Music and Children with Exceptionalities

Brown, Laura. Western Illinois University, Macomb. The Influence of Music on Facial Emotion Perception in Children with Autism and Typical Children. PPI

Individuals with autism struggle with social skills, including emotion perception from faces. Even though many individuals with autism have difficulty perceiving emotion from faces, some individuals with autism appear to be able to identify the emotional intent of musical excerpts. If individuals with autism appear to be able to identify emotional intent of music, yet struggle with perceiving emotion from faces, it is important to explore the relationship between the two modalities. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of background music on children’s recognition of emotions depicted in photographs of human faces. The research questions were:

1. Do emotional musical clips influence how children with autism and typical children rate the emotional intensity of facial photographs?

2. Do emotional music clips influence how quickly children with autism and typical children rate the emotional intensity of facial photographs?

3. Are there any differences between groups of children with autism and typical children in their perceptions of facial emotion when influenced by emotional music?

This study used a repeated measures design with typical children (n=30) and children with autism (n=20). The children rated 30 facial photographs (10 happy, 10 neutral, 10 sad) under happy and sad music conditions on a scale of 1 (very sad) to 7 (very happy). Music clips were selected from examples in current research and from pilot procedures. The happy clip was “Spring” by Vivaldi and the sad clip was “Adagio for Strings” by Barber. The stimuli were presented using Superlab ® software (Abboud, Heller, Matsak, Schultz, & Zeitlin, 2012); participants used a 7-key response pad to rate faces. Following a training procedure to familiarize participants with the task, participants heard 1 minute of either happy or sad music, and rated the 30 faces in random order as the music continued to play. After a three-minute break, participants repeated the procedure with the remaining music clip.

Data were analyzed using a repeated measures ANOVA. Findings revealed that both typical children and children with autism rated faces in the appropriate emotional categories (happy, neutral, and sad). There was a significant interaction for face type and music condition, meaning that the influence of the two music conditions was not consistent across face types. Participants rated sad faces as sadder during the sad music than during the happy music; there was little influence of the music on happy or neutral faces.

Analysis of response latencies revealed that sad faces took longer to rate than either happy or neutral faces. Participants with autism had significantly longer response latencies than typical participants. There was a significant group by face type interaction; participants with autism were slowest to rate neutral faces and typical participants were slowest to rate sad faces. There was a significant group by music interaction; the sad music had more influence on response latencies of participants with autism than typical participants.

Findings from this study reveal that music can influence facial emotion perception in typical children and children with autism. Sad music has more influence on children with autism than typical children as evidenced by response latency. Findings from this study have implications for individuals working with children with autism to improve emotional understanding.

Brown, Laura. Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL. Draper, Ellary and Jellison, Judith. The University of Texas at Austin. Research Informs Practice: Systematic Reviews of Music Research and Inclusion
It is reported that 6.5 million children have disabilities and over 96% are now in regular schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Given these data and survey findings from VanWeelden and Whipple (2012) showing that a large percentage of music teachers work with students with disabilities, it seems reasonable to assume that many music educators are providing instruction in inclusive music classrooms. Although the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is decades old, experienced and soon to be music teachers continue to search for ways for all of their students to learn and participate in inclusive classrooms. A goal of research is to improve the quality of education for all children, and systematic reviews of literature can interpret all of the evidence on a single topic and provide relevant applications for classrooms.

Systematic reviews of literature have been conducted by researchers in most all disciplines as a way to identify, evaluate, and interpret all the evidence from multiple studies relevant to a particular research question or topic of interest. There is a growing body of research on music and disabilities, and although research is sparse for inclusive settings, findings from two systematic reviews of music research offer suggestions that can be transferred to curricular and instructional music practices in inclusive settings. Other implications from the findings suggest actions for teachers as collaborators in their schools and in the research process. This presentation is based on two systematic reviews, Brown and Jellison (2012) and Jellison and Draper (2013). These two reviews are the most current on topics of disabilities, strategies, and inclusive settings.

For background, the reviews will be discussed specific to research questions, methodology, and findings. Questions differed in the two reviews although both examined music research with children identified as having disabilities. By including both reviews in this presentation, implications can be presented relevant to different types of disabilities and strategies for separate and inclusive music settings. Although the criteria for selection of articles varied, both reviews were conducted systematically and included original descriptive and experimental music research articles published in the United States for the period 1975 (the year of the passage of IDEA) through 2012. Both identified articles using computer-assisted searches of PsycINFO and Medline/PubMed databases as well as hand-searches of prominent music research journals. Once studies were selected, authors conducted analyses and coding processes using categories (e.g., participants with and without disabilities; research variables; designs; findings) and definitions. Both reviews discussed results considering issues of access and inclusion practices, and also discussed questions for future research.

Results from these reviews have clear implications for music educators. Following a discussion of applications of research findings for inclusive music education classrooms and collaborations with parents, colleagues, and other professionals, the presentation will conclude with suggestions for involving music educators in the research process to examine questions relevant for inclusive music education. Recommendations will be made for future research questions, designs, and procedures for inclusive music education settings. Also included will be a discussion of ways music educators in schools, colleges, and universities can collaborate to examine relevant, real world questions concerning children with disabilities in regular music education programs and classrooms.


The prevalence of autism has risen dramatically in many parts of the world including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Music educators often see this increase reflected in their classrooms and wonder how to meet the unique needs of these special learners. ‘Music Education for Children on the Autism Spectrum’ will address three questions: (a) what is Autism; (b) why is music education important for children with autism; and (c) what evidence-based practices can be used to increase comprehension and learning when teaching children with autism in the music classroom? What is Autism?

The session will open with the definition of autism according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-V) and the International Classification of Diseases, 10th edition (ICD-10). Multiple characteristics endemic to the disorder will be identified along with educational strengths and weaknesses. The many exceptional musical abilities often found in children with autism will also be described. Why is music
education important for children with autism? Music has a unique ability to engage and teach students with autism who might otherwise remain locked in their own world. This presentation will describe vital skills, such as joint attention, social interaction and language, which are often practiced spontaneously and naturally throughout musical instruction. Audience members will also be introduced to current neuroscientific research suggesting the potential for musical instruction to ‘grow’ the autistic brain in deficit areas. What strategies are useful when teaching children with autism?

Finally, this session will introduce multiple evidence-based practices as outlined by the National Professional Development Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders (http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu) to increase comprehension and learning in the classroom. Practices to be covered include visual supports, task analysis, video modeling, prompting, time delay and positive reinforcement. The presenter will also offer a demonstration of current iPad/iPod communication applications and explain how to utilize Speech Generating Devices (SGD) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices (AAC) during classroom instruction. Funding opportunities for adaptive equipment will also be discussed. Through this presentation, ‘Music Education for Children on the Autism Spectrum’, it is hoped that participants will build greater understanding and compassion for children with autism who often act in strange and unpredictable ways. Participants will also gain information concerning the vitally important role music educators play in the education and development of these special learners. Finally, teachers will leave the session with the ability to quickly and efficiently incorporate multiple evidence-based teaching strategies into their music classroom.

Draper, Ellary and Jellison, Judith. The University of Texas at Austin. Participating, Interacting, and Practicing IEP Goals: Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Elementary Music Classrooms

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), first passed in 1975, requires that children with disabilities are educated in regular classrooms with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate (IDEA 2004, p. 31); amendments in 1997 require children with disabilities to have access to the general curriculum (IDEA 1997, p. 5). During the 2009-10 school year there were 6.5 million students who received special education services; of those, about 95% were enrolled in regular schools and 59% spent more than 80% of their school day in general classes (Aud et. al, 2012). VanWeelden and Whipple (2012) found that all elementary music teachers surveyed taught students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The elementary music curriculum typically involves a variety of activities such as singing, playing instruments, and dancing that allow children to observe each other, participate in music ensembles, and interact (National Association for Music Education, 2013). The idea of learning from peers, or peer assisted learning, is a well-studied topic in education and psychology research, although it is rarely examined in music research (Rohrbeck, Ginsburg-Block, Fantuzzo, & Miller, 2003; Jellison & Draper, 2013). Only a few music studies have been conducted in inclusive music classrooms. Jellison and Draper (2013) identified 22 articles for the period 1975-2012 with only 9 examining behaviors in inclusive elementary music classroom settings. Since most all elementary music teachers provide instruction in inclusive settings (VanWeelden & Whipple, 2012), and there is a paucity of research in this area, observations of children with disabilities in inclusive music environments are important to the development of future research questions and research priorities.

This study examined the following questions relative to 11 children with disabilities in four elementary music classrooms: 1. What percentage of time are children on-task, and how does on-task vary across different activities and instructional formats? 2. What percentages of time are children engaged in peer interactions, and how do peer interactions vary across different activities and formats? 3. What opportunities are present in activities and instructional formats for children with disabilities to demonstrate IEP objectives?

A total of 69 third- and fourth-grade students participated in the study, including 11 with disabilities. Two video cameras were set up in the classrooms at a diagonal in order to videotape children in assigned seats and when they faced different directions. Music activities and instructional formats involving all children were analyzed using Scribe (Duke & Stammen, 2011) as were individual behaviors for the 11 children with disabilities. Using behavioral definitions, individual behaviors were measured (counts and/or duration) for the following main categories: participation, social interactions, IEP opportunities, music responses, and other verbal/non-verbal
responses. Preliminary data show that most often the class was engaged in instructional activities that involved playing instruments, singing and playing instruments, and discussing music theory and music knowledge. Consistent with previous literature for typical students, students with disabilities were less off-task when engaged in music making. Students’ IEP goals and objectives were all related to reading, writing, and speech; none were related to social or music goals. Opportunities for students to demonstrate goals were most often observed in music activities that involved music theory and music knowledge. Across both grade levels, most class activities were conducted in whole group situations, though there were instances of dyads and large groups (7-10 students) when students were instructed to talk to each other or practice a skill. Opportunities for individual responses (verbal/non-verbal and music) were rare, though when they occurred, students’ verbal responses were most often correct. Some students with disabilities were given the opportunity to play a solo part when performing in a class instrument ensemble or as part of a recorder activity; however, opportunities to perform music independently did not occur for all children with disabilities. Students engaged in interactions with their peers in groups as part of assigned tasks and when interactions were not part of assigned tasks. Some interactions (e.g., talking to each other) were allowed by the teacher given the activity (e.g., discussion during individual work on a worksheet); at other times, interactions between students were considered as off-task. Future research should include comparisons of on-task behavior of children with disabilities to that of typical peers.

Additionally, students with more severe disabilities and of different ages should be observed to see if there are differences in behaviors and opportunities for practicing IEP goals. Several questions regarding social interactions remain for the study, particularly questions examining the relationship of interactions and music learning.

Eshaq, Haya. University of Northern Colorado, Greeley. The Perspectives of Kuwaiti Educators Regarding Using Music with Students With Disabilities

In order to address the issue of lack of research about music education in Kuwait for students with disabilities, this study proposed to investigate teacher perceptions on this topic. Two major questions are stipulated: (a) How is music education used with students with disabilities in elementary classrooms and (b) What are the perceptions of teachers toward using music education with students with disability in elementary classrooms? This study was significant because the current literature regarding music programs for students with disabilities in the regular classrooms in Kuwait’s schools was lacking in providing enough information for researchers and educators to build on it. Moreover, there was a severe need to improve the current programs to increase the performance of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the teacher’s perspective about the use of music with students with disabilities in Kuwait’s schools. Method and Participants I used a qualitative approach to investigate the focus of the study (Creswell, 1988; Merriam, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three teachers from different public schools participated, all with between 4 and 10 years of experience teaching students with disabilities. Since I started to investigate the perspective toward using music with students with disabilities, participants were selected based on these criteria: special and music education teachers who worked with students with disabilities in different schools. I used a purposeful, convenient sampling technique to select the participants. Interviews were conducted by phone. When the interviews were finished, I asked them whether they knew of other professionals who could participate in my study. This strategy, known as network strategy, assisted in recruiting more participants. I asked each participant to refer me to other professionals who met my criteria (Merriam, 1998). I interviewed one special education teacher who had worked as a teacher for 3 years and two music teachers, one who has worked for 10 years and the other for 4 years.

Summary of Findings: The findings showed in the first theme that all the participants were in agreement that music was very important for the students with special needs in their classrooms and was supported by Abramo (2012). In addition, the participants observed that the attention and behavioral skills of students with disabilities were increased when they used music in their lessons, which was consistent with Langan’s (2009) study when he mentioned the different types of music that could help to increase important life skills including social, emotional, communicative, cognitive and behavioral skills. Another finding was that the participants wanted more collaboration between music and special education teachers, which was consistent with the Price (2012) study
about how music teachers may collaborate with special education instructors to ensure that students received the optimal level of instruction. In addition, all the participants were in agreement that singing helped a lot in the development of words and conversation of the students with special needs, supporting McDowell’s (2010) findings.

It is recommended, based on the information obtained in this study, that Kuwaiti schools use more music instruction to support the teacher’s ideas of using music with students with disabilities and present more instructions to guide them in their curriculum. More training in music education for general and music education teachers could help the teacher reach a higher level of understanding regarding teaching students with special needs. It seems that Kuwait needs more collaboration between the special education teachers and music education teachers to provide solid instruction to students with special needs. Also, the participants suggested getting more special instruments for students with special needs; for example, different types of percussion instruments, different size of strings instruments, and more keyboards for students to use. Further implications are discussed.


Gavin, Russell, and Middleton, Chelsea. Baylor University, Waco, TX. Cerebral Palsy and the Music Classroom: A Case Study of a Child’s Involvement in Music Education

Cerebral palsy (CP) is “a group of non-progressive, but often changing, motor impairment syndromes secondary to lesions or anomalies of the brain arising in the early stages of development” (Mutch et al., 1992). A number of auxiliary impairments are found in students with CP, the most frequent of which are learning disabilities, epilepsy, visual impairment, and infantile hydrocephalus (Bechung, 2002). The quality of life for children with CP is still relatively high with speech difficulties and limited self-mobility being the main deterrents from feeling life satisfaction (Dickinson, 2007).

The exploration of learning environments for students with learning disabilities has been quite common over the last several decades. Researchers have documented that fully included children with disabilities have higher levels of engagement and social interaction, give and receive more social support, and have larger friendship networks than their counterparts in segregated placements (Harower 1999). Children with CP were shown to make significant differences in speech and language development as well as motor development when they were placed in mainstream classes (Schenker, 2005). In an assessment of levels of participation with respect to cognitive/behavioral levels, students with more exposure out of the self-contained classroom had significantly
higher participation and physical activity performance (Schenker, 2005). Data shows that families determine their children’s participation in extracurricular activities based on the children’s movement functions, intelligence, and manual abilities (Morris, 2006). In a study comparing levels of education to functioning in daily activities and social participation, only around 30% stated restrictions attributed to limited gross motor functioning (Donkeryoort, 2007). Investigators have even discovered that regardless of level of motor functions, children with CP participate in organized activities at a comparable – if not slightly higher -- rate than typically developing children; although at a lower frequency (Imms, 2008).

Music therapy has proven to be an effective tool for advancing social interaction for students with CP. Facial expression, body posture, and vocalization greatly improved when highly preferred songs were used in therapy (Lee, 2012). Activities involving turn taking, playing, and singing were found to be the most productive in inciting increased communication in children with multiple profound disabilities, including CP (Rainey, 2003). Music therapy targeted at children with delayed speech development also resulted in a marked difference in speech understanding and phonological capacity, as well as slight increases in cognitive structures, action patterns, and levels of intelligence (Gross, 2010). When another individual is introduced into music therapy sessions, such as the student’s mother, communication between the pair is increased in multiple patterns, seven of which are nonverbal and two musical (Gilboa, 2010).

Several studies have examined the effect of classroom musical training on typically developing children. Students who experienced song through auditory, kinesthetic, and visual presentations showed significant gains in spatial IQ tests (Gromko, 1998). Motor-skill development also increased sharply when children were taught using an Orff based curriculum with rhythm and music training (Derri, 2004). As learning disabilities and motor development are common limitations for students with CP, this research leads us to believe that this training would also benefit CP students. Studies that indicate children imitate each other in vocal development, communication, and motor development also provide strong evidence for placing students with CP in group musical settings (Brown, 1979; Metz, 1989).

The current study sought to explore and document how a student with cerebral palsy responded to inclusion in a group music classroom. A case study design was chosen. Researchers collected data over a period of 15 weeks, with data collected from interviews, focus groups, researcher journals, and expert evaluations of class participation. The evaluations of class participation were accomplished using a panel of experts examining video recordings. Researchers sought to investigate the impact of participation on the student’s abilities in a variety of areas, including: ability to maintain pulse; pitch matching; frequency of voluntary vocalization; and, self control among peers. Data indicated notable improvements in all of these areas.

Hansen, Bethanie. American Public University, Charles Town, WV. Experiences of Three Students with ADHD in the Middle School Band Ensemble

This study was a qualitative examination of the band participation of three adolescents with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This investigation of individual experiences and perceptions could help readers understand what adolescents with ADHD value about their band participation and what academic, interpersonal, and behavioral challenges adolescents with ADHD face during band participation. Research questions included: (a) What is the nature of band participation for three adolescents who have been diagnosed with ADHD? (b) How do adolescents with ADHD, their music teachers, and their parents describe the band participation of adolescents with ADHD? (c) In what ways do adolescents with ADHD interact with their music teachers and peers in bands? Data collection methods included interviewing, observing, and a researcher journaling; analysis involved data coding, selecting representative quotes, sorting thematically, and summarizing. Important themes included isolation from peers, a sense of belonging, the perception of peers as family, music learning and achievement motivations, behavior management strategies such as self-monitoring and hyperfocus, and ADHD-symptoms of impulsivity, inattentiveness, and hyperactivity. All participants were high achieving musicians. Notable findings included close relationships with band directors, the use of hyperfocus to manage individuals’ ADHD impulses or to be musically expressive, diminutive descriptions of individual skills by adolescents with ADHD, unknowingly
supportive behaviors of band directors toward students with ADHD, and positive social interactions with peers when advanced musical skills coupled with leadership roles exist for adolescents with ADHD.

Herron, Deborah. Florida State University, Tallahassee. The Use of Music in Research Conducted in Non-Music Settings with Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the various ways music has been used in research with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The focus of this study was research conducted outside of music-specific settings and to evaluate the effectiveness of music in this research. ASD is identified as a group of neurological conditions displaying specific symptoms in the areas of restricted and repetitive behavior, as well as impairments in social interaction and communication. The disorder continues to receive significant global attention and appears to be increasing in diagnosis rates. The latest statistics from the United States government estimated the occurrence of ASD to be 1 in 50 school-aged children. This figure is up from 2007 estimates which placed the incidence of ASD at 1 in 86 school-aged children. ASD has no known cure, and while recent research indicates a possible connection between genetics and environmental factors affecting early brain development there remains no clear consensus in the international scientific community as to its cause. With this increase in diagnoses there has been a substantial surge in ASD research, some of which employs a musical element.

It has been noted that children with ASD often display a significant capability for and response to music, and some even acquired skills that exceeded their typically developing peers. Other studies have determined a predisposition toward certain music skills in children with autism such as heightened abilities in pitch identification, pitch contours and pitch direction. With this documented propensity toward musical talent it is not surprising that music appears to be a frequent element in ASD interventions.

When music is employed as an element of treatment it is often termed ‘music therapy’. As defined by the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA), this type of therapy is “the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program”. There is a robust body of literature in which significant achievement of goals are seen in the three main domains of concern in ASD when paired with music therapy. Specifically, music therapy has been found to improve deficits in socialization, communication and restrictive behaviors. Furthermore, recent fMRI research has determined there is now neurobiological justification for using music therapy to improve both emotional and communication skills in individuals with ASD.

While researchers have analyzed the use of music therapy interventions in the treatment of children with ASD, other disciplines outside of music therapy also indicate the use of music in the treatment of children with autism. However, it is unclear as to the actual use of music in this research, and there is uncertainty regarding the credentials of those who have administered the music in these studies. Therefore, research questions for this study include: 1. What is the study’s type and purpose? 2. What type of music is used and in what way is it used? 3. Are the study’s personnel certified in music therapy or music education?

A search for studies using music was done initially on computerized databases using combinations of the keywords autism, music, intervention and treatment. Reference lists of retrieved articles were also searched. As an additional measure, a search was made for articles in various relevant publications in the fields of autism, child development, applied behavior analysis, psychology and psychiatry. Results of this study confirmed that ASD research using music as an integral component has been conducted across multiple disciplines. This seems to indicate that music maintains a place of relevance and importance in ASD research. Other potential areas of study related to this discussion may include the role of non-musicians in music research, if music training should be required in order for the non-musician researcher to be effective using music, and the possible benefits of establishing a comprehensive database of ASD research utilizing music.

Description: Research studies in fields outside the scope of traditional music settings utilizing
Music and individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) were evaluated. This information may be beneficial to establish ways in which music may be used in ASD research.

Hoffman III, Edward C. University of Montevallo, AL. The Status of Students with Special Needs in the Instrumental Musical Ensemble and the Effect of Selected Educator and Institutional Variables on Rates of Inclusion

The purpose of this study was to describe the current status of students with special needs in the instrumental musical ensemble and to examine the effect of selected educator and institutional variables on rates of inclusion.

This study addressed the following four research questions: (1) What is the rate of inclusion in K-12 instrumental musical ensembles, what types of student disabilities are most prevalent in those ensembles, and is this rate and representation in instrumental music congruent with K-12 education as a whole? (2) Do selected educator or institutional variables have significant effects on the rate of inclusion? (3) What challenges or issues arise when including students with special needs in the instrumental musical ensemble? (4) Are instrumental music educators prepared for inclusion and willing to accommodate students with special needs?

An original survey was developed by the researcher, informed by a thorough review of the literature and questionnaires utilized in existing studies, and evaluated by a panel of expert music educators and special educators. The electronic survey was distributed to 600 practicing elementary, middle, and high school (P-12) instrumental music educators using Survey Gizmo.

The overall rate of inclusion was found to be 6.8%; meanwhile, 13.6% of the nation’s total school-aged student population received special education and/or related services. Rates of inclusion varied among the three ensemble types (band, orchestra/strings, and other instrumental ensembles) and experience levels (first year, second or third year, and four years of more). Orchestra teachers reported a larger portion of special education participants (8.1% of all reported orchestra/strings students) compared to teachers of band (6.7%), and teachers of other instrumental ensembles (4.7%). In terms of instrumental music experience, 7.8% of all first year students were identified as special needs, while the inclusion rate among second and third year students was 7.2%, and 5.5% among students with four or more years experience.

The effect of selected educator variables (gender, age, level of education, special education coursework, primary teaching area, and teaching experience in years) and institutional variables (geographic location, community setting, institution type, and student population) on rates of inclusion was also examined. While the educator variables were not found to be significant predictors of inclusion, the overall student population of the institution was significant. Schools with larger student enrollments were found to include students with special needs at lower rates.

When presented a list of 14 common teaching considerations, responding instrumental music educators most often indicated that inclusion was “rarely (24.7%)” or “never (48.3%)” negatively impacted. Among the most inhibitive aspects of teaching students with special needs, those perceived by respondents as “always” or “often” hampering inclusion, were: performance expectations, the amount or lack of information available for individuals qualifying for special education services, and school scheduling. The physical layout of the music classroom and school, amount of time granted for planning and preparation purposes, and level of administrative support was less of a concern.

When asked to characterize the abilities of students with special needs in instrumental music, respondents were less positive. Based on their observations of and in their experiences working with these students, instrumental music educators, on average, reported that students with special needs “never (7.1%),” “rarely (30%),” or “sometimes (34.8%)” executed the 11 musical and non-musical tasks presented. Sight-reading ability, facility when reading musical rhythms, and memorization where among those skills identified as most challenging. Responding
instrumental music educators indicated students with special needs were most successful in functions associated with public performance, behavior, and instrument carriage and hand position.

In terms of teacher preparation, the results of this study corroborated those found in previous research; music teachers, by in large, lacked the training necessary to teach students with special needs. Although 66.2% of all respondents held an advanced college degree, most lacked coursework necessary to teach students with special needs. More than 42% of respondents had no undergraduate or graduate level coursework in special education or special education in music. While a significant number of instrumental music teachers were ill-prepared to include individuals with special needs, 97% of all participants in the current study were providing instruction for special education students. Furthermore, music educators indicated that they had or were willing to provide accommodations in spite of their beliefs that students with special needs were only moderately successful in instrumental ensembles.

Paul, Jaclyn. Texas Tech University, Lubbock.  

A Music Teaching Strategy for Deaf Students: A Qualitative Study of the Perspectives of Teachers Who Use Music to Teach Deaf Students

Teaching music to students with deafness has been an area of academic interest in music education for many years, typically in the areas of music therapy and music for non-mainstreamed Deaf classrooms. Researchers have investigated successful strategies involving kinesthetic and visual approaches to music education for Deaf students (Fahey 1972; Darrow 2007; May 1961; Darrow & Heller, 1985). Some other successful strategies have included auditory training for Deaf students in a therapeutic method have also been investigated in several quantitative and qualitative studies (Darrow & Starner 1986; Yennari, 2011). Finally, a small number of surveys have been conducted into specific therapeutic musical strategies used by music and non-music teachers in their classes, including the perspectives of Deaf students on these strategies (Spitzer, 1984; Williams, 1989; Darrow, 1993).

However, there has been a minimal amount of research done into the investigation of teachers’ perspectives on using music in the Deaf and inclusive classrooms and how this impacts their professional and personal lives. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the type of music education that students of the Deaf are receiving through the eyes of educators, and to understand how this educational experience has impacted these teachers’ pedagogy.

The research project will follow the educational trails of two educators of Deaf students in the West Texas region: a teacher of the Deaf who uses music in her classroom, and a music teacher who teaches classes with Deaf students at the mainstreamed elementary school. The study will consist of a series of observations and interviews in order to create a more complete understanding of how music is used in classes involving students with deafness. The direct observations will include both an inclusive music classroom with children who are deaf or hard of hearing as well as observations of a classroom for the Deaf in progress at a West Texas elementary school. All interviews and observations will be recorded for further analysis and reliability tests. Continued observations will continue throughout the fall of 2013 in order for the researcher to understand which therapeutic and educational music strategies are used for these classes.

Additionally, the researcher will conduct several interviews throughout the term to discover perspectives of these teachers when it comes to music and deafness. These interviews will begin following the first observation and will continue throughout the semester until a final observation before the 2013 Christmas break. Sample questions from these interviews include background questions into the teachers’ experience with music education and Deaf education and how these have influenced their teaching strategies. Results of the study will be obtained through a thorough analysis of the observations and interviews. Open and axial coding and content analysis (Creswell, 2013) will be used to determine common themes among teachers and their methods. Further, triangulation will be used with recordings to verify their authenticity (Merriam, 1998) and further investigations using Scribe computer software to analyze these video recordings. While interviews and observations are still in progress, the results will hopefully give a clear insight into how music is taught to students with deafness in the West Texas region and how this educational experience has impacted these two teachers personally, professionally, and musically. Hopefully, these varied perspectives will open the doors to further research into Deaf education and
music education, and how the merging of these two seemingly disparate fields can have a profound impact on both Deaf educators and music educators.

VanWeelden, Kimberly and Heath, Julie. Florida State University, Tallahassee. Leaman, Scott. Lincoln High School, Tallahassee, FL. The Effect of a Peer Mentorship Program on Students with and without Disabilities Perceptions of Success in Choral Ensembles

Children with disabilities can often be successful in ensemble music classes. This is especially true when they receive individualized attention and instruction that meets their specific needs. However, music educators have indicated they believe it is difficult to provide individualized instructions during actual class time to this population. Peer mentoring, which is a technique that provides individualized attention and instruction, may assist music teachers meet the needs of children with disabilities who are participating in their music ensembles.

While peer tutoring is an expected approach to foster learning and academic achievement across the curriculum, to date, there is a paucity of empirical research examining the use of peer mentors assisting peer mentees with disabilities in secondary music ensemble classes. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to investigate the effects of a peer mentorship program on students’ perceptions of success in high school choral ensembles. Specifically, perceptions of comfort, skills obtained and feelings of success while working within a peer-pair were examined.

The participants (N = 14) were students enrolled in choral ensemble classes at a large suburban high school in a mid-sized city within the southeast United States. These students were divided into two groups: the peer mentors (n = 7) – typically developing choral students that gave help to an individual student, and the peer mentees (n = 7) – choral students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan that received help from an individual student. The high school chorus teacher identified the students to be in the peer mentor group, while the chorus teacher along with the ESE Coordinator identified the students to serve as peer mentees. Furthermore, the chorus teacher and ESE Coordinator created the peer-pairs according to choral ensemble, voice part, and student personality. Following the obtainment of the appropriate IRB approval and consent/assent, the researchers asked all participants to complete a pretest that contained several questions pertaining to their perceptions of comfort, skills obtained and feelings of success while working within a peer-pair. Directly after the pretest, the peer mentors began their training for this program by meeting individually with the chorus teacher to discuss his observations of the challenges they may encounter as well as the solutions he has found helpful to utilize with their peer mentee in the choral rehearsal. This individual appointment was followed by two one-hour training sessions with the researchers in which the peer mentors were lead in multiple activities that included role-playing, problem solving and discussion to help them become familiar with their responsibilities. Training was also given to the peer mentees in which they were lead in several activities that helped them understand the role of their peer mentor and the assistance available to them. Over the course of the 12-week peer mentorship program, the peer mentors were responsible for helping their peer mentee with musical objectives (e.g., following along within the music score, such as directing them to the correct words and/or music system) as well as non-musical objectives (e.g., remaining on-task during the rehearsal, such as gentle verbal or non-verbal reminders to pay attention to the chorus teacher) within each choral rehearsal. The peer-pairs also met once a week during their lunch period in order to give them an extra opportunity to practice the music and non-music objectives set by the chorus teacher as well create a time to foster a social connection. Finally, all participants kept a journal throughout the program. Students were asked to answer three questions each week pertaining to the assistance provided, whether the assistance was helpful, and their perceptions of the overall program. At the conclusion of the program, all participants completed a posttest. Peer mentors rated their perceptions of comfort while working and socializing with peers with disabilities very high at the beginning of the study. Thus, analysis between pre-to-posttest found no significant differences overall or within the individual questions. Peer mentee pretest responses were dichotomous and indicated either very high are extremely low ratings within the overall categories and/or individual questions. Reasons for this were directly linked to their desire for independence and were verbalized using words such as “normal”, “like everybody else”, and “the same”. Posttest analysis indicated the peer
mentees’ perceptions were much less varied. Additionally, there were several questions and categories that indicated significant differences. Further results will be displayed on the poster.

VanWeelden, Kimberly and Meehan, Laura. Florida State University, Tallahassee. Teaching Children with Disabilities: Preparation through State Music Educators Association Conferences

Academic preparation of teachers is a key component of the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in music classes. Researchers have found music educators generally have positive attitudes toward the concept of mainstreaming/inclusion (Brittin, 1995; Hawkins, 1992; Sideridis & Chandler, 1995; White, 1981/1982; Wilson & McCrary, 1996; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2013a); however, most do not feel adequately prepared to address the needs of students with disabilities in their music classes (Atterbury, 1986; Frisque, Niebur, & Humphreys, 1994; Gfeller, Darrow, & Hedden, 1990; Gilbert & Asmus, 1981; Sideridis & Chandler, 1995; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2013b). Of particular interest to the current study are the results reported by VanWeelden and Whipple (2013b) in which teachers perceived a lack of ongoing education through workshops regarding how to successfully work with students with disabilities in their music classrooms and ensembles.

Workshops held at professional conferences, such as those sponsored by The National Association for Music Education (NAfME), are one of the primary ways in which music educators can attain professional development training that is tailored specifically to working with students in music (NAfME, 2013). Furthermore, researchers have found music educators who had attended workshops related to working with students with disabilities in music felt more prepared to work with this population in their classrooms/ensembles (VanWeelden & Whipple, 2013b). While professional organizations do provide ongoing education for music educators, the question has been raised of whether there are enough workshops offered at professional music conferences that can give teachers music specific information to work with students with disabilities in their teaching situations (VanWeelden & Whipple, 2013b). To date, no research has examined music and special education workshops presented at professional music education conferences. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the types and frequency of music and special education workshops held at state Music Educators Association (MEA) conferences. Specifically, the researchers sought to determine the following within the last 10 years: (1) states that offered music and special education workshops at their MEA conferences, (2) frequency of music and special education workshops at each MEA conference, (3) area of special education focus of the workshops, and (4) clinicians who presented the music and special education workshops.

The researchers obtained the state MEA conference programs from 2004-2013. Each individual conference program was examined to determine the number of music and special education workshops presented, area of focus in the workshops, and the clinicians who presented the workshops. For the purposes of this study, the workshop title and/or the description had to contain reference to special education information to be included in the data analysis. For example, titles or descriptions that included the words “special learners”, “special needs”, “students with disabilities”, “children with exceptionalities” or any of the disability categories found within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were counted.

There were 333 music and special education sessions given overall within the past 10 years. Of these, 39 states (78%) had less than one session presented per year, seven states (14%) had one to two sessions presented per year, and four states (8%) had more than two sessions presented per year. Furthermore, eight states (16%) did not hold any music and special education sessions within the last 10 years. Results also indicated most sessions (88%) were about general information and only 10% were about a specific disability and 2% were pertained to secondary music ensembles. Finally, while there were many presenters, there were several that did roughly half (46%) of all the sessions. Further results will be listed on the poster.