improvisation

The Students
This activity is designed for high school students in a public high school. Students are involved in the band program at their school and have been selected, by audition, for membership in the school’s jazz ensemble.

The Required Resources
The high school has a dedicated practice space, equipped with music technology, for use by the vocal and instrumental departments. It has a Mac computer equipped with audio and midi interfaces capable of recording up to sixteen tracks of live music at a time. Students have access to a library of audio loops, microphones, and various audio tools for use in this music lab.

The Individual Knowledge Creation Activity
The student will use Garageband to record an improvised blues solo, two to four choruses in length, to Duke Ellington’s *C-Jam Blues*. In this assignment the student will demonstrate their knowledge of blues improvisation and music technology. Working alone, the student will have one week to practice using the blues scale to improvising to *C-Jam Blues*. They will reserve a 30-60 minute time slot in the music lab to create their recording. The student will submit .wav file of their performance on a recordable cd.

Standards Addressed
The following State of Kansas Music Standards will be engaged during this assignment.

Standard 2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

Standard 3: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performance

Continued Investigation
For additional credit, students may demonstrate their knowledge of blues improvisation by finding examples of the blues scale being utilized by other jazz musicians. Audio clips of musicians using the blues scale may be placed on the student’s recordable cd.

Learning Theory
Sticht's Functional Context Theory

1. Instruction should be made as meaningful as possible to the learner in terms of the learner's prior knowledge.
   - Students in the jazz ensemble are specializing in a very specific genre of music. Learning the art of jazz improvisation is very meaningful to the students and a desired outcome.

2. Use material and equipment that the learner will actually use after training
• For students continuing on in their music studies, the understanding of music technology (Garageband, MIDI Interfaces, ETC) will be vital to their development as professional musicians.

3. Literacy can be improved by: improving content knowledge, information processing skills, or the design of the learning materials.

• By studying the blues scale, students are acquiring the necessary tools to demonstrate an understanding of jazz improvisation.

4. Valid assessment of learning requires context/content specific measurement.

• Judging a student’s improvised performance in a concert would be a context/content specific measurement.
Using Garageband and iMovie to Compose a Music Video

The Students
This activity is designed for advanced music students in a public high school. Students active in the vocal and instrumental program at the school. The students have been selected for an iAdvanced Placement class which studies music theory and composition.

The Required Resources
The high school has a dedicated music practice space, equipped with music technology, for use by the vocal and instrumental departments. It has a Mac computer equipped with audio and midi interfaces capable of recording up to sixteen tracks of live music at a time. Students have access to a library of audio loops, microphones, instruments, and various audio tools for use in this music lab. Students will also have access to video recording equipment available for checkout through the school.

The Collaborative Activity
Students will work in groups of 3-5 to compose, record, and illustrate an original 3-4 minute composition. Students will work in groups during class time for three weeks on the project. The students will use Garageband to make a live recording of their composition and iMovie to illustrate it with video. To receive full credit for the assignment student’s will post their finished video to YouTube.

Standards Addressed
The following State of Kansas Music Standards will be engaged during this assignment.
Standard 2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
Standard 3: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
Standard 4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performance

Learning Theory
Lave’s Situated Learning Theory
1. Knowledge needs to be presented in an authentic context, i.e., settings and applications that would normally involve that knowledge.
   • Students have the opportunity to learn “hands on” with software often used in professional settings.
2. Learning requires social interaction and collaboration.
   • Assignment’s group collaboration provides opportunity for social interaction and learning.
B. Technology vs Content Knowledge 10 points

When you consider the career needs of your students and the overall needs of society, is it more important that your students know basic knowledge about information technology or is it more important that they know the content in your area? For example, if you teach science education is it more important that the students understand the periodic tables or how to create spreadsheets or some other technology skill?

Why?

I believe today it is more important that students learn to utilize technology to access knowledge. In other words it’s more important that students know how to ACCESS information about the periodic table. Computers are smaller and faster then ever before. They are in our cars, in our phones, and these tools won’t be fading away any time soon. They are here to stay. We need to equip our students with the skills and abilities to access the information they need at any given time. The periodic table should always be taught in schools. Given the new trends in how we use technology to access knowledge I believe our focus needs to broaden. We need to embrace technology in our schools and use it to supplement our instruction. Technology can help us learn about the periodic table in ways that weren’t possible before.