

Exceptional Practices for Exceptional Children!

Table of Contents:

- General Considerations
- Pre-Lesson Planning
 - Special Educator Communication
 - IEPs and 504 Plans
 - Curriculum Development (UDL)
 - Planning Assessments/Modifications
 - Paraprofessional Communication
 - Supplemental Materials/Pre-Class Materials
- Parent Communication
- Classroom Management
- Specific Exceptional Student Practices
 - ASD
 - Down Syndrome
 - d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 - Blind and Visual Impairments
 - Dyslexia
 - ADHD
 - Cognitive Disabilities
 - Physical
 - Behavioral
 - Sensory
 - Emotional
 - Gifted Students
- Specific Music Classrooms
 - General Music Classroom
 - All Performing Ensembles
 - Choral Classroom Specific
 - Instrumental Classroom Specific

General Considerations

- Challenge our initial perception of using medical model language in both our writing and thinking. For example, further understanding systems in place that function within a medical model (reading more from advocates in the disabled community, being thoughtful about how our class textbook might still function within a medical model). In research and this class' writings, avoiding very medical terminology when discussing disabilities (Lecture, 08/24).
- Keeping up to date with the news if any legislation were to change by following the Department of Education website, NYT Education, Edutopia, and WashPost Education (Lecture, 08/29).
- Acknowledge that we have our underlying biases when talking about disabilities (either in your head or out loud to others), and that the way we have been trained to think about these topics is not the full picture. For teachers, it is important to include multiple different perspectives when teaching to allow students to develop their own opinion, and create a space for them to be able to change their opinion (Lecture, 08/24).
- Let patience and positive reinforcement guide your instruction. Reward students with musical reinforcers for communicating thoughts, feelings, etc.

Pre-Lesson Planning

➤ Special Educator Communication

- In a music classroom setting, when sending home a syllabus/welcome sheet that highlights the class, include an inclusivity statement that among other things specifies use of the social model in your teaching. That way, the community is aware of your intentions to adapt societal expectations and foster a welcoming community to all students (Lecture, 08/24).
- To assist with transition services, music class needs to provide multiple opportunities for all students to make their own choices and take risks in front of their peers. Examples for helping students with disabilities, they can help organize an event for the music class such as helping to prepare things for the concert (organizing music, creating promo/media for the concert, etc.) (Darrow & Adamek, 2017).
- Reach out to speech pathologists and special education teachers to help you prepare for a student's accommodations for communication

➤ IEPs and 504s

- When receiving a class list as a music educator, it can be helpful to work alongside guidance counselors and other professionals in order to gain knowledge of those students who may have disabilities and gain access to IEP/504 meetings if allowed to better understand the needs of students (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017, pp. 63-84).
- From looking at the expansions in ADAA, there are more expansions on "major life activity" (reading, concentrating, bladder functions, etc.) for 504/IEPs. In long rehearsals or class time, provide structured, short bathroom/brain breaks to help

be aware of the physical and emotional/social needs of students (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017, pp. 37-38)

➤ **Curriculum Development**

- When working in a classroom with Universal Design implemented, be willing to have flexibility when it comes to the space. Layout the classroom with specific sections that are good for certain activities such as movement, listening, composing, and playing (Darrow, 2010).
- It's best to design activities that do not inherently require strenuous physical effort (Darrow, 2010).
- Incorporate captions in video presentations, for example providing perceptible information, making it more accessible to students with hearing impairments (Darrow, 2010).
- When working in a classroom with Universal Design, think about lessons as design-for-all. Instead of forming lessons meant to address specific disabilities, design lessons that are accessible to all students and beneficial to all students, this means having many different kinds of activities/modes of expression not only within the lesson but within each activity (Darrow, 2010).
- It can be very helpful to create lessons that contain multiple means of representation in order to help not only students with special needs, but every student. A great example of multiple means of representation would be to create lessons that contain aural, visual, and kinesthetic ways that the students can learn the information (Darrow, 2010).
- Purchase classroom materials that accommodate all students (Darrow, 2010).
- Be aware of the class climate and make adjustments if students are struggling in the environment (moving to the hallway or different parts of the classroom, etc.) (Darrow, 2010).
- Be mindful when creating lessons. This can include making sure lessons are accessible to all and not an added burden to families (Chapter 1). Encourage positive communication for students to feel comfortable to speak up for their needs. For example we can use students' preferences to adapt lessons, considering factors such as size, color, pacing and modality to enhance their learning experiences (Lecture, 08/24).
- It's important to advocate for student accommodations. As educators/people working in educational settings, we have a responsibility to the student for their best interest in an educational setting. When applicable try our best to keep students in the least restrictive environment and work to create lesson plans that are accessible to all learners (Lecture, 08/29).
- In order to help students with self-determination, an educator could work to allow students to pick their own activity, whether that be a song or a movement, etc. By giving them a choice they have the freedom to pick something they would enjoy doing and feel more self-motivated (Lecture, 08/31).
- It is important to promote the importance of music education with other educators. Provide thoughtful experiences through musical activities that help

facilitate the transition to post-school life through qualities such as independence, collaboration, self determination, and creativity. It is important to then observe the students and use this information to tailor activities to help develop life skills in the classroom (Lecture, 08/31).

➤ **Planning Assessments/Modifications**

- Teachers should consult the 2 sections of the IEP that are helpful for planning assessments prior to classes beginning: the section discussing current levels of academic achievement/functional performance, and the section about the special education and supplementary aid a student is currently receiving (VanWeelden & Heath-Reynolds, 2017).
- Be sure to include every student in the assessment process and provide multiple modes of expression. Provide different options like performance, composing, writing, movement, etc. so students can choose how they demonstrate their understanding best (Darrow, 2010).
- Before the school year begins and before you know what students you'll have in your classroom, create a document that is a quick reference guide for accommodations/modifications you can plug in to your lesson plans for certain types of disabilities you may encounter in your classrooms. Over the years, add to this list as you learn more about relevant and significant disabilities (Lecture, 09/05).
- Feedback for improvement and accomplishment should be detailed and provided often (Darrow, 2010).
- It is important to hold each student accountable regardless of having a disability. Assessments should be given to each student to see if they are meeting their goals.
- Use the Activity Modification Form or a chart similar that clearly shows the musical goals with the modifications right next to it in the chart. This can also show specific accommodations or supports needed for each activity for each student. It is also helpful to allow special educators to add their expertise by communicating before the class about any specific questions or challenges (VanWeelden & Heath-Reynolds, 2017).
- Use a detailed grade book to track the progress of the students. This will be useful when planning new lessons and activities (VanWeelden & Heath-Reynolds, 2017).

➤ **Paraprofessional Communication**

- Schedule meetings with paraprofessionals before and after lessons to have open communication about how to best help the student. This can help invite feedback from both teacher and paraprofessional.
- When working with students who have paraprofessionals, it is important to be respectful and meet with them regularly, as well as facilitate check-ins, to discuss how to best support them and the student you are working with. The knowledge

they can provide from spending time with the student can help you create the most accessible lesson plans and learning environment (Lecture, 09/05).

- Working in schools it is important to stay up to date with the services available in schools by staying in conversation with the special education staff (Darrow and Adamek, 2017).

➤ **Supplemental Materials/Pre-Class Materials**

- When interacting with others, practice asking for detailed information about their identity. When in doubt: use the default model of person-first language (individual with disability) while being aware of specific communities like the deaf and autistic community that may prefer identity-first language (disabled individual) (Lecture, 08/24).
- Teachers should explain skills needed to play instruments or participate in an activity to the special educator so that they get a clear understanding of whether or not the lesson plan is inclusive and accessible to all students with disabilities. This gives the teacher flexibility to adjust or modify the lesson plan to accommodate all students (Fitzgerald 9/14).

Parent Communication

- Prior to the first day of class, open lines of communication with parents by either meeting with them or contacting them, continuing this throughout the year. (Lecture 09/05)
- KISS with parents. For example, have a code system for important documents that the parents need to see when the kids bring papers home, such as having specific colors for homework, parent documents, sheet music, and class handouts. (Fitzgerald 09/7)
- If you find yourself getting frustrated you can take a couple deep breaths before talking to the parent. (Lecture 09/7)
- Keep a positive mindset when discussing a student with their parents. For example, include a valid positive update, “I was so proud of x when they....” If you have a negative interaction keep in mind the stages of grief that parents of a child with disabilities may experience, and that most likely it is not you. (Lecture 09/7)
- When showing parents you care, show them that you are taking note of their child’s interests, and that you are doing your best to incorporate that into your instruction. (Lecture 09/7)

Classroom Management

- It is important to speak the same way to all students and to not change tone, volume, etc just because a student has a disability. If a teacher feels the need to adjust their language towards the student in order to help them, they could work on specifying language when instructing a lesson or having a paraprofessional (should one be there) further explain the activity. (Fitzgerald 9/7)

- Monitor and assess your students consistently to see if they may need to be evaluated. If they do, approach your school's special educator/counselor and notify them of your observations and concerns. Don't give them a diagnosis. (Lecture 08/29)
- Make it a habit to ask the student's personal preference for how they identify. Don't default to a specific terminology without consulting the student. (Lecture 8/31)
- Be involved, being attentive and thoughtful in conversations about positive behavioral support, and attending the necessary meetings to support these students. (Darrow and Adamek, 2017)
- Educators should be aware of each student's individual communication needs so that they can best understand and help the students. (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).

Specific Disability Practices

➤ ASD

- Provide schedules for students to assist with anxiety during transitions
- For students with specific interests, include their interests throughout learning but also introduce new ideas (such as although a student enjoys Disney, introduce other genres of music as well)
- Allow for PECS systems instead of verbal communication for those who are nonverbal
- Simplify movements or instrumental parts if needed for students with processing delays
- Allow students to "stim" during class time unless it is harmful to themselves or others. In this case, encourage a different behavior for sensory needs
- For sensory needs, turn down bright lights, reduce decorations, provide headphones or earplugs if necessary, use low odor markers and not very fragrant perfumes/smells, and keep safe foods in mind
- Incorporate time for physical activities as well as set expectations for break times
- Create activities with multiple forms of engaging (offer dancing, singing, playing instrument as all options, maybe provide student with two different options if they have difficulty with processing delays)

➤ Down Syndrome

- For children with Down syndrome: (Presentation 9/14)
- For students with a strong visual memory, teachers can present information visually and even color coded
- For students with visual impairments, make sure the visual materials are accessible in size, clarity, and tactility
- Be mindful that students might have hearing impairments as well, so in order to help with this teachers should have headphones readily available
- When new materials are being introduced, the pace of the instruction may need to be slower

- Teachers should present information from multiple different perspectives and modalities in order to allow students to process and retain information
- For students with nonverbal communication, teachers can utilize many different games, iPads, or even the PECS system to help students express their knowledge
- Many students with Down syndrome are often very good at illustrating pictures or stories, which can be incorporated into the classroom and into a music lesson (using pictures instead of notation to read music on a piano)

➤ **d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

- It is important to understand that we must go by the individual label that the person prefers (D/deaf).
- To accommodate students to the best of the teacher's ability it is important to consider preferential seating, captioned videos, and visual representations of lectures.
- Teachers must reach out to special education teachers for help when working with D/deaf students. Research which services are available to students in your school (interpreters, audiologists).
- When planning instruction for a student who is d/Deaf or hard of hearing, take note of which frequencies are comfortable and uncomfortable for them; assign instruments accordingly.
- Control the classroom environment for loud noises and avoid frequencies that may be uncomfortable for students who are d/Deaf and hard of hearing.
- Have high expectations for students, regardless of disability.

➤ **Blind and Visual Impairments**

- Invest technology and Braille devices that students can readily even if they don't have them themselves at home
- Make the classroom space itself easily traversable so students won't have difficulty moving across the space
- Understand the different types of blindness and visual impairments so that you can best accommodate the students.
- Be aware of the impact to the sequence of learning for motor, social, learning, and cognitive disabilities and work to incorporate adaptive techniques and specialized skills instruction.
- Everything you have written down for students to view, make sure you are either saying it out loud to the whole class, or provide handouts for students to look out closer or handouts that include Braille
- Invest in textured material (velcro) to implement throughout the classroom for students to feel and identify certain instruments/objects
- Provide parents and students with music specific resources for blind and visually impaired students so they can reference them at home

➤ **Dyslexia**

- For students with dyslexia a teacher could strictly focus on the fingerings, and note durations and exclude the actual names of the notes. This simplifies the number of things the student must be thinking about while trying to play music. Then once the student becomes comfortable with this you can begin to incorporate the names of the notes. (Fitzgerald)
- **NEED TO ADD BEST PRACTICES HERE**

➤ **ADHD**

- **NEED TO ADD BEST PRACTICES HERE**

➤ **Cognitive Disabilities**

- a teacher must introduce the concepts and material in a variety of ways such as aural, kinesthetic, auditory
- Practice concepts multiple times to help students commit knowledge to memory and help with retention
- When practicing the concepts allow the students to have multiple options so they are able to decide what task would best suit them to express their knowledge (ex: test, project, video, etc.)
- It is important to consider enhancing the interactions between the learner and their environment such as in the classroom and outside for activities

➤ **Physical Disabilities:**

- Use a variety of different instruments to accommodate to students with different physical disabilities since some instruments are more easily accessible to certain students
- Change or accommodate instruments to their needs, for example changing the grip on the bow of a string instrument to fit their hands.
- Refrain from assuming lesser physical function also indicates lesser cognitive function.
- When constructing/arranging a music classroom, make it easily traversable and modifiable so that students can easily move around regardless of physical disability
- Provide breaks in activity (especially if medication needs to be administered at specific times)

➤ **Behavioral Disabilities**

- Incorporate engaging activity based on the students interests and past experiences (give them the ability to relate personally to the activity)
- Provide positive reinforcement (this reinforces good behavior, compliance, and academic success)
- Have challenging tasks or leadership roles (dependent on individual)
- Include activities that will not limit students' opportunity to engage
- Providing rewards can be a good way to keep these students engaged and on task.

- Participating in the classroom without interruptions and be able to let students express themselves and talk (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017, pp 84-98)
- Keep students safe (i.e.restrain, padded room) (Lecture 09/12)

➤ **Sensory Disabilities**

- For noise sensitivity, have headphones/ear plugs on hand
- For light sensitivity, see what types of lights work for them, possibly lower classroom lights, include warmer-toned lighting, allow for preferential seating
- Students with vision impairments/blind, include musical braille, larger fonts for handouts, captions on videos, use verbal cues and offer verbal/aural ways of participating in activities, move closer to teacher/in front of the room with preferential seating
- Students who are hard of hearing/deaf, move closer to the teacher if needed for some activities, offer visual cues and handouts for them to follow, learn some ASL if they use that, be mindful of a cochlear implant with loud noises in the classroom, include instruments that have strong vibrations.
- Be aware of sensory aspects like smell, touch, taste in the classroom for these students as they may have heightened senses (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017)

➤ **Emotional Disabilities:**

- Consult a music therapist in order to best learn strategies to assist individual students
- Follow a similar schedule every day (write schedule out on board)
- Use a welcome and goodbye song for consistency purposes
- Use positive reinforcement when students express emotions in a positive way to encourage emotional development
- Seat students with emotional disabilities next to excellent role models
- Incorporate activities that include internalized and externalized emotional expression to see how students best respond or react to emotional stimuli (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017, pp. 84-98)

➤ **Gifted Students:**

- Provide different levels of engagement and participation in your music classrooms to keep all students engaged regardless of ability level, music or otherwise (introducing different scales, aural skills, etc.) (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).
- Be informed of your own district's gifted testing process, and make an effort to reach out to those teachers to learn about their curriculum, selection process, and if students are pulled out of certain classes (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).
- Offer supplemental musical groups in your music program such as chamber music ensembles or a mentoring program where students can be challenged/explore their specific interests (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).
- Teachers should keep in mind that the strengths and weaknesses for gifted students can often be masked by one another. A way to manage this is to make

activities more creative to allow students to demonstrate their strengths in the classroom (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).

- Offer an extension project opportunity fit for the student's skills and interests (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).
- Since some gifted students prefer the company of older students or adults, teachers should keep in mind this preference and try to incorporate opportunities for this whenever possible (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).
- When working with intellectually gifted students it is important to consider that they are at a greater risk when in classrooms that do not recognize the need to adjust the pace and style of teaching. In order to prevent these students from finding themselves in a situation where their intellectual giftedness is delayed, ignored, or denied, it is necessary to consider what they need to be most successful in the classroom environment (Hammel & Hourigan, 2017).

Specific Music Classrooms

➤ **General Music Classrooms**

- It would be useful to use PECS which is a picture exchange communication system
- Provide multiple ways to express understanding and emotions (students may not be able to express themselves verbally, but they can musically)

➤ **All Performing Ensembles**

- It can be helpful for ensemble educators to incorporate technology into their lessons. Examples could include: recording a lesson and uploading it for students to watch at their own pace, using apps or videos for conducting, or using iPads as tools for practicing instruments through different apps.
- It can be helpful to begin by offering small group music experiences before large group experiences due to possible difficulties with a large number of people and loud music.
- Reduce the non-obvious aspects that might be excluding students with disabilities such as the entry point, in-class requirements such as on-the-spot performance, parent involvement. Providing more ways students can join, such as visiting the ensemble beforehand, getting them excited about the class can encourage them to see they can join the ensemble.
- For Practice Help: teachers can videotape or record what they expect for the piece so the student has that at home, practice with a buddy, provide music and recordings far in advance of when the ensemble meets!
- For some students it may be important to give recordings of the pieces. These recordings are used as supplemental material if the student is not able to read the sheet music. (Fitzgerald)
- In addition to your ensemble, help look for ensembles that center around performing for students with disabilities in the local community.
- It is important to remember that using "put on the spot" methods may not be a useful tool for students and may in turn discourage participation in the class.

Instead you could set up weekly “class leaders” who are in charge of being the main participants for that day.

- Consider utilizing a “floating cutoff” to ensure that regardless of development, every student has the chance to join music when they are ready (at any point in the year).

➤ **Choral Classroom Specific**

- Reach out to special education staff to confirm every student that wants to participate in music class has no scheduling conflicts due to therapy or other requirements so they can be there.
- Seek out and choose repertoire that can provide parts for all students at a variety of levels, so that not student feels left behind or bored in any way
- Facilitate student interaction regularly in the choral classroom, whether that is through asking questions for discussion, working on sections parts, etc.
- Work against choral traditions that limit certain students.

➤ **Instrumental Classroom Specific**

- Teachers should explain skills needed to play instruments or participate in an activity to the special educator so that they get a clear understanding of whether or not the lesson plan is inclusive and accessible to all students with disabilities. This gives the teacher flexibility to adjust or modify the lesson plan to accommodate all students.