MAKE AWESOME 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

[On the surface 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

[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

Professional shift from:
- traditional thinking, traditional teaching
- applying consequences, reacting to problems
- traditional interventions
- changing students

to:
- recognizing brain differences
- preventing problems, proactive
- developing effective strategies,
- changing the environment
- changing my teaching
STRUCTURE & PREDICTABILITY

1. Establish and keep the same seating chart.

2. Define the child’s space with carpet squares; marking a square with tape or chalk; etc. Using a child size chair helps to anchor the child. Can their feet reach the floor to stabilize the body? Use a footstool if needed.

3. If a child has difficulty staying in his chair:
   • Turn the chair around and have the child straddle the chair.
   • Assign two chairs to the child, across the room from each other. For one activity he sits here, for the next he sits there.
   • Ask your occupational therapist (O.T.) for a T stool, or use a disc-o-sit.
   • Show the child a picture of him sitting in his chair.

4. If a child refuses to sit in his chair but prefers the floor, you designate where.
   • carpet squares
   • masking tape squares
   • sidewalk chalk on carpet

5. Keep a routine schedule. Post the schedule in front of the class, and/or provide a personal schedule to the child with special needs. Use a tab or picture system.

6. Develop and maintain routines; i.e. routine for going from chairs to a circle dance; for playing Orff instruments; for test taking; for lining up at the door; for passing out materials; etc.

7. Be Consistent with your classroom management. The same rules and consequences go for Suzie-the-Over-Achiever as well as Jimmy-the-Hyper-child.

8. Prepare the students for change. Use photographs. Use a calendar. Mark and acknowledge the last day of a unit, the first day of a new unit. Use an ‘all-done’ folder.

9. Use a tab system for the child’s behavior plan—CONCRETE, PREDICTABLE
TEACHING GUIDELINES

- Recognize processing delay
- Respect all levels of participation. Degree of Approximation
- Follow the child’s lead.
- Songs with repetition
  - Repeat the song for three to four to six weeks. Introduce only one or two new songs at a time.
- Make abstract CONCRETE
- Visual Aids and Visual Systems
  - Look at progress over weeks, months, years. Celebrate all achievements and improvements!
- Auditory Atmosphere
  - physical cues
  - visual cues
  - verbal cues.
  - Use direct, concrete language: “Bob, sit.”
  - Avoid verbose, indirect, or inferential language: “Bob, won’t you try to sit down, please?”
  - Use a musical cue to help the child sing.
- The number one goal is to have fun.
- Celebrate and Inspire students
  - experiential vs. instructional
- Use descriptive language
- If everyone is having fun, and that is the goal, then music is the motivator.
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


*see also* ricklavoie.com

*see also* see allkindsofminds.org


West Music catalog has a nice section on music therapy aids and adaptive equipment. See www.westmusic.com.