

## **Music Educators' Perceptions Regarding the Inclusion of Students with Severe Disabilities in Music Classrooms**

**Alice-Ann Darrow, PhD, RMT**  
**The University of Kansas**

*The purpose of the present study was to: (a) examine music educators' perceptions regarding the practice of full inclusion, (b) conduct a descriptive analysis of their perceptions, and (c) compare and contrast choral, instrumental, and general music educators' perceptions regarding the practice of inclusion. The data collection technique used in the study was personal interviewing. Participants were instrumental, choral, and general music educators (N = 35) in a midwestern school district that supports the practice of full inclusion. Written transcripts of the 35 interviews were coded and analyzed for recurring themes and patterns using content analysis. Music educators identified 13 critical issues related to the inclusion of students with disabilities. The need for collaboration or consultation with special educators, music therapists, or others knowledgeable about students with disabilities was identified as a critical issue by nearly all of the participants. Many participants also identified as critical issues: the need for more information about the students included in their music classroom, the amount of time required to successfully include students with disabilities, and the range of abilities often found in the inclusive classroom. Most music educators felt that inclusion has had a positive impact on students both with and without disabilities, though reservations were also expressed by some of the music educators. Subject responses were also analyzed for frequency of: disabilities mentioned, positive and negative statements made regarding inclusion, personal anecdotes, and references to music therapy. Suggestions are given for the role music therapists can play in facilitating the inclusion of students with disabilities.*

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There are few issues in education today with such important implications for music educators as the practice of inclusion. The term "inclusion" is a state-of-the-art term that refers to placing students with disabilities in classrooms with their nondisabled peers. Inclusion differs from mainstreaming in that the latter term usually refers to integrating children with disabilities for only a portion of the day. In a full inclusion model, students with disabilities, regardless of how severe, are taught in the regular classroom of their home school with their age and grade peers for the full day. Support services are provided within the classroom rather than moving the child to a segregated setting to receive special services.

The practice of inclusion has generated a wide range of emotional responses—some exciting and productive, others problematic and controversial. Proponents of inclusion believe that it reflects the moral and ethical values of our society and fosters understanding and appreciation for individual differences. Other advantages of inclusion are that it minimizes the deleterious effects of labeling children with disabilities, segregating them on the basis of their disability, and placing them in an environment that is inconsistent with the "real" world. Others who argue against inclusion contend that regular educators are not trained to work with students who have severe disabilities. Consequently, educators often have negative attitudes about teaching these students—which results in their further isolation and stigmatization. Other disadvantages that have been cited are that students with special needs demand excessive amounts of teacher time, impede the education and progress of other students, and often fall further behind without the services provided in the special education classroom. Regardless of the continuing debate, inclusion is becoming increasingly accepted and widely practiced.

From the beginning of mainstreaming until today, the music classroom has served as a common placement for students with disabilities (Atterbury, 1990; Graham & Beer, 1980). Too often, however, the placement of these students in the music classroom was due to administrators' misconceptions about the academic environment of the music classroom. They believed any student could be integrated into a class to listen to music. Administrators were, and often still are, unaware that music educators are responsible for implementing a structured curriculum that involves music

reading, writing, creating, and listening as well as performance skills, such as singing and playing (Goeke, 1994).

With the passage of the Pub. L. No. 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, increasing numbers of students with disabilities have been mainstreamed into the music classroom. The U.S. Department of Education has now found that over 70% of the students with disabilities in this country receive their instruction in the regular classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Part-time placement in the regular classroom was the most common scenario until the recent movement toward the total integration of students with disabilities (Rodríguez & Tompkins, 1994). With this movement came the term inclusion. The National Association of State Boards of Education (1992) provides the following definition:

Inclusion . . . means that students attend their home school with their age and grade peers. It requires that the proportion of students labeled for special services is relatively uniform for all of the schools within a particular school district, and that this ratio reflects the proportion of people with disabilities in society at large. Included students are not isolated into special classes or wings within the school. To the maximum extent possible, included students receive their in-school educational services in the general education classroom with appropriate in-class support. (p. 12)

Inclusive schools also adopt the zero rejection principle—no student can be denied access to academic programs on the basis of disability. Consequently, there has been increased enrollment of students with severe disabilities, such as those with autism and traumatic brain injuries, in regular music classes. The inclusion of these students has required special skills on the part of music educators. The total inclusion of students with disabilities into music classrooms has meant that music educators must be prepared to create a learning environment that varies with the needs and abilities of their students. Most music educators receive some academic preparation regarding the characteristics and general education of students with disabilities. In most cases, however, their preparation does not include actual teaching experiences with students who have various disabilities or information regarding systematic and vi-

able instructional strategies that facilitate the success of all students in a music classroom (Gfeller, Darrow, & Hedden, 1990).

Since full inclusion is a recent reform in education, little research has been carried out related to the efficacy of its implementation. Related studies in music mainstreaming, though helpful, do not address the same issues found in inclusive education. Nevertheless, the research in this area provides an appropriate background for the study of inclusion practices in music education. In examining the status of music mainstreaming, researchers have frequently found that music educators feel they are not adequately prepared to teach in the mainstreamed classroom (Frisque, Niebur, & Humphreys, 1994; Gfeller, Darrow, & Hedden, 1990; Gilbert & Asmus, 1981). The ability to adapt educational procedures to the learning characteristics of students with disabilities often requires specialized educational preparation. Music educators' lack of preparation is unfortunate since research has indicated that disability-related information is positively related to teachers' attitudes and willingness to integrate students with disabilities into the regular classroom (Stephens & Braun, 1980). Most states now require a college special education course for all education majors. Nevertheless, many music educators still feel that they are not effectively educating students with disabilities (Frisque, Niebur, & Humphreys, 1994).

Several researchers have examined the type of training needed to prepare music teachers for the mainstreamed classroom. Colwell (1995) found that instructional strategies, such as the use of adapted lesson plans designed for inclusive classrooms, are helpful in assuring that all students will make progress in their music study. Wilson and McCrary (1996) found that participants, after a 7-week course designed to prepare them for teaching music to students with disabilities, felt more capable to work with these students, though they felt less comfortable and less willing to do so. These findings indicate that attitudinal change strategies may need to be a part of the training teachers receive to prepare them for the inclusive classroom.

The findings of several early studies that examined the attitudes of music educators toward mainstreaming (Shehan, 1977; White, 1981/1982) indicate that various factors, including years of teaching, educational level, previous experience with mainstreamed students, and training in the area of disabilities did not contribute in

any significant way to the positive or negative attitudes expressed by the respondents. These general findings were corroborated in a later study by Gfeller, Darrow, and Hedden (1990). Although the majority of music teachers reported positive attitudes toward students with physical and cognitive disabilities, many respondents indicated that there should still be special schools or programs for students with disabilities.

Later studies reported that music educators' negative attitudes toward mainstreaming were often the result of their limited experience with students who have disabilities (Fisque, Niebur, & Humphreys, 1994; Gfeller, Darrow, & Hedden, 1990). Teachers are often unaware of the strategies that can be used to make a mainstreaming situation successful and of the music potential of many students with disabilities. Darrow (1996) found that once teachers were aware of successful strategies for mainstreaming situations, they were significantly more positive about the process of inclusion.

It is doubtful that public education systems will ever go back to self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities; therefore, it is imperative that future teachers be prepared to meet the challenges of the inclusive classroom. Preparation of preservice teachers should be founded upon field-based data taken from practitioners who are working in schools on a daily basis. The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to: (a) examine music educators' perceptions regarding the practice of full inclusion, (b) conduct a descriptive analysis of their perceptions, and (c) compare and contrast choral, instrumental, and general music educators perceptions regarding the practice of inclusion.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were music educators in a midwestern school district that includes 10,045 students and 24 schools. For the past 3 years, the school district administration has encouraged the practice of full inclusion. Participants in the study included general music teachers ( $n = 17$ ), vocal teachers ( $n = 5$ ), and instrumental teachers ( $n = 13$ ). All of the music educators in the school district ( $N = 35$ ) individually agreed to serve as subjects in the study. Their teaching experience in the school district ranged from 2 years to 31 years. Participants included 25 females and 10 males.

### *Design*

The present study was designed to examine music educators' perceptions regarding the practice of full inclusion. The data collection technique used was personal interviewing, a data collection technique frequently employed in qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Mishler, 1986; Stainback & Stainback, 1988; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The nondirective, open-ended nature of personal interviewing enables the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people, without directing those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories or rating scale items. Broad general questions posed to the participants encourage them to answer from their own frame of reference (Mishler, 1986; Sudman & Bradburn, 1982). Direct quotations obtained through nondirective interviews are the raw data that reveal people's thoughts and perceptions.

### *Procedures*

Phase 1 of the study involved obtaining permission to conduct the study from the school district, 24 building principals, and 35 teachers. Names of potential participants were obtained from the district's director of fine arts. A letter of introduction was sent to each of the 35 potential participants in which the purpose of the study was described and an invitation to participate extended. All 35 potential participants agreed to serve as subjects for the present study, and submitted to the researcher contact numbers and convenient times for scheduling interviews.

Phase 2 of the study involved interviewing the 35 participants. Participants were asked to address the following general questions: (a) What are the critical issues related to the inclusion of students with severe disabilities into the music classroom? (b) How, if at all, has the inclusion of students with disabilities affected your teaching methodology? (c) How, if at all, has inclusion affected your students—those both with and without disabilities? And (d) What advice would you offer to beginning music teachers who will be teaching in inclusive music classrooms? The interview questions were formulated to be as general as possible and to be posed without a lead. Follow-up questions were asked only to seek clarification or to request additional information. Such questions included: "Can you tell me more?", "Is there anything else you would like to add?",

“Could you expound on that idea?”. Participant responses to these questions were audio recorded for later analysis.

Phase 3 of the study consisted of compiling written transcripts of the recorded interviews with participants. Audio recordings of the interviews were used to produce the written transcripts which were then organized into three groups: choral, instrumental, and general music educators.

Phase 4 involved coding and analyzing the interview transcripts for recurring themes and patterns using content analysis, a procedure described by Weber (1990) and others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1983; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Content analysis classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant manageable bits of data. Three common uses of content analysis are to reflect patterns of groups, reveal the focus of an individual, and describe trends in communication content. All three uses were appropriate to the present study. The data process involved reducing words of the written transcripts into fewer content categories. The techniques or steps of content analysis, such as text encoding, category counts, the development of key-word-in-context and word-frequency lists described by Weber (1990) were followed. An example of a coded transcript excerpt is shown in Table 1.

## Results

Analysis of the interview transcripts involved classifying responses into themes or patterns. These patterns were first identified by three readers who, independent of one another, characterized the nature of each complete thought in the written transcripts, then grouped them into categories. Of the final 13 response patterns or categories for Question 1, 10 were identified by all three readers. The readers, in consultation with each other, determined the remaining three categories by combining or reconfiguring categories. Response categories for the remaining three interview questions as well as several additional categories of interest were developed through a similar process. Text codes were assigned for key thoughts, words and their synonyms, word frequency counts, and category counts. Interrater reliability was .89 for the coding of transcripts.

In response to Question 1, participants identified 13 critical issues related to the inclusion of students with severe disabilities in

TABLE 1

*Example of Coded Text: Vocal Teacher*

Code	Subject Interview Text
O <sub>3</sub>	[ <i>inclusion—there are a lot of problems with it</i> ] as well as
O <sub>2</sub>	[ <i>wonderful benefits from it</i> ] for everybody.
I <sub>9a</sub>	[ <i>Certainly for the kids who we are including who didn't used to be included, I think there's some wonderful opportunities for them</i> ].
I <sub>6</sub>	Having [ <i>not had a lot of preparation for this and not having gone to school with very many kids who now are in the music education program, I didn't feel very prepared</i> ].
I <sub>11</sub>	Just thinking in terms of [ <i>planning</i> ] for kids who have a
D <sub>13</sub>	[ <i>physical disability</i> ], whether it is
I <sub>3</sub>	[ <i>getting help from their resource room teacher or paraprofessional for ideas</i> ],
I <sub>11</sub>	just remembering to [ <i>think ahead</i> ]. A girl who is
D <sub>5</sub>	[ <i>visually impaired</i> ], I am going to need to have
I <sub>14</sub>	[ <i>time</i> ] to get them the
I <sub>2</sub>	[ <i>materials to have brailled</i> ] for her.

*Note.* O<sub>3</sub> = negative outcomes; O<sub>2</sub> = positive outcomes; I<sub>9a</sub> = advantages for students with disabilities; I<sub>6</sub> = experience/education; I<sub>11</sub> = planning; D<sub>13</sub> = disability identification (physical disability); I<sub>3</sub> = collaboration/consultation; D<sub>5</sub> = blind/low vision disability; I<sub>14</sub> = time; I<sub>2</sub> = adaptive music/materials.

music classrooms. Following are descriptions of the issues or response categories:

1. *Accessibility*—Statements which referred to the physical accessibility of school buildings, music classrooms, marching fields, school buses, and bathrooms on field trips. These statements were primarily in reference to students who use wheelchairs.
2. *Adaptive music/materials*—Statements which referred to the adaptation of curriculum materials, music, or instruments.
3. *Collaboration/Consultation*—Statements which referred to collaboration with special education teachers, parents, or school counselors.
4. *Expectations of parents*—Statements which referred to parents' expectations regarding inclusion.
5. *Experience/Education*—Statements which referred to the participants' experience or education regarding students with a disability.
6. *Grading/Evaluation*—Statements which referred to the grading, evaluation, or auditioning of students with a disability.



7. *Information*—Statements which referred to information about disabilities, specific students, or their IEP goals.
8. *Performance expectations*—Statements which referred to music performance expectations and the inclusion of students with disabilities.
9. *Planning*—Statements which referred to lesson planning in relation to inclusion.
10. *Placement of students*—Statements which referred to the placement of students with disabilities in the music classroom.
11. *Socialization*—Statements which referred to socialization between students with and without disabilities.
12. *Time*—Statements which referred to time issues related to the inclusion of students with disabilities.
13. *Varied abilities*—Statements which referred to varied abilities within the inclusive music classroom.

The need for collaboration or consultation with special educators, music therapists, or others knowledgeable about students with disabilities was identified as a critical issue by over 75% of the participants. Over 60% of the participants expressed a need for more information about the students included in their music classroom. The amount of time required to successfully include students with a disability was identified as a critical issue by over 50% of the participants, and nearly 50% viewed managing the varied abilities in the inclusive classroom as a critical issue. Instrumental and choral music educators also stated that performance expectations for ensembles and the expectations of parents were also important issues. These data are reported in Table 2.

Participant responses to Question 2, "How, if at all, has the inclusion of students with disabilities affected your teaching methodology?" were grouped into seven categories related to teaching adaptations. Following are descriptions of the adaptations or response categories for question two:

1. *Modifications*—Statements which referred to the modification of curriculum materials, music, or instruments.
2. *Individual instruction*—Statements which referred to individual instruction given to students with disabilities.
3. *Multiple approaches*—Statements which referred to the use of multiple goals for students, multiple class plans, multisensory experiences, or multiple teaching strategies.

TABLE 2

*Critical Issues Related to the Inclusion of Students with Severe Disabilities in the Music Classroom*

Critical Issues	Percentage of Music Educators' Responses			
	General Music (n = 17)	Instrumental (n = 13)	Vocal (n = 5)	Total (N = 35)
Accessibility	23	31	60	31
Adaptive Music/Materials	35	54	0	37
Collaboration/Consultation	100	61	40	77
Expectations of Parents	18	46	60	34
Experience/Education	29	38	40	34
Grading/Evaluation	0	15	0	6
Information:				
Disabilities	18	0	0	8
Specific Students	24	61	40	63
IEP	12	15	0	11
Performance Expectations	18	46	60	34
Planning	35	15	100	37
Placement of Students	12	31	40	20
Socialization	23	54	40	37
Time	35	69	100	57
Varied Abilities	59	31	60	48

4. *Paraprofessionals*—Statements which referred to the use and/or training of paraprofessionals who often accompany students with severe disabilities to the music classroom.
5. *Peer partners*—Statements which referred to the use of partnerships between students with and without disabilities.
6. *Class size*—Statements which referred to adjustments made in class size as a result of inclusion.
7. *Pacing*—Statements which referred to adjustments made in the pacing of instruction as a result of inclusion.

The adaptations in teaching most frequently mentioned were the use of paraprofessionals and peer partners. References to paraprofessionals and peer partners, however, were not always positive. Several participants believed that paraprofessionals were more an interference than a help. Some participants also questioned the need to rely on students as teacher assistants. Over 40% of the participants adapt their teaching for the inclusive classroom by giving individual instruction to students with a disability and by modifying the curriculum or teaching materials. Several participants men-

TABLE 3  
*Adaptations in Teaching Methodology as a Result of Inclusion*

Adaptations	Percentage of Music Educators' Responses			
	General Music (n = 17)	Instrumental (n = 13)	Vocal (n = 5)	Total (N = 35)
Modify:				
Materials	12	69	80	43
Instrumentation	6	46	0	20
Curriculum	29	8	100	31
Individual Instruction	29	46	80	43
Multiple Approaches:				
Goals/Objectives	23	3	0	14
Class Plans	12	15	0	11
Sensory Experiences	29	3	0	17
Teaching Strategies	59	23	20	40
Paraprofessionals	100	46	80	85
Peer Partners	76	23	80	57
Class Size	12	3	20	11
Pacing	18	15	40	20

tioned that the pacing of instruction had to be adjusted for students with a disability. The adjustment generally made was to slow the pace, except in reference to students with behavior disorders or attention deficit disorders when pacing was increased. The data related to teaching adaptations are reported in Table 3.

Participant responses to Question 3, "How, if at all, has inclusion affected your students—those both with and without disabilities?" were grouped into four categories which reflected the impact of inclusion on students with and without disabilities, both positive and negative. These data are reported in Table 4. Participants believed that inclusion has made students without disabilities more understanding and accepting of others, and has made students with dis-

TABLE 4  
*Music Educators' Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Inclusion on Students with and without Disabilities*

Impact of Inclusion on:	Percentage of Total Number of Comments Made Regarding Impact of Inclusion on Students (N = 79)	
	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Students with Disabilities	35	2
Students without Disabilities	48	14

TABLE 5  
*Suggestions for New Teachers Regarding Inclusion*

Suggestions	Percentage of Music Educators (N = 35)
Treat Students with a Disability Like Everyone Else	17
Be Flexible	11
Ask for Help/Information	48
Involve Students in the Process	28
Have: Broad Expectations	17
Multiple Objectives	17
Varying Criteria for Success	17
Talk with Parents	8
Reduce Class Size	17
Be Proactive	3

abilities more a part of their peer group and more skilled socially. Several participants, however, felt that students with disabilities were often “left behind” musically and that students without disabilities were sometimes resentful of students who were behaviorally inappropriate or who impeded the progress of the class or ensemble. Overall, participants made more references to the benefits for students without disabilities than for students with disabilities.

Participant responses to Question 4, “What advice would you offer to beginning music teachers who will be teaching in inclusive music classrooms?” were listed as suggestions. The number of times each suggestion was given was tallied and recorded. Many of the participants suggested that new teachers ask for help or for information about disabilities, and that they involve students, both those with and without disabilities, in the inclusion process. These data are reported in Table 5.

A final group of categories was devised for incidental information that was of particular interest to the researcher. Response categories were devised for the various disabilities mentioned and the number of times each disability was mentioned. Students with behavior disorders or with learning disabilities were the most frequently mentioned, and primarily as being problematic. These data are reported in Table 6. Because students with behavior disorders were identified the most frequently, a list of classroom management strategies mentioned by participants was also recorded, although participants were not specifically questioned regarding their strategies for managing students with behavior disorders. The

TABLE 6  
*Disabilities Mentioned by Music Educators*

Disabilities	Percentage of Music Educators' Responses			
	General Music ( <i>n</i> = 17)	Instrumental ( <i>n</i> = 13)	Vocal ( <i>n</i> = 5)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 35)
Attention Deficit Disorder	30	6	80	28
Autism	53	0	0	26
Behavior Disorders	70	38	60	63
Blind/Low Vision	12	38	20	23
Cerebral Palsy	23	6	40	23
Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing	18	6	20	17
Down Syndrome	23	11	0	23
Learning Disabilities	29	61	60	46
Mental Retardation	18	38	40	14
"Nonreaders"	26	11	20	26
Physical Disabilities	18	38	80	34
Spina Bifida	0	0	20	3
Tourette's Syndrome	12	0	0	6

management strategy mentioned most frequently was defining rules and expectations. These data are reported in Table 7.

Categories were also devised for: the number of positive and negative statements made regarding inclusion, the number of anecdotes given regarding specific inclusion situations, and references made to music therapy and its role in relation to inclusion. These data are reported in Table 8. Nearly twice as many positive statements as negative statements were made regarding inclusion. Negative statements were rarely made in reference to the concept of inclusion, but rather in reference to specific situations that had been problematic. These situations generally involved students

TABLE 7  
*Classroom Management Strategies Mentioned for Students with Behavior Disorders*

Management Strategies	Frequency of Responses
Time Out	4
Reinforcement	3
Work Individually	2
Define Rules/Expectations	8
Proximity/Placement of Student	5
Involve in Performance Activity	5
Keep Busy	3

TABLE 8  
*Incidental Information*

Categories	Frequency of Responses
Positive Statements Regarding Inclusion	60
Negative Statements Regarding Inclusion	31
Anecdotes Regarding Specific Inclusion Situations	50
Music Therapy Mentioned	4

with behavior disorders. Most participants were more comfortable discussing inclusion as it related to their own experience, rather than as an educational concept; consequently, nearly all participants relied on personal anecdotes to illustrate their perceptions of inclusion. Several participants mentioned music therapy as perhaps a more appropriate setting for students with disabilities, or the need for a music therapy consultant on matters related to inclusion.

#### Discussion

This study examined the perceptions of music educators in a middle-size school district that encourages the practice of inclusion. The school district is perhaps unique in that it includes a major research institution with a department of special education that supports the practice of inclusion, and a music therapy program that provides regular assistance to some of the students in the district's special education program. Nevertheless, many of the issues raised by music educators in the study were not unique and have been documented in the mainstreaming literature. Results and discussion of the present study, though perhaps applicable to others involved in inclusion, reflect the findings based solely on the 35 participants interviewed in the study.

Results of the present study indicate that music educators find the need for consultations or collaboration with specialists as the issue most critical to the successful inclusion of students with a disability. One participant stated:

*I have never been included in any of these students' staffings. I would be happy to try to go if even knew when they were. The lack of information we receive about some of these students is amazing. I think I could be a better teacher if I were aware of the students' strengths and what strategies had been successful in the past.*

This sentiment was echoed by many of the participants. Though attending IEP meetings for all the students included in the music classroom would probably not be feasible, one possible solution might be the dissemination of staffing reports to interested teachers, or the provision of advising times during which music educators could schedule conferences as needed with music therapy or special education personnel. Collaboration, however, takes time, and time was identified as another critical issue related to successful inclusion:

*There is just not enough time during our planning period to take care of your normal responsibilities and the different needs of so many students. Many times I am aware of what a disabled student needs in the way of adaptations, I just don't have the time to set it up or to orchestrate it.*

It is obvious that the adaptation of curriculum materials, music, instruments, and other teaching materials takes time. In addition, some students with disabilities would benefit from individualized instruction. One of the most imperative supports for inclusion then is the provision of time. Time, however, that is devoted solely for the purpose of facilitating inclusion.

Many music educators identified the varied abilities found in the inclusive classroom as a critical issue. Most teachers felt a sense of frustration in not knowing how to manage such a classroom:

*I have students who are musically gifted and those who are there only for socialization in the same class. What do I do for them?*

The issue of varied abilities relates to another issue, education and experience, identified by many of the participants.

*I have reservations, whether I have as an educator, because of my lack of training, been able to make them [students with a disability] successful because I do not have the skills nor training to attach instructional goals with the various learning styles that they have.*

Instructional strategies for including students of various abilities exist, though they are of little use to teachers who are unaware of them and how they can be used in the music classroom. One participant stated that she manages instruction by viewing students with varying abilities on a continuum.

*I look at all students that I teach on a continuum . . . I look at the whole student body and know that we just have a huge variety of abilities and talents. It's not planning for a specific child with cerebral palsy who has some level of brain damage and is operating on whatever level of intellect, those details don't matter as much as seeing a child, seeing a whole child and going from where they are and including them in the same group as the 7-year old who is composing things at the keyboard. Anyway, the continuum idea I think really guides my preparation for teaching all these students.*

The provision of education (or in-service) that includes adaptive strategies for teaching students of varied abilities and is specific to music instruction appears to be an imperative support for the successful inclusion of all students in the music classroom.

Paraprofessionals and peer partners were identified as the two most widely used adaptations in teaching. When teachers are not given adequate education, time, or resources to teach students with disabilities, it is perhaps understandable that they rely on others, specifically paraprofessionals and student peers. These two types of support, however, are not without problems. Paraprofessionals often require training themselves in how to adapt music instruction. They can also impede the musical independence of students with a disability. Peer partners, though identified by nearly all of the participants as eager and willing to assist, are often at a loss as well about the adaptations that need to be made for their classmates. Several participants explained that parents are sometimes worried about their children losing instruction time to assist other students. In addition, students with a disability are rarely assigned as the helping partner; consequently, they are often viewed as vulnerable, less capable, and never experience the joy of helping a classmate learn. All students need to learn to give assistance as well as to accept it.

Most music educators felt the impact of inclusion was beneficial to students both with and without disabilities, though for different reasons. Students without disabilities were generally regarded as having learned tolerance or acceptance of others who are different.

*I think it is very beautiful and inspiring to watch the kind of interactions that take place between students and the acceptance of students with differences. I know my students have grown in their awareness of others.*



Students with disabilities were generally regarded as having “fit in” or become part of a group: “I think (student’s name) feels like a part of the band now and he’s proud of that.” The advantages of inclusion to students both with and without disabilities were seen by participants as being predominantly social. It is important, however, that all students grow musically in inclusive classrooms. Suggestions given for facilitating music learning were for teachers to ask for help, seek information, and involve students, with and without disabilities, in the inclusion process.

The disabilities mentioned the most frequently and as the most problematic were behavior disorders, attention deficit disorders, and learning disabilities. Students with behavior disorders were identified more often by general music educators, particularly at the elementary level. Many of these students do not elect music at the secondary level or have dropped out of school by then. One participant identified himself as having an attention deficit disorder throughout school, and even now to some extent. When he was asked, as an addendum to the formal interview, if having the label of ADD had given him a better understanding of these students, or a better approach to their instruction, he replied:

*It has helped me actually have more patience just because I understand why they’re doing some of the things they’re doing. And at the same time it helps me understand how disheartening it can be to other people . . . My suggestion is to be energetic, be understanding, keep the student busy. Don’t just give them stuff for the sake of giving it to them because kids are smart enough to know that you’re doing that. They know what busy work is, they’re not stupid. They are a lot brighter than you might think. Don’t be afraid to talk to the students. Don’t be afraid to keep them going, and don’t be afraid to push them. As a matter of fact, they’ll take to you even more if you let them know that you think highly of them.*

Instrumental music educators did not find students with attention deficit disorders to be as problematic as students with learning disabilities, because as one participant explained, “I keep the instrument in their mouth.” Students with learning disabilities generally have problems with reading; therefore, their disability is highlighted in an environment that requires music reading. Instructional approaches for these students involved rote learning, private lessons, and the use of peer partners.

Overall, participants in the present study were positive about inclusion, though many had concerns and continuing struggles. Several participants stated that they were better teachers as a result of inclusion:

*Everything I have done for the inclusion kid has helped every kid in my classroom, because I've become a better teacher just by using various teaching strategies. And it's really changed what I've done. But I think every kid's benefited from that.*

According to this statement and others like it, as well as other related data in the study, it appears that successful inclusion is possible. There are, however, a number of issues related to implementation that need to be resolved. It is apparent that in order for inclusion to be successful, it needs to be facilitated. In addition to music therapy services, music therapists working in schools can also serve as facilitators and inclusion specialists in music education programs.

The responsibilities of a music therapist serving as an inclusion facilitator might include the following topics:

1. Schedule consultation appointments.
2. Inform teachers of placement decisions.
3. Coordinate dissemination of IEP information.
4. Consult with parents.
5. Provide in-service for music teachers and paraprofessionals on the following:
  - adapting curriculum, instruments, music and other teaching materials
  - problem solving for specific situations
  - useful technology/teaching materials
  - appropriate use of peer partners
  - classroom management strategies
  - adaptive teaching strategies.
6. Provide classroom assistance.
7. Coordinate practicum experiences for music education and music therapy majors.

As we gather more information about the environment of the inclusive classroom, we can begin to develop supports that will assist music educators in facilitating the successful integration of all stu-

dents, and will ultimately nurture the feeling that they are better teachers because of their experience with inclusion. As increasing numbers of music therapists are hired into public school districts each year, they can provide an important support for music educators working with students who have serious disabilities. The collaborative efforts of music educators and music therapists can serve to make the inclusive music classroom a place where all students experience the joy of learning music.

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