

MAKE
AWESOMIE
HAPPEN!

Music for Students with Disabilities

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Every child is a born achiever until someone teaches them not to be.

~Marva Collins



I know of no greater injustice than ascribing a child's deficits to their disability when it belongs to my teaching.

~Stephen J. Gould

Understanding the Iceberg

[Tip of the iceberg]

Instead of seeing the child as:

won't

bad

lazy

doesn't try

mean

doesn't care

refuses to sit still

demanding

resisting

trying to make me mad

tantrums

indifferent to reprimands

trying to get attention

doesn't listen

violent

doesn't try

Professional shift from:

traditional thinking, traditional teaching

applying consequences, reacting to problems

traditional interventions

changing students

changing students

[Underneath the iceberg]

to Understanding the child as:

can't

frustrated, defended, challenged

shut down, unable to organize behavior

exhausted or can't start

defensive, hurt, abused

shut down

over-stimulated

oversensitive

doesn't get it, confused

doesn't know how to make better choices

unable to communicate

poor receptive language skills

needs contact, needs support

needs repeated repetitions

aggressive & overwhelmed, needs support

tired of always failing

to:

recognizing brain differences

preventing problems, proactive

developing effective strategies,

changing the environment

changing my teaching

PARAPROFESSIONALS IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

When speaking to a deaf student with a sign-language interpreter, talk to the *student*, **not** the interpreter. Face the child.

Let's do the same for children who have an aide. Let's not talk *to* the aide *about* the student *in front* of the student as if he were not there. Talk directly *to* the *student*, **not** the aide. It respects the dignity of the child, even if the child is non-verbal. Refer to aide as needed.

- Communication is key.
- Who will monitor misbehavior—who will be the authority figure?
The music teacher, the aide, or both?
- How active a roll should the aide take in music class? Will she sit in the back of the room and be on hand “just in case” or sit next to/ behind the child and take a more active roll?
- Does the music teacher want the aide to model “on-task” behavior; i.e. singing, playing instruments, moving, dancing, etc.?
- Will the child with special needs use the paraprofessional for help and cues, or will a peer buddy be assigned to him? Remind them to speak normally, not to use baby talk or talk down to the child with special needs.
- Ask the aide to use 1. **physical** cues 2. **visual** cues 3. **verbal** cues. In that order.
- Avoid double-processing: only **one** authority figure should give directions or verbal cues at a time. Provide wait time for the child to process that direction.
- *Sometimes*, hand-over-hand can be a physical prompt-- Use sparingly—the child is not a puppet.
- Encourage hand-*under*-hand prompts—the child's hand rests on the teacher's own hand and *feels* the action he is supposed to take.
- Use a personal white board for the child who needs it. The aide or student can manipulate copies of what you have on the board—icons, rhythm patterns, etc.

Resources

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- LaVoie, Rick. *F.A.T. City: How Hard Can This Be?* Videodisc recording, PBS video, 2004. *see also* ricklavoie.com
- Levine, Mel. *Misunderstood Minds*. Videorecording, WGBH Boston Video, 2002. *see also* see allkindsofminds.org
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- Sagor, Richard. "Lessons from skateboarders." *Educational Leadership* 60, no. 1 (2002): 34-39.
- Sheedy Kurcinka, Mary. *Raising Your Spirited Child*. New York, New York: Harper Perennial, Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.
- West Music catalog has a nice section on music therapy aids and adaptive equipment. See www.westmusic.com.
- World Music Drumming with Will Schmid, see www.worldmusicdrumming.com.