

Making Musical Connections: String Orchestra for Special Learners

ABLE Assembly 2020

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Special Learners Information

Special learners can include:

Students who/with: receive special education services, communication delays, intellectual or cognitive delays, sensory processing delays, emotional or behavior disabilities, physical disabilities, are blind, deaf, or hard-of-hearing, classified as gifted and talented, who receive ENL services, or English is not their first language

Know your students' IEP or 504

Will include: goals, adaptations, accommodations, modifications, and restrictions

Know your team

Can include: teachers, para-professional's or teaching assistants, related service providers, counselors, and parents

Create a safe musical environment

Set up classroom as organized and neat as possible

Be aware of sensory needs a student might have

Be patient and understanding

Incorporate visual cues and kinesthetic objects to build connections

Create a structured musical environment

Have consistent routines, rules, consequences, and expectations

Have consistent procedures

Incorporate schedules

Allow wait time for sensory processing

Music is Beneficial for Special Learners

Music is/has: organized, structured, form, phrases, patterns, emotions, sequences

Music is a language in itself, and may provide ways for students to communicate and express oneself that they might not already have the ability to do

Music can be used to build lifelong connections

Musical Benefits	Social/Emotional Benefits
Music Literacy	Connections to ELA skills (ex: reading, writing, analyzing, form) Connections to Math skills (ex: counting, sub-dividing)
Posture, Bowing, Fingering, and Technique	Connections to OT and PT skills Gross Motor Skills Cross Hemispheric Development
Discussion, Speaking and Singing	Language and Speech Development
Ensemble Experience	Social Skills Teamwork

	Peer Relationships
Analysis, Conducting, and Self/Peer Assessing	Development of Student Choices or Ideas Student Input Critical Thinking
Performance Experience	Build Self-Esteem

Adapting the Musical Content

Orchestral instruments can be easily adapted to allow higher levels of student success

Basic strategies can include:

- Moving the strings further apart (re-stringing)
- Using color-coded stickers to differentiate different pitches
- Using stickers or padding for students to feel where fingers should go
- Using colored tape or straws to help with bow technique
- Using a sharpie marker to draw where hands should go

Easier when there is less information at first

You can start with only the D and A string, take the E and G off

Incorporate gloves with Velcro to help students grasp the bow

Incorporate tactile manipulatives for students to feel where their hands should be placed

Teaching students to handle, maneuver, and get between rest/playing position can be done

Visual supports or icons can be provided

You can take pictures of correct positions

You can place supports on their music stands, or somewhere in the music classroom

Can support all learners

For multiple steps, you can create differentiated checklists (3 levels)

Level 3 – Typed out box checklist with directions

Level 2 – Typed out box checklist with directions and visuals

Level 1 – Picture checklist

Goal is for students to become as independent as possible

You can adapt fingering technique easily

You can color-code each pitch with different colored tape on their instrument

You can also put colored stickers on each finger to help students match the colors

You can create alternative names for each finger, so students can differentiate

Example: “Shark Family Fingers”

Baby Shark = 1st Finger

Mommy Shark = 2nd/3rd Finger

Daddy Shark = 3rd/4th Finger

You can adapt bowing technique as well

Bowing is great to practice cross-hemispheric motion

You can incorporate manipulatives or icons to help students learn proper technique

Pencils as a precursor, stickers, padding, items found online (ex: Cellophant)

You can create alternative names to help guide correct posture

Similar to “Shark Fingers,” we introduced the octopus and the fish.

Making Connections through Music

Being part of an orchestral ensemble can provide many important lifelong connections and skills for students.

Being part of an ensemble can help boost a students' self-esteem and self-concept.
Language, critical thinking, and social skills can be developed by participating in an orchestra.
Being the "student conductor" can further enhance lifelong connections

Language development to communicate with peers

Social skills when communicating with peers

Critical thinking when student has the opportunity to listen, evaluate, and critique

Allowing students to self and peer assess will allow them to think deeper and teach them critical thinking skills.

Being part of an orchestra will help increase a students' self-esteem and self-concept.

Contact

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