



# Teach Music Inclusively So Every Learner Shines!

with  
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GITC Founder, Executive Director  
&  
**Reagan Duncan**  
Vista Unified Educator, GITC Faculty Trainer



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Guitars and Ukes in the Classroom

- B.A. Child Development/Behavioral Disabilities
- M.A. Clinical Psychology/Family and Child Counseling
- Singer/Songwriter
- Music Educator (Orff Trained)
- Guitar Instructor (JamPlay.com)
- Author
  - ❖ Let's Make Music! Hal Leonard
  - ❖ SmartStart Guitar Series, Hal Leonard
  - ❖ Green Songbook, Alfred Publishing
  - ❖ Your Musical Child, String Letter Press
  - ❖ SmartStart Ukulele Method, Korg



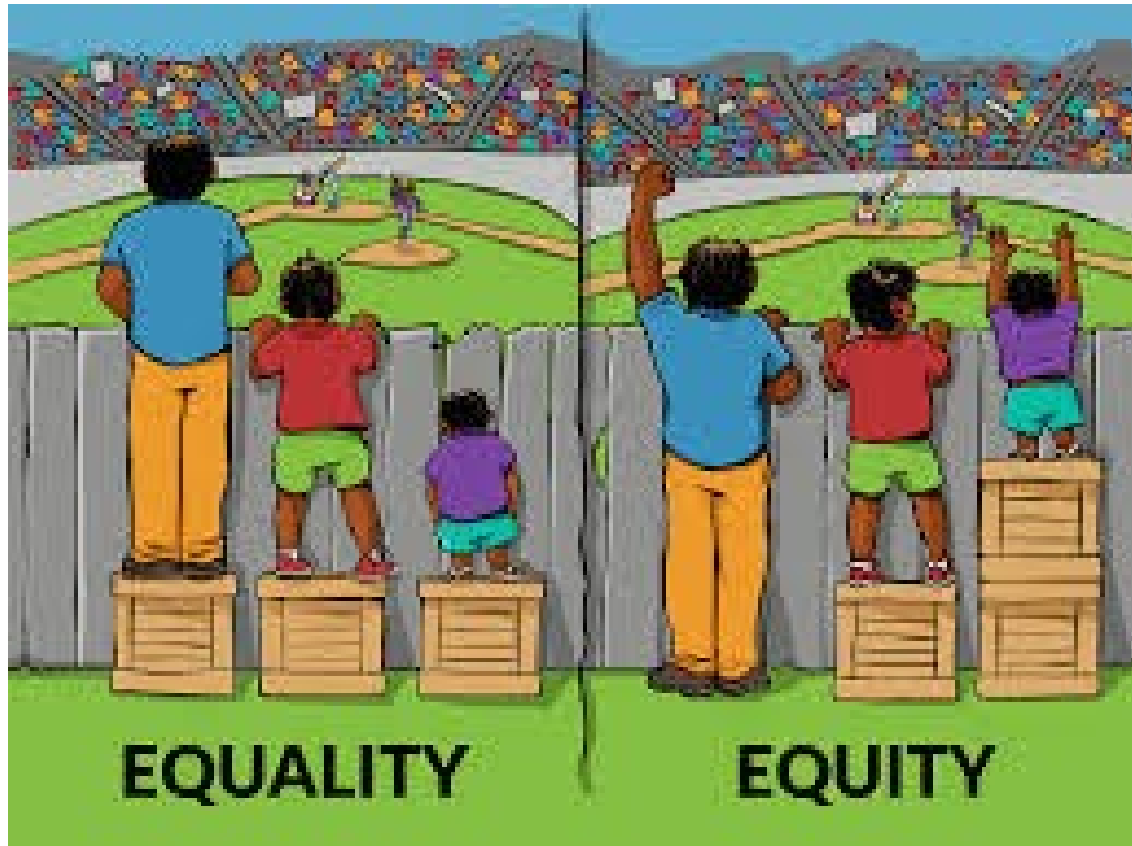
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- Expanded Learning Ukulele Instructor
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- 2021 SEL Teacher of the Year  
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## **Equity, Access, Excellence!**

**“Music is a profound,  
efficient,  
and effective medium  
for reaching, supporting,  
and teaching a broad  
spectrum of learners by  
meeting them  
exactly how and  
where they are.”**

Desirée Robles & Jessica Baron



**What does this image say to you?**

**Start with LOVE!**  
**(it's not an acronym)**

**What Qualities Support  
Successful Adaptive and  
Inclusive Music Leadership?**

- Desire to Serve
- A Vision of Equity
- Empathy
- Curiosity and Wonder
- Willingness to Ask & Listen  
(Nothing About us Without Us)
- Analysis & Reflection
- Ingenuity
- Courage to Fail Forward
- Humility and Humor
- The Will to Advocate
- Resilience



Differentiation Works Best  
with Social Emotional Awareness

Every Learner Can Benefit from SEL

Dive into with SEL through Music  
with Reagan!

# Social Emotional Learning

Employing songs and songwriting along with instrumental music allows you to implement SEL through music!

You can lead music for calming, self regulation and self-soothing, connecting with others, developing a sense of belonging, constructively expressing emotions and needs, articulating social thinking strategies, and practicing positive self talk!





# Intersection of SEL & Music!

What Zone Are You In?

Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
			
Sick Sad Tired Bored Moving Slowly	Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	Mad/Angry Mean Yelling/Hitting Disgusted Out of Control



# ZONES

## of Regulation

Supporting Self Awareness, Self Management &  
Responsible Decision Making and promoting  
Social Awareness and Relationship Skills

			
<b>BLUE ZONE</b> Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	<b>RED ZONE</b> Mad/Angry Mean Terrified Yelling/Hitting Out of Control

# What Zone Are You in Today?

to the tune "Farmer in the Dell"

© 2021 Reagan Duncan

Time: 4/4    Tempo: Moderato    Strum: Down or Shuffle    1<sup>st</sup> Singing Note: G

C/OFF

**What zone are you in today? What zone are you in today?**

C/OFF

**Are you in the blue, the green, the yellow? Hopefully not red!**

C/OFF

**What zone are you in today?**

C7/Index Finger, 1<sup>st</sup> String, 1<sup>st</sup> Fret

**Show me your zone!**

Students may respond with Color Cards, Sign Language,  
or with 1 finger for blue, 2 for green, 3 for yellow, 4 for red

## OPEN C TUNING WITH GUITARS IN THE CLASSROOM

At *Guitars in the Classroom* (GITC), we start everyone playing guitar and ukulele in Open C tuning. We lower the tension on the 1st string, dropping the note down from an A to a G. This way, when you strum across the strings, they already form a pretty, major chord. This is easier for your hand to master quickly, and it lets you develop your musical skills one at a time. After learning to play this way, you can make a smooth and simple transition to playing in *standard tuning* with total success.

In learning to play the ukulele, your first open chord is a "C" chord. Our method makes this very easy.

To put your uke in Open C, tune the 1st string to "G." The first string is the one closest to your lap. Strings are counted from your lap up. Your 4th string is closest to your chest.

Now your strings, from 4 down to 1 (chest to lap), will be notes G-C-E-G. These are the notes in a C chord. In this method, you can play this C right away without having to press down to form a new note. This lets you focus on learning to *strum and sing*.



## OPEN C UKULELE

**OPEN C**

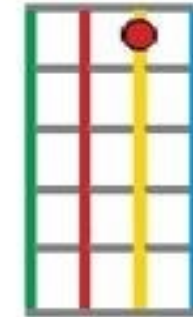
G C E G



**OFF**

**F NOTE**

G C F G



**ON**

	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>COWS</b>	<b>EAT</b>	<b>GRASS</b>
String Number:	4	3	2	1
String Location:	Chest			Lap
Solfège Pitches:	Sol	Do	Mi	Sol
String Color:	Green	Red	Yellow	Blue

# This Little Light of Mine

## for Strategy Awareness

Lyrics ©2020 Jess Baron, melody Traditional

Time: 4/4

Tempo: Moderato

Strum: Down

1<sup>st</sup> Singing Note: C

OFF/C

This Little Light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!

ON/F

OFF/C

This Little Light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!

OFF/C

ON/F

This Little Light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!

OFF/C

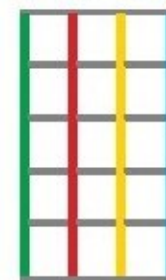
ON/G7

OFF/C

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine,

**OPEN C**

G C E G



**F NOTE**

G C F G



OFF/C

I've got a light inside me, I feel it when I \_\_\_\_\_

ON/F

OFF/C

I've got a light inside me, I feel it when I \_\_\_\_\_

OFF/C

ON/F

I've got a light inside me, I feel it when I \_\_\_\_\_

OFF/C

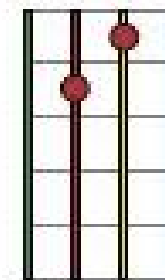
ON/G7

OFF/C

And I feel fine, I feel fine, I feel fine

**G7**

G D F G



# The Green Zone Song

A.K.A. I Use My Strategies

© 2019 Desirée Robles to the tune of “Bingo”

Time: 4/4    Tempo: Lento

Strum: Down

1<sup>st</sup> Singing Note: C

OFF/C

When it's time to calm down I use my strategie-ies

OFF/C

ON/F

OFF/C

Breathe, stretch, take a break! Breathe, stretch, take a break

OFF/C

ON/F

OFF/C

Breathe, stretch, take a break, and these are strate-gies

ON/F

OFF/C

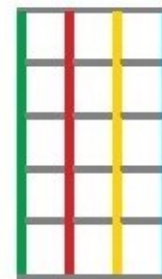
ON/F

OFF/C

To help me feel calm, and get me to back to green!

**OPEN C**

G C E G



**F NOTE**

G C F G



# Green Zone Songwriting

OFF/C

When I'm in the Blue Zone I feel \_\_\_\_\_ I use my strategies

I can <sup>ON/F</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, I can <sup>OFF/C</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, I can <sup>ON/F</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

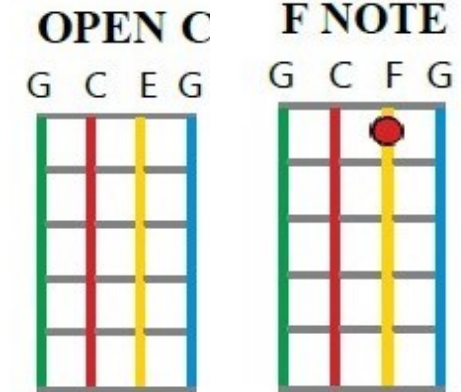
ON

To help me feel calm.... and get back to the Green Zone

When I'm in the Yellow Zone I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
I can \_\_\_\_\_, I can \_\_\_\_\_, I can \_\_\_\_\_

When I'm in the Red Zone I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
I can \_\_\_\_\_, I can \_\_\_\_\_, I can \_\_\_\_\_

**What are  
YOUR helpful  
strategies?**



Find Zones of Regulation  
information and materials here:  
[zonesofregulation.com](http://zonesofregulation.com)



Learn more about SEL Training  
from National University  
with Sanford Harmony here:  
[sanfordharmony.org](http://sanfordharmony.org)

**Do you use a system for gauging  
student SEL now?**

**Could Zones work for you?**

**Please share with your neighbor!**





When we talk about teaching inclusively  
and differentiating instruction,  
We keep students with these categories of “diagnoses” in mind.  
Rather than medicalizing kids, let’s look for what they CAN do!

- Learning disabilities
- Speech and Language Disorders
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Speech and Language Impairment
- Visual Impairment or Blindness
- Visual-Spatial and Visual Motor Disabilities
- Hearing Impairment or Deafness
- Auditory Processing Disorders
- Medical Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairments
- Mental Health Issues
- Behavioral Disabilities
- Severe Emotional Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Cognitive Impairment

## Asset-Based Thinking!

Asset-based pedagogies focus on the strengths that diverse students bring to learning and showing what they know.

The asset-based approach is a direct response to deficit-based models of the past.

Ensuring musical equity and access means viewing student differences as assets and not deficits, and doing our best to provide supports. As Jason Mraz says, we ["Look for the Good."](#)

- What CAN a student do?
- How might they express music in their own way?
- What can WE notice about their musical responses?
- How can we adapt the environment and our approach
- to cultivate greater possibilities for participation?

**Think of a student you were able to reach by looking for the good!  
Please turn, meet your neighbor  
and exchange your stories about these students**

# Teach Low Floor High Ceiling Activities to Make Music Inclusive!

“Low Floor” means that the initial level of difficulty of a task or learning activity is simple enough that everyone can access it in their own way.

“High Ceiling” means those students who seek more challenging opportunities can find a way to apply their full potential to participating in the learning process.

Every student needs a way to begin, and room to grow. The concept of "low floors and high ceilings," when applied to playful musical learning, refers to the idea of creating a learning environment and group activities that are accessible for everyone. This gives each student a way to utilize their unique assets (cognitive, physical, expressive, social-emotional, intuitive, creative) to embrace learning in whatever ways they are able.

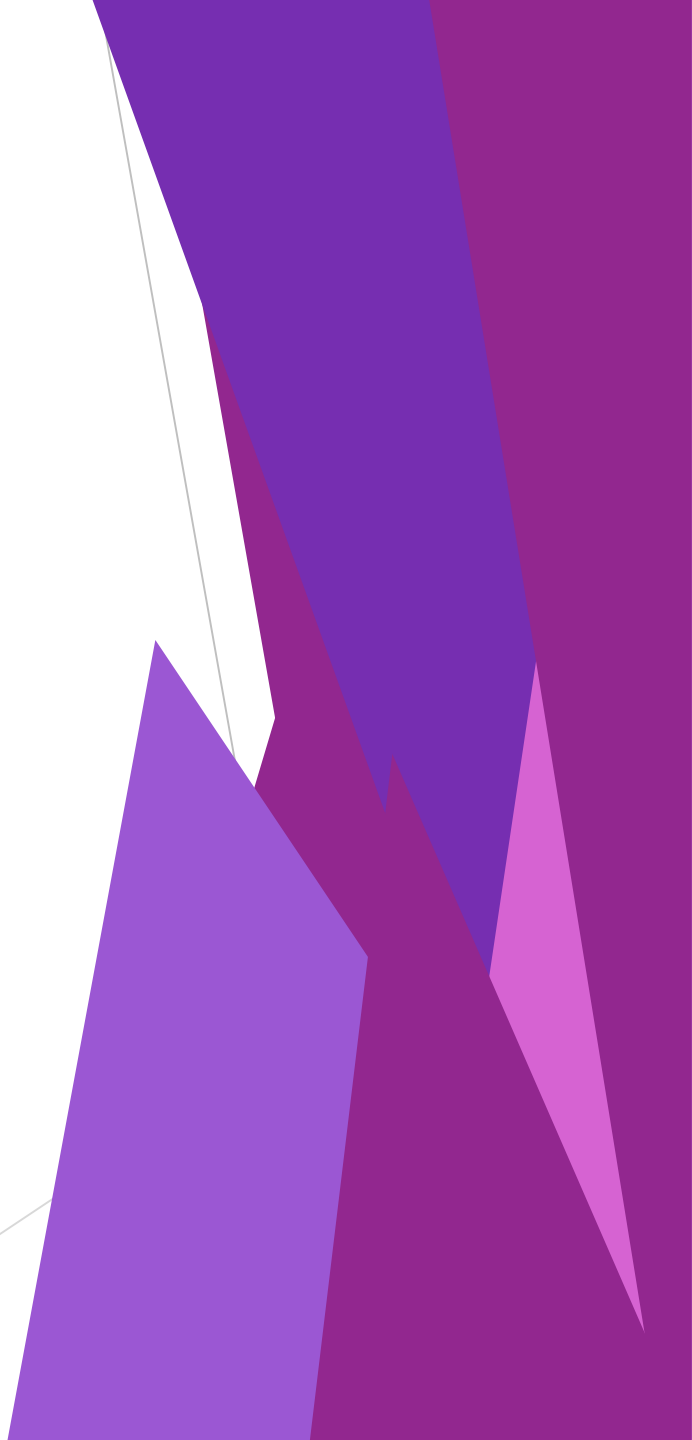


**GITC Adaptive Ukulele Training with Special Olympics Arizona has now resulted in statewide adoption of the organization's Unified Ukulele. 30 new ukulele clubs are launching at this time.**

## Who are the diverse learners in *your* classroom?



**Turn, Talk, and Share!**



**How can we adapt our  
environment, approaches and  
materials to make musical  
learning more accessible &  
successful for diverse learners?**

**Let's Explore.**

## ORGANIZED SOUND

### What sounds can your students make?

An often-cited definition of music is that it is "organized sound", a term originally coined by modernist composer Edgard Varèse in reference to his own musical aesthetic.

Varèse's concept of music as "organized sound" fits into his vision of "sound as living matter" and of "musical space as open rather than bounded".

Varèse's definition leaves room for anyone who can intentionally create sound to be capable of expressing themselves musically.

## **STEADY BEAT - An ORGANIZING FORCE**

### **Scaffolding Spoken Language**

### **Let's Paddle Drum!**

Teaching students to feel and create the steady beat lays the groundwork for whole group engagement, entrainment, and language development. It also sets the stage for solos and improvisation!

GITC builds many games and activities based on creating group cohesion with steady beat.

Entraining students to your leadership drum facilitates beat matching, group mindset, and motivation. It also builds audiation that serves as a scaffold for focusing and acquiring sounds, words, and phrases!



# **Let's Start with Inclusive Rhythm Activities** **Open Your Baggies!**

- 1. 7 Levels of Body Percussion**
- 1. Borrow a Beat, Busta Move**
- 1. Paddle Drumming from Easy to Hard**
- 1. Shake Your Egg Your Special Way**
- 1. Hidee Hidee Ho with Sounds & Blends**
- 1. Strum Your Uke Your Special Way  
(Herco Picks, Soft Picks, and Traction Mats)**

# Accommodate, Adapt, and Assist!

## ACCOMMODATION

The term "accommodation" may be used to describe an alteration of environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or to complete assigned tasks.

Accommodations allow students with disabilities to pursue a regular course of study.

## ADAPTATION

Adaptation means we are adapting our approach, and with music, that can mean adapting the curriculum, too, as well as providing adaptive supplies

**How do you adapt your  
teaching and your classroom environment  
to accommodate diverse learners now?**

**Please turn and share  
in a group of 3 or 4,  
and choose someone to report out.**

## ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Adapt your classroom environment to minimize triggers and obstacles, and maximize participation for students with exceptional conditions.

This can involve:

- Turning off fluorescent lighting
- Lowering volume levels and providing noise canceling headphones
- Changing your room set up for optimal individualized seating
- Creating a quiet or sensory corner
- Designating personal space between students,
- Developing space to allow autonomous freedom of movement
- Creating safe mobility pathways for students using mobility aids.
- Preparing visual language to express musical ideas
- Enlarging print or sourcing braille musical charts
- Offering hand-outs that free students from teacher-driven pacing of slides
- Supplying or adapting instruments that increase playability, provide access, and foster student success through novel positioning, motoric supports and/or tools that aid small and large motor tasks.
- Learning to work with and train classified student support service professionals in assisting students with musical instruments and participation.

# PHYSICAL ACCOMMODATIONS, ADAPTATIONS & SUPPORTS

## Let's Explore Those Baggies!

Strive to give each student an instrument they can hold, strike, shake, or strum using adaptive tools and/or positioning.

Find out what is already available or invent your own solutions.

GITC utilizes sensory-friendly grips, straps, instrument stands, traction mats, adaptive thumb picks, and more.

If you are working in Moderate-Severe or Medically Fragile classrooms or in hospitals, include support personnel in your music making. Paras or PIFs, therapists, and assistants will enjoy receiving some music instruction so they can offer hand-over-hand support to their students at music time.

## **MUSICAL DIFFERENTIATION**

### **Tips on Starting with Discovering Students' Assets!**

Choose and arrange a piece of music that allow students to participate with their unique abilities.

Observe and listen to your students closely. Find an instrument that fits their interest and ability.

Next, work with what they CAN do to build an individualized part. This can be as simple as playing a simple sound or beat, adding percussive and vocal sounds, interpreting music with dance/movement, chanting.

Give highly curious and adept students chances to take on peer assistance during music if they wish, and provide opportunities to allow them to explore complex musical roles like playing or singing solos, rapping, or improvising.

**Is there a musical activity or song  
you'd like to arrange for your students  
that gives you room to arrange  
a low floor and a high ceiling?**

Please make a mental note or jot it down.

**What could be the simplest musical point of entry?  
The grandest musical achievement?  
What would help make it more inclusive**

Turn, Meet Your Neighbors,  
Choose a Song, and Arrange it.

We'll be sharing out soon!



**REVIEW:**  
**AMAISE-ing STRATEGIES**  
**for Adapting Music for Achievement in**  
**Inclusion and Special Education**



## 1. BEGIN AND END WITH SOMETHING ALL CAN DO

- a. Take a Low Ceiling High Floor (LCHF) approach to lesson planning! Ask their classroom teachers for insight and guidance as per specific accommodations and successful techniques.
- a. Warm up with a simple activity that includes making sounds without using words. Body percussion, vocalization, or small instruments can include emerging speakers and non-verbal students. This is fantastic for developing phonological awareness! Try kazoos!
- a. Teach a steady beat rhythmic piece that allows students with manual or motoric disabilities to express the beat in any way they are able to - eye blinks, head nods, striking, clapping, tapping. Try adaptive instruments ie. finger shakers and toe tambourines.
- a. Incorporate simple songs with predictable lyrics. Students benefit from melodic repetition, and finding small parts that give every student something they can learn at all levels.

## 2. FOSTER BELONGING, TEACH RESTORATIVELY

- a) If possible, seat students in a circle so they can see one another. This builds community. Let everyone be seen and accepted.
- b) Open with a quick check in song such as our Zones Song, a Hello Song, or a Name Song. If a student cannot sing, sing to them. Be their voice. This calls each student into the space.
- c) In frustrating, sad or stressful situations, slow down. Find the heart of the matter. Seek understanding, model compassionate and collaborative solutions. You can mine these times for your most important teachable moments!
- d) Teach and sing songs that cultivate positive feelings and social thinking strategies!

### 3. ADAPT THE TEACHING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL

- a) Create “Observer Seats” for students who become overwhelmed in a group musical setting. Demonstrate how students can move from the inner circle to the perimeter to take an Observer Seat. Give them agency to do so and to return when they are ready. This builds self regulation and self esteem.
- b) Proactively keep sets of noise canceling headphones at the ready. This will allow students with sensory integration issues to avoid triggers while continuing to participate.
- c) Create a quiet or safe corner of the room (bean bag chairs work well). Place a waterman ukulele there, and also headphones and a ipad containing a calming music app such as Phaserings on it so students who feel overwhelmed can go there to calm themselves down and reset in order to return.

## 4. IMPLEMENT STUDENT SUPPORTS & STRATEGIES

- a) Work with the classroom teacher to understand each student's physical needs in order to adjust instruments, and provide helpful supports, accessories, and hand over hand assistance from peers, volunteers or paraprofessionals.
- b) Teach teamwork in each class and invite student volunteers to serve as peer assistants to students who can play with support. If gripping, strumming or striking instruments is hard, another child can assist. This is a powerful lesson in empathy, care, and service.
- c) Ask to be included in students' SST teams if you want the family and faculty to support particular students to succeed in music, and to transfer knowledge from the music room to the classroom and home.

## 5. ADJUST OR ADAPT INSTRUMENTS

- a) Create or purchase grips, straps, traction mats, or stands to hold instruments or accessories that enable adaptive playing by students with limited manual dexterity, mobility, range of motion, missing limbs or digits, rigidity or paralysis. Get creative! You'll change lives.
  
- b) Try fitting students with smaller sized instruments that may be easier to hold or move, and can fit within a wheelchair or space-limited set up.
  
- c) Place instruments in different positions when necessary such as laying them flat, face up on a mat, pad, or pillow, and adjust the student's approach to the instrument to fit their range of motion.
  
- d) If helpful remove bars or strings so students have fewer playing targets and can hit the desired notes more successfully, or try putting the instruments in an easier, alternative tuning.

## 7. USE VISUAL LANGUAGE, CUES, & VISUAL AIDS

- a) Prepare a visual system of communication so all students have a way to indicate needs or give answers. Students who are less verbal may be more able and likely to communicate effectively with you if you develop and teach hand signs, or provide cards with images or words they can hold up. Many non-verbal students use speech simulating devices like pre-recorded voice buttons, “switches” or apps to indicate their needs or give answers. Ask special ed teachers to show you how these work.
- b) Having a set of these tools at the ready with YES/NO, STOP/GO, Green, Blue, Yellow and Red, Help, and specific signals for routines, transitions, and more can save time and reduce confusion.
- c) Using music notation cards, music related symbols on signs, or little white boards can also help students share ideas and answer questions.

## 8. REFINE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS TO 5 WORDS OR LESS

- a) Many of us are highly verbal teachers. We try to explain complex ideas and procedures using rich details and vocabulary. For students with speech and language delays, processing disorders, and Autism, less can be more. Simplifying our messages can bring better results.
- b) Identify what commands you most often use in your music classroom. How do you cue students for tasks and transitions? Make a list of the top 10 things you say each week, then reduce them to 1-5 words. Practice these shorter commands and see what happens!
- c) When you are teaching a complex process, or an elaborate piece of curriculum or music, offer visual images to support the verbal instruction. Pictures, graphs, text, notation, and videos with moving symbols students can follow can help a wide range of learners keep up.
- d) Whenever you teach verbally, try to pace your speech more slowly than normal. Feel free to repeat a sentence twice. Then afford students adequate response time to allow your speech to fully register. You may need to take significant pauses. To be sure you were understood, it's helpful to check for understanding.

## 9. ARRANGE PIECES FOR SIMPLICITY & CAPACITY

- a) When modifying musical arrangements for students with auditory, cognitive, verbal, motoric, and visual impairments, a little creativity goes a long way. It's worth the effort to create and assign parts within the capacity of each student to achieve. Taking this adaptive approach to arranging draws upon the thinking of Carl Orff, and the Orff Schulwerk method that incorporates not only music but movement, spoken word, and dance.
  
- b) Many students with impairments are actually excellent musicians. They may have great ears, a strong ability to interpret a lyric or melody, and they may track musically with the class. So, in addition to making parts everyone can play, also give students showing capacity or promise a chance to rise to a new challenge, and to lead. Please do this in a way that gives them support, dignity, and that will not present a risk for embarrassment. One on one outside of class can be the safest approach.



## 10. MAKE PERFORMANCES INCLUSIVE & PROCESS-ORIENTED

- a) To make sensory-friendly performances for neurodivergent and also traumatized performers and audience members, you can lower the sound level, reduce or “infer” startling or loud sounds, keep the house light on a very low level during the performance, designate quiet seating areas in the theater, as well as areas for people who may need to get up and move during the performance. Seat talkers at the back. Make sure you have sufficient ADA compliant seating for anyone with a mobility device or special need of any kind and if possible, seat them first.
- b) Work with the classroom teacher to institute practicing stage entrances, cues, and exits as much as needed to create safe, predictable, secure pathways and transitions, beginning and endings. This will reduce anxiety and accidents.
- c) Along with “show stoppers”, boldly share process pieces that demonstrate learning in progress. This takes pressure off the students, and includes the audience in the rhyme and reason of the musical learning.
- d) Create cameos and solos for students who clearly do things in a unique way rather than attempting to make them blend. They can have fun and achieve new confidence by performing something exuberant or brave. Tenderness and beauty can prevail, resulting in a joyful experience for all.

# Everyone Deserves Music!

Thank you so much for joining us today!  
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