

Rhoda Bernard, Ed.D.
ABLE Assembly Synopsis Paper
September 14, 2020

Session title - The ABLE Arts Resource Center: Online Resources to Reach Every Student

Lead Presenter – Rhoda Bernard, Ed.D., Managing Director, Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs

Introduction

This session is designed to share the ABLE Arts Resource Center, a newly redesigned online resource clearinghouse to support arts educators in their work with students with disabilities.

The aims of the session include:

- To introduce attendees to the ABLE Arts Resource Center
- To demonstrate how to use the ABLE Arts Resource Center
- To show attendees how they might contribute to the ABLE Arts Resource Center

History

The ABLE Arts Resource Center was originally conceived by Rhoda Bernard, Managing Director of the Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs, and Julie Duty, Executive Director of United Sound. They spoke at length about their desire to better support arts educators in their teaching of students with disabilities by providing resources, including lesson plans, articles, book chapters, power point presentations, website links, audio and video materials, and more.

Rhoda Bernard brought this idea to her colleagues at Berklee College of Music, and they created a simple ABLE Music Resource Center using a basic platform. This first effort was a good initial step in the right direction, but the limitations of the platform made comprehensive cataloguing and searching difficult. Because other departments at Berklee were also seeking to develop similar clearinghouses, Bernard and her Berklee colleagues began researching other available platforms to host these sorts of collections.

They selected BePress as the platform for these various clearinghouses. The team participated in training and information sessions offered by BePress, and Berklee staff member Yamil Suarez traveled to California for a week of intensive technical training. A smaller team was formed to create the ABLE Arts Resource Center. This team included Suarez, Jenée Force, and Bernard. Over the next 18 months, they met every couple of weeks and collaborated on the creation, design, and operation of the ABLE Arts Resource Center

The “Zappos Model”

Throughout the planning process, Bernard sought to create a resource that would be as simple to search as it is to purchase shoes on the Zappos website. Invoking the “Zappos Model” with her colleagues, she envisioned check boxes on the left of the webpage, and that educators would select various aspects of what they were looking for so that their searches could be defined. While BePress does not offer this exact sort of checkbox interface, the many layers and

categories of coding in the system do make comprehensive keyword searches possible in a variety of formats. Through employing multiple ways to organize and group the data, the ABLÉ Arts Resource Center team was able to simulate the “Zappos Model” in the BePress platform.

ABLE Arts Resource Center Demos

In the session, Yamil Suarez walks participants through several types of searches that educators might want to execute in the ABLÉ Arts Resource Center. These simulated searches provide session attendees with concrete examples of how they can use the ABLÉ Arts Resource Center to access materials for their teaching.

Launch and Access

The ABLÉ Arts Resource Center was launched on August 14, 2020. There are three ways to access the ABLÉ Arts Resource Center:

- Directly - <https://remix.berklee.edu/able/>
- Through the Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs - <https://www.berklee.edu/berklee-institute-arts-education-and-special-needs/able-music-resource-center-arts-better-lives>
- Through the Berklee Library - <https://library.berklee.edu/>

Next Steps

We continue to add materials of all kinds to the ABLÉ Arts Resource Center. We are linking with other online resource compilations, and we are finding and creating new materials. New items are being reviewed by an Editorial Board. Soon we will begin to solicit new items from authors and leaders in the field. If you are interested in contributing to the ABLÉ Arts Resource Center, contact Rhoda Bernard at rbernard@berklee.edu.