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Eastern Kentucky University

Solutions to Dissonance: Solutions to the Gaps in the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional
Development of Students with Disabilities in the Music Classroom

Honors Thesis

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Solutions to Dissonance: Solutions to the Gaps in the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional
Development of Students with Disabilities in the Music Classroom

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to define disability as it is used in the music classroom, summarize gaps in the development of students with disabilities in the music classroom, and determine possible solutions to those issues. The research in this thesis is intended to be used as a resource for music educators of all levels and not to criticize the work of countless other educators to impact the lives of students with disabilities. This paper makes use of some classroom observations as well as a survey of music educators from around the state of Kentucky. This paper should not be considered an all-encompassing list of strategies for students with disabilities; however, the strategies that are defined and described should be used as solutions or strategies to mitigate the issues that the author has found in music classrooms.

Keywords: Thesis, Undergraduate Research, Disability, Music Education, Capstone, Survey, Classroom

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Solutions to Dissonance: Solutions to the Gaps in the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Development of Students with Disabilities in the Music Classroom

In many music classrooms around the state, the population of the classroom is generally made up of students of all cultural backgrounds. However, students with disabilities are often placed in more traditional classrooms in lieu of the arts classrooms for them to focus on other aspects of education. Although this may be necessary many times throughout a student's educational career, by pulling them out of arts classrooms, this does a disservice to them educationally as well as socially. Inclusion in music classrooms has been proven to be beneficial for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students with disabilities, so why do many music classrooms still have such a low population of students with Individual Education Plans or 504 plans? Many music teachers have not had training to successfully differentiate their teaching and educational opportunities for students with moderate to severe learning, intellectual, and physical disabilities; moreover, this lack of training manifests itself as teachers not advocating for inclusion in their classrooms and not accommodating student needs in their classroom settings. However, there are many different tools and techniques that teachers could use to make the learning opportunities for students with disabilities, including the use of purposeful and meaningful advocacy for students with disabilities, differentiation and cooperative teaching, and changing the basic philosophy of music education. The opportunities for successful and meaningful inclusion available to teachers, but the implementation of these ideas could be something of a challenge. To better help educators with these issues, understanding how disability coincides with the laws of the commonwealth and how disability differs in the eyes of education can be extremely beneficial and necessary to be able to properly run a culturally responsive classroom.

Disability

Throughout history, disability and people with disabilities have been somewhat taboo concepts to talk about in casual conversation. For this reason, it was not until the late 20th century that legislation and advocacy for people with disabilities came to the forefront with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act--now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act--in 1975 and the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 (Abeson and Zettel, 1977; Blanck, 2019). These two acts have been altered, amended, and rewritten, but they still have tried to help create a new society for people with disabilities. Before these acts, there was very little legal protection that prevented people with disabilities from being taken advantage of or abused in some form or fashion. There was nothing that guaranteed them the same rights and freedoms that were promised to non-disabled citizens.

Disability in the Law

Since the concept of disability has only been in the public eye for about fifty years, it is very important to understand how the laws stand now and how they came to be. In the 50s and 60s, there were several programs that were created on the state or local level for the benefit of students with disabilities including the “Training of Professional Personnel Act” of 1959, the “Captioned Films Act “ of 1958, and the “Teachers of the Deaf Act” of 1961; however, in 1968, there were over 200,000 people with disabilities in mental institutions that could have been a part of society, but the state governments did not have enough funds to help them (History of the IDEA, 2020).

To remedy this, in 1975, Gerald Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act into law due to the increase in protests for the enhanced and guaranteed education of

students with disabilities. According to an article, written in 1977, by Alan Abeson and Jeffrey Zettel entitled “The End of this Quiet Revolution: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975” states that this act defined what types of disability were eligible for accommodation, what services can be provided, who is going to provide the service, and it allocated funds, space, and time to achieve what is specified for each student. There were several amendments to this act including amendments in 1983, 1990--which changed the name to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act--, and 1997 which all helped to transition high school students with disabilities to adulthood (History of the IDEA, 2020).

At around the same time, the Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990 made sure that all Americans could live in their “least restrictive environment” and take part in all governmental offerings in community settings (Blanck, 2019). The ADA uses a lot of the same principles of the IDEA but simply places them in the context of society rather than the school system. In 2008, the ADA was updated to include people with disabilities that were not considered before such as people with cancer, diabetes, and other diseases.

With these laws, thousands of people with disabilities are protected against wrongdoings and are given many opportunities that they may not have received years ago.

Disability in Education

Because of IDEA, classrooms across the nation have started including students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Those students have rights that are guaranteed to them by the IDEA. Those rights, according to Angelika Doebler in her article *There is no Such Thing a Free Appropriate Public Education*, are the right to Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the right to be assessed by a competent review board, the right to an Individual

Education Program (IEP), the right to a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), the right to have parent involvement, and the protection against procedural problems like miscommunications or beginning an assessment of a student without parental consent. These six principles make up the foundation of IDEA and have a strong impact on how teachers must create their classroom to support the individual needs of students.

To begin, the FAPE, or free appropriate public education, is the most important source of all in IDEA. It is required that all students, regardless of disability, are to be offered an education that supports their needs entirely and provides access to all the resources and materials that could be necessary for the success of that student (Doebler, 2019). This definition is vague intentionally as the needs of the students are completely different depending on the situation and the varying extents of the individual case. For instance, two students with autism spectrum disorder could have the same symptoms and needs but could react very differently depending on their home life and personal circumstances. To be clear, before a student is offered any accommodations by IDEA, they must be assessed and tested by professionals and given a diagnosis or be in the process of getting diagnosed. Once a child is formally diagnosed and tested thoroughly, the IDEA begins its support with the rest of the plan. Therefore, the IDEA also provides the students with the right to an IEP, or an Individual Education Program. This plan for individual students is given to students aged three to twenty-one and is generally a list of goals that the student should meet to show progress. The process generally consists of a professional assessment of the child that has members that consist of at least the child's physician, their parent, and one of their teachers; a list of academic and personal goals that are specific to the child; a schedule of when the student should be reaching those goals; and a list and description of the accommodations and modifications that are required in every classroom the child is a part of.

This program is typically altered or modified on a yearly basis, but the IDEA does give some leeway to the states for procedures and extra details (Musyoka and Clark, 2017). This IEP is the gateway for the student to be included in a general education classroom. The list of accommodations allows the general education teacher to support the student's needs and include them in activities that they would otherwise have difficulty participating in. The actual process of getting the IEP can take years as different diagnoses and proper procedure must be followed in order to make sure the student is getting the proper support that he or she needs. Depending on the situation, the IEP can be extremely beneficial to the student or it can do little to nothing at all. According to an article entitled *SMART or Not? Writing Specific, Measurable IEP Goals*, by Laurin Hedin and Stephanie DeSpain, the traditional IEP goals are often not substantial enough to push students to achieve them. In an article by Millicent Musyoka and Diane Clark, *Teachers' Perceptions of Individual Education Program (IEP) Goals and Related Services*, they agree by stating that the goals were "vague, broad, inconsistent, and ineffective" when it comes to addressing the educational needs of the individual. However, with the proper program, the goals can be extremely beneficial to the student and provide them with an excellent opportunity to grow. The next pillar of the IDEA is the Least Restrictive Environment or the LRE. This is basically the right that every student must be in a classroom that gives them every available opportunity and does not limit their potential based on unnecessary protection. For instance, placing students in a special education classroom away from their non-disabled peers for their whole educational career is not necessarily the LRE for that child. According to Megan McGovern (2015) states that the IEP team is responsible for determining the appropriate level of restrictiveness (p. 7). The LRE is often referred to as the education of the student to the "maximum extent appropriate" for that individual (McGovern, 2015). The next pillar in IDEA is

the right to parent involvement. As the parent will typically spend much of their time with their child, it is important for educators to consider their opinions and input on the IDEA process and especially the IEP process. As previously stated, it is required that a parent be present during the IEP process. Their input can often be invaluable to make sure a child gets the proper support and the goals are reasonable. The final pillar in IDEA is to protect the parent and student from procedural complications. Doeblner (2019) describes some of these safeguards like making sure all of the documentation in a student's case is in understandable rhetoric and in the parent's native tongue, requiring written communication before any educational service is administered, and allowing complaints to go through due process (p. 779). Overall, the IDEA outlines the way that a school should offer education to the student.

Depending on the needs of the individual student, what the school offers could come in a variety of ways. The two main types of support are accommodations and modifications. Accommodations are additions to a child's education that support his or her needs in that environment. These could come in the form of extra time on tests, a scribe, larger print, audio files of lectures, and many other options. The purpose of accommodations is to give the student the fullest opportunity to participate in the class assignment and objective. The accommodations do not change the assignment or the objective, they simply help the student complete the assignment or the objective. Modifications on the other hand are direct changes to either the assignment, objective, or curriculum for the purpose of helping a child achieve a goal. Sometimes, this simple addition to an assignment is not enough to fully support a student in their educational endeavors. Modifications are another option in supporting the student as they are not full inclusion within a classroom. They are full inclusion when it comes to social and emotional contexts, but academically they are still separate. The overall objective of an assignment or unit

should not change much, but slight adjustments could be necessary to allow a student the opportunity to succeed and make progress in a class' curriculum.

Types of Disabilities in the Classroom. In the classroom setting, it is important to note that all students who have a documented IEP or are in the process of getting an IEP are offered accommodations or modifications to their education. Another group of students that are allowed accommodations are students with 504 plans. Students with 504 plans are typically students who may not need accommodations their entire educational career. In an article, by Cecily Betz, entitled *Use of 504 Plans for Children and Youth with Disabilities: Nursing Application*, she provides a chart with all of the possible qualifications for a 504 plan; some of them are having a physical or mental impairment that significantly affects at least one daily function, having a record of such an impairment, being regarded as having that impairment, being misdiagnosed, and/or having a physical injury that temporarily limits your daily functions. These plans are not typically permanent and do not have nearly the requirements that the IDEA does for IEPs. However, a 504 could lead to an individual being recommended for an IEP, so making sure they are taken seriously in the classroom is of the utmost importance. Despite not being as detailed, it is still very important to make note of the 504 plan and understand it in the context of education. In general, the IDEA lists fourteen disabilities that are covered; those disabilities are as follows: developmental delay, autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disability, emotional disturbance, speech or language impairment, visual impairment or blindness, deafness, hearing impairment, deaf-blindness, orthopedic impairment, intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment and multiple disabilities. These disabilities are all unique and have specific requirements that should be addressed.

Developmental Delay. A developmental delay is a disability that causes a child to not meet developmental goals within the expected age ranges. It is one of the most common disabilities that is found in a classroom as there are many versions of this disability and the effects will often vary from individual to individual. Pradeep Vasudevan and Mohnish Suri (2017) list some of the possible developmental domains as fine motor skills, speech and language, cognition, personal-social, and daily activities (p. 558). Developmental delays are typically caused by some type of genetic mutation or malformation that happened before the birth of the child. The history of the family and certain complications during pregnancy could also cause a child to develop a developmental delay. Many times, these disorders can often be detected before the child is out of the womb through genome sequencing or chromosomal testing; moreover, these disorders will become prevalent before the child is five years old (Vasudevan & Suri, 2017). Since this is the case, many parents will often have their child diagnosed and prepared with an IEP before they enter the school system. Because of the wide variety of developmental delays, many of the disorders can also be categorized as other types of disabilities or can coincide with other disorders (Vasudevan & Suri, 2017). Some examples of developmental delays are Down Syndrome, Fragile-X syndrome, and Fetal-Alcohol Syndrome. Other disabilities like autism spectrum disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder have also been attributed to some developmental delays.

Autism Spectrum Disorder. Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, is one of the fastest growing populations of disabilities. It affects about two percent of the population and the number of diagnoses is growing daily (Posar & Visconti, 2019). This disability is multifaceted,

incredibly varied, and the definition is still being altered even today. According to an article entitled *Long-term outcome of Autism Spectrum Disorder*, by Annio Posar and Paola Visconti, ASD is a culmination of environmental and genetic factors that are still being researched. ASD is not like other disabilities as it is a “spectrum disorder.” This means that there is not one clear definition of what the disability entails. There is instead a long list of possible symptoms that may or may not be present in an individual case of ASD. Most children with ASD will develop any issues until about age three (Posar & Visconti, 2019). As such, parents can generally get a diagnosis before their child reaches a schooling age. Since ASD is a spectrum disorder, it is difficult to summarize all the possible effects of the disability. In all actuality, the varied aspects of ASD can cause some very different cases. For instance, some individuals could be considered low-functioning and have extreme symptoms that affect their daily lives in severe ways while others could have high-functioning ASD and have minor effects on their daily lives. There are even several cases of savant syndrome with ASD that cause the individual to have abnormal gifts in one or more areas of study. Much of the population with ASD are somewhere in between. Some of the most consistent symptoms of ASD are limited social skills, limited speech and language skills, and limited fine motor skills. There are also cases of individuals with ASD having certain fixations on either their schedule or some other aspect of their life. Although this is not the case for every person, individuals with ASD should experience these symptoms in some capacity at some point in their lives. ASD is a very diverse disability that is represented in almost every classroom around the country.

Specific Learning Disability. “Individuals with SLDs have weaknesses in specific processes rather than global intellectual disability” states Elena Grigorenko and her colleagues

(2020) in an article entitled *Understanding, Educating, and Supporting Children with Specific Learning Disabilities: 50 Years of Science and Practice* (p. 40). This statement basically encompasses what is attributed to Specific Learning Disabilities or SLDs. There are many different types of SLDs, and they affect about 35% of the population of students with disabilities (Grigorenko et al, 2020). According to Grigorenko and her colleagues (2020), SLD can be in the form of difficulty reading or spelling certain words (specific word reading disability or SWRD). This disability could be caused by phonological processing deficits while other facets of language could be saved. On the other hand, specific reading comprehension disability (SRCDD) deals with “non-phonological language weaknesses” and can be attributed to other things like background knowledge or other executive functions. Specific math disabilities (SMD) can involve either calculating or understanding word problems but may require different accommodations depending on the form of the disability. Finally, specific written expression disability (SWED) deals with either the fine-motor skills involved in writing or the composing text through oral language skills (p. 40). In any case of SLD, the notion is always the same that the students may be perfectly capable and adept in other subjects, but they could struggle significantly in one or more subjects because of their disability. Understanding what the underlying cause of their disability is and understanding how their disability causes them to have difficulty in that subject can be beneficial both to the student and to the instructor when it comes to creating assignments.

Emotional Disturbance. Also known as serious emotional disturbance or emotional behavioral disability, an emotional disturbance is something that inhibits a child’s abilities in the classroom due to some reason besides an intellectual, sensory, or health factor. Until very

recently, the assessment of students with ED did not include mental or psychological disorders and were almost entirely based on behavior (Forness, Kim, & Walker, 2012). An ED is something that limits a child due to something that changes their mood or behavior. Emotional disturbance can be due to internalizing or externalizing disorders. Internalizing disorders typically affect the individual's mood like depression or anxiety while externalizing disorders can influence the individual's behavior like aggressiveness, defiance, or disruption (Chow, Hollo, & Wehby, 2019). Often, these disorders will coincide with each other. For instance, a student's depression could be an underlying factor for why they are acting aggressive. Often, the accommodations for students with an emotional disturbance will not be so much academic as they are social. Since there is not an intellectual factor causing the disability, the accommodation must be different for students with ED. For instance, a student with an ED may have required counseling or could have a personal behavior chart that the other students may not have. Students with this disability can vary widely. Some students could be more aggressive while others tend to shy away from social interaction. From this point of view, the ED could almost be considered a spectrum disorder. Because of the variations in symptoms, this disability can go undiagnosed (Algozzine, 2017). As such, teachers must be diligent in understanding their students and noticing changes in mood and behavior or they could cause unneeded stress in the lives of their students.

Speech or Language Impairment. Speech or language impairments are disabilities that cause delays in a child's ability to form words, make specific sounds, and/or communicate using language altogether. This disability can often go unnoticed and undiagnosed in young children as parents will typically not notice delays in their child's language abilities until it has already

caused a lasting effect on the child (Adlof et al, 2017). The parents and teachers of a student with speech or language impairment may not recognize the signs until formal testing of the child is done. Children with a speech or language impairment will often need therapy from a young age. If caught quick enough, this disability can be remedied and will not cause the child any more problems. However, if it is not tested for early enough, it can cause a child to lose a child's ability to communicate properly or hinder progress on teaching language to a child. Most students with speech or language impairments will also experience some other type of disability such as a specific learning disability like dyslexia (Adlof et al, 2017). This is due to how language, reading, and writing all interact with each other and form lasting habits on children. Students with speech or language impairments are often diagnosed in elementary schools due to programs that are designed to identify students who could possibly have a speech or language impairment and develop a plan to intervene to prevent that child from struggling any longer. Despite their best efforts, students with speech or language impairments could have hindered development in comprehension of written or spoken word and word reading or spelling even with speech or language therapy (Adlof et al, 2017).

Visual Impairment/Blindness. Visual impairments or blindness occur when a student has a health factor that limits their vision so much so that it hinders their educational opportunities. This could come in the form of not being able to read the board, the font on assignments being too small, the pictures on an assignment being too blurry, and many other considerations. This is not the most common disability as it affects around 455,000 children, but it is still necessary for consideration (Parent Center Hub, 2017). Visual impairments can range from mild to severe to blindness. It is very important to try and diagnose visual impairments at a young age as eyesight

tends to diminish quicker if there is no intervention. Vision is one of the senses and visual learning is one of the most common and most often practiced. Without this sense, students can lose a lot of opportunities without the right accommodations. Some of the most common accommodations for students with visual impairments are change of seating, larger print for assignments, pictures instead of words, and materials in braille. These are not the only options and since visual impairments can vary, it is important to understand what will work for individual students.

Deafness. Deafness is a “hearing impairment that is so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information with or without amplification” (Parent Center Hub, 2015). Deaf students are becoming progressively more common in the general education classroom with new use of American Sign Language or text relays (Parent Center Hub, 2015). If the general education teacher does not have the capabilities, an aid will often be available to help the child in the classroom. Deafness is caused by a genetic condition or by some other incident such as an injury (Parent Center Hub, 2015). IDEA does not categorize hearing impairment and deafness as the same disability type. The differences in the accommodations for the two disabilities could be a reason for this. Some of the most common accommodations for deafness is the addition of a paraprofessional that is assigned to a child to assist them in the classroom, adding text to sound or dialogue on videos, using text to speech, or writing down questions and answers rather than speaking them. Although deafness can be intimidating to try and teach without limiting the student, understanding resources and the needs of the students is overwhelmingly helpful.

Hearing Impairment. A Hearing impairment is defined by IDEA as “an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (Parent Center Hub, 2015). Hearing impairments vary widely and can be very different. They can range from slight to severe. Again, they can be acquired or congenital, or they could be caused by some other disability like Down Syndrome (Parent Center Hub, 2015). Much like speech or language impairments, hearing impairments should be caught at a young age as that is when there can be the most help to the child. Elementary schools do have intervention programs set-up for hearing impairments, but they are not as common as speech or language impairment interventions. As such, these disabilities can cause lasting damage to an individual and greatly impact their educational opportunities. Some of the most common accommodations for this disability are alteration to the seating, speech or hearing therapy, captions on films/videos, amplification of sound, and alternative communication methods. An important consideration is that students who are hard-of hearing will have difficulty learning vocabulary, grammar, and other aspects of communication simply because they do not hear them as often as their peers do (Parent Center Hub, 2015). Because of this, students with hearing impairments could develop speech or language impairments as well.

Deaf-Blindness. Also referred to as a Dual-sensory impairment. Although the name implies someone who cannot see or hear at all, however deaf-blindness means someone who has some degree of hearing and vision loss (Parent Center Hub, 2015). The amount of loss will vary but this distinction is incredibly important as deaf-blindness can be a very intimidating concept for those who are unaware. Regardless, understanding the needs of the individual student is of the utmost importance. For instance, if a deaf-blind student has more impairments in their vision

than their hearing, captions for videos may not be the proper accommodation. The opposite is true if the student has more hearing impairments than visual impairments. Children who are diagnosed as deaf-blind will often have that diagnosis before they reach the school-age due to early intervention programs. Often, these children will also have some other disability that is either a comorbidity or an underlying cause of their deaf-blindness. Due to the low instance of this disability in the classroom, many times, teachers must facilitate the social interactions between students with deaf-blindness and non-disabled students; for instance, teachers must arrange the room a certain way, prompt interactions between peers, and communicate language or body-language barriers (Goetz & O'Farrell, 1999).

Orthopedic Impairment. An orthopedic impairment is a physical impairment that limits a student's educational performance. This could be caused by congenital deformities, injuries, diseases, or other causes as defined by IDEA (IDEA, 2020). This disability is another where the accommodations may come in the form of something non-academic. For instance, students with orthopedic impairments could make use of mobility technologies, so it is important to create a classroom environment where those students are able to get around easily and without harm to themselves or others. Depending on the type of orthopedic impairment, they could also have impairments in language or fine-motor skills. Another consideration is that students may not be able to participate in activities around the classroom like games or songs, so it is important to create lessons with the idea that a student may need an alternative option to an active game or dance. With the proper accommodations, most students with orthopedic impairments should be easily supported and properly accommodated in any and every classroom setting.

Intellectual Disability. “Intellectual disability means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (IDEA, 2020). This disability is characterized by significant limitations in intellectual processes and adaptive behavior, and the onset of the symptoms typically start before age eighteen (Schalock, Luckasson, & Tassé, 2019). It is important to note that the intellectual processing and the adaptive behavior of an individual are equally important in making a decision or the diagnosis about a disability. Intellectual processing skills generally relate to an individual's ability to comprehend, retain, and retrieve information that they have previously learned. The original test to diagnose someone with an intellectual disability was the Intelligence or IQ test; however, more recent developments take into account the individuals needs and supports as well as their adaptive behavior skills along with their IQ or some other equivalent (Schalock, Luckasson, & Tassé, 2019). The adaptive behavior skills typically consist of a person’s ability to conceptualize information, socialize with their peers, and their practical knowledge and life skills. These are much different than the considerations for an individual's intellectual processing. These behavior skills determine how well an individual can survive on their own, interact with others, and use the information that is provided for them to complete a task. A student with an IEP for an intellectual disability will have goals set for both the academic aspects of their education as well as goals in their adaptive behavior skills. This type of goal setting is generally to prepare students for their entrance into society after school. One of the goals of full inclusion is to hopefully include people with disabilities in everyday society with certain accommodations and modifications to their daily lives. Individuals with intellectual disabilities will sometimes be diagnosed with another disability as a comorbidity such as a developmental

delay that caused an intellectual disability or a traumatic brain injury that caused a student to lose their cognitive and social functions. When researching intellectual disabilities, the previous and archaic term was “mental retardation.” This is important for research purposes only. This rhetoric is no longer acceptable in any setting and is aggressive or ableist language.

Traumatic Brain Injury. Traumatic Brain Injuries or TBIs are injuries that occur from head injuries that cause moderate to severe damage to some part of the brain or spine and cause an individual to have impairments in their daily functions. According to Gabriella Ilie et al (2020), twenty to twenty-two percent of adolescents will have a TBI in their lifetime (p. 2). These TBIs will typically occur during sporting activities or in concurrence with illegal substances or alcohol. TBIs can affect the cognitive, social, emotional, or physical aspects of one’s daily life including aspects like visual impairments, auditory impairments, loss of cognitive function, loss of social development, psychological disorders, and more. The impairments vary greatly as the brain is a significant organ that is directly responsible for most of our daily functions. Damage to just one area can cause a lifetime of impairments. TBIs are not predictable as they are the result of injuries, but reckless behavior, binge drinking, and drug use have been linked to future TBIs (Gabriella Ilie et al, 2020). If teachers notice this behavior in their students, it is strongly recommended that teachers should act against this behavior and try to prevent any future injuries or accidents. Teachers must carefully research and understand any and every student that has a TBI as their needs and accommodations can vary significantly. Another consideration of TBI is that the TBI may not cause any impairments to a student’s life right away, but it still must be documented in case any future impairment or complication is noted in the classroom.

Other Health Impairment. “Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems. This includes, but is not limited to, asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and acquired brain injury” (Florida Department of Education, 2020). This set of disabilities is basically anything that impairs a student’s daily life in some way. As stated, this set of disabilities encompasses a lot of different disabilities, so a classroom can consist of many students with OHI. The most common OHI is ADHD, and nearly every classroom will have at least one student with ADHD. Understanding that this disability is not necessarily a behavioral disability, or a learning disability will help teachers implement the accommodations without stigmatizing the student or putting undue stress on the child. Understanding the details of an individual student’s IEP is imperative to giving proper accommodations.

Multiple Disabilities. “Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities does not include deaf-blindness” (IDEA, 2020). The accommodations that must support students with multiple disabilities can be very lengthy and detailed as well as individualized so much so that the common accommodations may not be enough to fully support the students.

Studies and Research

This portion of the thesis deals directly with the research and studies that the researcher has composed or put in place. The data that was collected was in the form of survey data and

observational data. The data is mostly qualitative and deals a lot with the experiences of individual teachers and classrooms. The research was done progressively over a period of a little over a year. All the research participants, their organizations, and their students will remain completely anonymous in compliance with the Institutional Review Board. The teachers and survey participants are made up of strictly music educators or retired music educators of all grade levels within the state of Kentucky. The purpose of the research was built on three driving research questions: do students with disabilities feel welcome in the music classroom?; are there significant accommodations being made to support the students with disabilities?; and are music educators capable of fully including a student with disabilities in a music classroom? From these questions, there are several other sub-questions that can be asked and answered as well. From those driving questions, the main purpose of the research arises; that purpose is to find out if anything is hindering the education of students within the music classroom based on their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Before beginning my research, my hypothesis is that many music teachers are unfit to properly teach students in their music classroom and neglect their given accommodations and try to incorporate them in the class in some other way. This hypothesis is not poised to be accusatory towards current music educators; it is simply trying to understand and discover if there are any underlying reasons that are affecting the representation of students with disabilities in the music classroom and if the students that are in those classrooms are being supported properly. The questions are answered thoroughly by most of the respondents and the responses were reasonable regarding the types of questions that were asked. None of the questions or responses give any indication about who the responder is or what organization they represent.

Survey

The survey consists of ten questions that are made up of contextual questions of the classroom and questions that are more from the teacher's perspective in the classroom. The questions range from simple figures like "how many students with disabilities are in an average class" and more complex questions like "how have you advocated for students with disabilities?" A full list and link to the questions will be provided in the appendix section. This survey was sent out shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19, and the schools shut-down soon after. For that reason, the answers are expected to be mostly based on estimation and past experiences as the teachers were no longer in front of their classes. This is unfortunate, but for the purposes of qualitative research, the data is still valid. The sample size is twelve teachers from different parts of Kentucky and who teach all grade levels. This sample size may seem small, but according to Statistic Solutions (2019), the recommended sample size for qualitative research is anywhere from five to thirty participants as the goal of qualitative research is "saturation," or when adding new participants to a study does not change the amount of perspectives the researcher can determine from the research. The data from this survey is well saturated as the survey already has repeated answers, and a lot of the responses are consistent. From the data, most of the educators have similar experiences, so the data is likely to be more consistent. More data would only add similar perspectives to this list with the occasional outlier, and qualitative research is more about the breadth of perspectives that a researcher can attain. As such, this survey, along with the observations, are enough data to support the conclusions that this thesis finds.

Observations

The observations that are included in this thesis are informal findings that were taken from schools around Madison County in Kentucky. The findings are from years of classroom observations. These observations serve to strengthen the responses of the survey. These observations were taken from four different classrooms, and any identifying features of those classrooms, their inhabitants, and the organizations they are a part of will be removed. These observations were done as an outside party with no interaction between the observer and the observee. As these observations were done under the careful watch of the Eastern Kentucky University College of Education, the findings are completely valid and without fault to the researcher. The findings include everything from interactions between students, teachers, assignments, activities, and more.

Interpretation of Research

This research serves to highlight possible issues and gaps in the development of students with disabilities in the music classroom. The following are a number of statements that can be made based off of the research: The average number of students with disabilities in a music classroom is somewhere between 2-5; The disabilities that are represented in an average music classroom are developmental delay, ASD, SLD, Emotional Disturbance, OHI, and speech and language impairment; a majority of the music educators that were surveyed stated that they felt as if their training had not prepared them for the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classroom; the responses show that music educators do not feel the need to advocate for students with disabilities; the majority of the respondents believe that their students with disabilities only somewhat understand the content; the responses show that there are not enough true accommodations in the classroom. From the observations, many of these statements can be

supported. For instance, in all the four classrooms that were observed, there were always five or less students with disabilities even in classrooms that are significantly larger in terms of population. One middle school classroom was made up of forty-four students. Among those were only three students with disabilities. Another high school classroom was made up of 38 students; again, there were only 3 students with disabilities in the classroom. Although these cases could be anomalies, they still show issues in terms of inclusion and participation of students with disabilities. Although it cannot be proven through writing or spoken word, the observations show a lack of confident decision making when it comes to students with disabilities; some teachers would just ignore the student with a disability for the whole class period. One kindergarten classroom had several instances with a child who had multiple disabilities. This child would not be included in class and would simply roll on the floor for the class time. The instructor would only make about two attempts to get the child to participate, and then they would give up. This shows a lack of confidence in teaching students with disabilities and an ignorance to what students with disabilities need to be successful. From the observation of assignments and classroom feedback, the students with disabilities would only somewhat achieve the objective, and sometimes they were left behind altogether. For instance, in one middle school classroom observation, the instructor asked a question to a student with a SLD. The student tried, but it was incorrect. Instead of giving the student feedback, the teacher simply went to another student. The student with the SLD became upset and silent the rest of the class. In another high school class, a student with ASD was asked to stop talking during a class discussion because what he was talking about was not relevant to the discussion. Rather than lead the student back to the discussion, the instructor shut the student down and excluded them from the learning opportunity. The final statement about music teachers not understanding what an accommodation

means in terms of the classroom is also showcased in the observations and in the responses. There were very few times the researcher saw an actual accommodation being used in the classroom even though there were students who needed accommodations due to their IEP. Some of the only accommodations were used on the entire class which is not a true accommodation. Some of the responses were think-time, think-pair-share, repeating questions, peer tutoring, and walking around the room. These are fantastic teaching techniques, but they are not individualized accommodations. This question also had responses that did have individualized accommodations like listening devices, larger print music, and preferential seating, so it is not necessarily a total lack of knowledge about accommodations but simply a need for more of them.

Possible Issues and Gaps in Development. This interpretation of the research does allow for some very interesting developments. The three largest conclusions that can be drawn from the research are that music educators do not feel as though they need or should advocate for students outside of the classroom. This is shown through the responses of the participants in the survey on question number four which reads, “List anything you have done to advocate for the inclusion of students with disabilities in your classroom.” The responses generally consist of vague statements about the classroom being open to all students, students with disabilities already being placed in the music classroom, and general accommodations that the teachers will use in the classroom. However, only two of the respondents listed anything they have done outside of the classroom to try and recruit students with disabilities or make a case for them. This type of apathy towards the participation of students within the music classroom could cause a number of students to go their whole educational career without the opportunity to participate in

music. This limits their social development as it limits their opportunities to be involved with their peers or branch out even more social extracurricular activities.

The next conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that accommodations for students with disabilities are not nearly individualized enough and this could lead to a lack of support within the music classroom. This conclusion could drastically lower the cognitive development of students with disabilities. Even though the music classroom is not a general education requirement, the music class helps to link all the different areas of study together which helps to strengthen the overall education of the student and the conceptual understanding of education.

The final and overarching conclusion is that music teachers will generally think that a student with disabilities just being in a classroom is enough. Being on the roster and in the seat is enough inclusion for to be considered full inclusion. The attitudes and apathy towards students with disabilities in the observations and the lack of support within the survey responses shows this belief. Almost all the respondents stated that their students with disabilities enjoyed the music classroom, this could be the case. The students may enjoy the atmosphere of the class, but they may not enjoy the content or the ways the teacher is providing them the content. None of the responses or the observations showed teachers finding ways to actively place students in opportunities to enjoy music or enjoy making music. They simply stated that they were included or just allowed them to be present in the room. This type of inclusion is fine to begin with, but true inclusion means changing the way the students experience the music classroom. By simply allowing them to exist in the classroom, this can damage their emotional development and their opinions about music for the future. Students must recognize their worth and need to experience the classroom in the fullest extent possible.

These three conclusions deal with the social, cognitive, and emotional developments of those students with disabilities. Without addressing these concerns properly, students could find themselves stuck or in a position where their development is being hindered by teaching that is simply unmeaningful.

Addressing the Issues

To remedy these issues and gaps in the development of students with disabilities, teachers must make a change in the way they address disability in their classroom. No longer can teachers simply ignore the issues that are going on in their classrooms. It is time to open up and see the possible dilemmas that classrooms could be facing. Understanding the problems is just one step though. The most important part is finding a solution that works for each individual classroom. This section of the paper is devoted to finding solutions to address the issues that were listed previously. These solutions are not comprehensive, but they do directly address the problems and gaps in development that could be present in any music classroom.

Solutions

The following are three solutions or groups of solutions that address the issues that were listed previously. The first is advocating for students with disabilities, the second is differentiation and purposeful teaching, and the third is changing the philosophy of music education as we currently know it to be. These solutions all have many different parts and could be expanded upon for pages on end; however, this section of the paper is intended to be used as a resource on possible teaching strategies or attitudes that could make the lives of students with disabilities more meaningful and worthwhile in the classroom.

Advocation. To begin, the sole responsibility of a teacher is to be an advocate for their students. No amount of subject knowledge or research-based strategies can replace being there for your students and helping them through their needs and desires. Despite this, students with disabilities do not always receive the same amount of personal advocacy that general education students receive. One example of how to start advocating is to be present in the lives of your

students with disabilities. Alice-Ann Darrow (2017) pushes for the participation of music educators to be a part of the IEP meetings for their students with disabilities, and explains how participating in these meetings can be a great opportunity to show the IEP board how the child fares in non-traditional classroom settings. This could open a whole new world of goals for the student simply because the educator was there for them. Darrow (2017) continues to show how sharing information even when the student is not present can also lead to improvement in the school. For instance, it is important to share new findings with the administration of a school to show how beneficial new teaching practices or special tools could be for students with disabilities. This could lead to new opportunities for students as well as for educators. For instance, new classes could become available or more funding for new teaching practices. Alice-Ann Darrow (2015), again makes a claim stating that advocacy can also be for other parts of a student's life and give the example of health and wellness. The wellness of students with disabilities is often taken for granted as many disabilities also mark health complications as one of their symptoms. As music educators, it is important to advocate for the health of all students but especially for students with disabilities. As music has the implications to be a physical, social, and cognitive stimulant through the right activities, music educators could advocate for the inclusion of students within the music classroom for the purpose of health of all things (Darrow, 2015). These health activities would not be nearly as physical as other activities, but they would allow a new type of physical exertion that students with disabilities may not get from any other classroom setting. Figuring out the needs of your students and finding ways to implement supports for those needs is one of the foundations of advocacy. A final way to advocate for students with disabilities in your classroom is to study the history of disability culture and truly understand where your students come from and what they have faced. By truly

recognizing the struggles and tribulations that people with disabilities have faced, educators are more likely to understand why people with disabilities are in such need of support systems (Darrow, 2013). This is the only way to be a true culturally responsive teacher and a true advocate for your students.

Differentiation and Purposeful Teaching. Differentiation is the act of teaching multiple groups of students at the same time and using practices that can address the needs of multiple students at the same time. It is the only way to make sure that all students succeed at the same level (Birnie, 2015). Alice-Ann Darrow (2015) explains that, in differentiation, “A layered curriculum is one of the most salient features of DI. Although the focus of the subject matter -- the essential concepts -- is the same for all students, individual students are learning the curriculum content at different levels of complexity and are expressing what they know at different levels of sophistication.” This layered instruction is essential as it keeps the content the same and makes sure that all the students receive the proper supports. Purposeful teaching is a term that basically represents student-based learning. Every lesson should be made purposefully and with the achievement of the students in mind. One example of differentiation is finding different ways to assess students. Within their music classroom or ensemble, many teachers may find physical assignments to be unneeded in the classroom because of the idiosyncrasies of the topic they are teaching. However, this could not be farther from the case. In an article by Lauren Richerme (2016), she argues that measurement in the music classroom is of utmost importance for students to develop and retain musical concepts that are learned. Physical assignments and assessments are particularly necessary to measure student growth on topics like notation, note recognition, and other formal concepts. For more older classroom settings, listening assignments

are also needed to measure student understanding of musicality and style. For students hearing impairments or even other disabilities, these listening assignments can be difficult to complete. However, the completion is not difficult because it is inherently harder for students with disabilities to convey their emotions; rather, students with disabilities hear differently according to Professor Joseph Straus (2011). According to Straus' book, *Extraordinary Measures*, he lists 5 different ways that people with disabilities hear music: Autistic Hearing, Deaf Hearing, Blind Hearing, Mobility-Inflected Hearing, and Beyond Normal Hearing. Straus goes into detailed discussion about these different types of "listening," the basis of the topic is that people with disabilities interpret the mood of music differently and sometimes have inherently different approaches to understanding musical language. Teachers must learn that to successfully accommodate students with disabilities in the music classroom, assignments must be modified to fit what students with disabilities are capable of. In another article by Michael Watts and Barbara Ridley (2012), they strongly object to forcing students to do the same things in classrooms, especially when they are forced to complete a task where they are not properly prepared for success or not given the opportunity to succeed. For instance, a student in the article's case study used keyboards and synthesizers to play in the ensembles because an impairment in his facial structure prevented him from playing instruments with his mouth. This modification of requirements and assignments allows students with disabilities to be assessed properly. This differentiation of instruction allowed multiple students to succeed while also making sure that the individual students are getting the support they need. Often, music educators shy away from interdisciplinary teaching as it can be difficult to create an opportunity for general education teachers, special education teachers, and non-traditional classroom teachers to meet; despite this, it is incredibly necessary. Many teachers do have some form of collaborative teaching be it a

Professional Learning Community or a subject committee, but the way that collaborative teaching needs to be introduced in a music classroom is much more involved. In Alice-Ann Darrow's article (2017), she argues specifically for the use of collaboration in the classroom for students with severe intellectual disabilities; however, her arguments can be used for the advocacy of students with other disabilities as well. Collaboration between students as well as teachers can make the education of students with disabilities more meaningful. Through Darrow's (2017) form of collaboration, students with disabilities can gain a sense of agency and feel more in control of their musical abilities. This allows them to be more invested in the music classroom. This meaningful collaboration helps students to learn and for their peers to become more accepting of students from different cultures. This meaningful collaboration is the constant discussion with special education teachers or paraprofessionals about how to make the classroom better for students with disabilities. In Richerme's article (2016), she places huge importance on discussing curriculum, instruction, and assessment with different teachers and administrators throughout the school to make sure all the children are getting the same opportunities within the classroom. This collaboration is very important to make sure that students with disabilities are getting the proper accommodations and are being treated equitably within the classroom. Although it seems like it would be normal for teachers to talk about their plans with other teachers, only a handful of music teachers go past their subject area to ask for help in areas they struggle in or have no expertise in.

Changing the Philosophy of Music Education. A final way to solve the issues that have been addressed is to change how educators look at music education. From its very foundation, music is about enjoyment. Through music, people can learn joy. Too often is this philosophy lost

in place of a competitive mindset that causes fear in the players who live with the constant threat that they will make a mistake. Gone is the pure bliss of listening to music in class for the purpose of an extra rehearsal to prepare for a concert. Educators must take a step back and try to understand the reason why they entered the field of music education. With the proper philosophy, students with disabilities can achieve much more emotional security and happiness in ways that were originally unimaginable. In Straus' book (2011), he discusses how accommodations for performances for people with disabilities can also help to lessen the stigma associated with disability. If a student is able to, with accommodations, perform on some level with his peers despite any impairment that the student has, it is more likely that the audience will feel more connected with the student rather than feel pity for the student. This pity for the student does nothing but encourage the systematic stigmatization of people with disabilities within the educational system and in other facets of society, so it is important for educators to remove the pity from the situation. In Watts' and Ridley's article (2012), they bring to light the various philosophical and psychological benefits that having accommodations for students can drastically improve their life in and out of the classroom. Having modifications to instruments allows them to perform on an equal level with their peers and prevents any stigma of music in the classroom as being strictly therapeutic for students with disabilities. Although music therapy is beneficial to students with some disabilities, having modifications gives them an opportunity to participate in class not for the purposes of lessening their disability but embracing the difference and inviting the student to participate on an equal playing field. Proper music teaching is also inherently beneficial to the emotional development of students with disabilities as learning to listen to music can help develop good self-esteem, learning to play an instrument can also help develop high self-esteem, and students can learn to be assertive in their beliefs about

music which also leads to high emotional development (Darrow, 2014). Having a good and meaningful music education can lead to students having a smoother transition into adulthood as well as more emotional intelligence that can be beneficial for the rest of their lives. Hopefully, through this new philosophy, music teachers can recognize the purpose of music in the lives of students with disabilities. Music, although inherently therapeutic, does not have to be introduced as a therapeutic entity. Students with disabilities should have the right to experience music as a non-therapeutic device. Music can simply be music. It does not have to have any extra benefit. Students with disabilities need to know that music has no bias and will always be a window of opportunity and exploration.

Conclusion

As previously stated, this thesis is intended to be used as a resource for music educators as disability is a topic that is quite studied and complex. Through observation and research, it can be shown inclusion and differentiated instruction is possible, necessary, and meaningful for students with disabilities. With the advocacy for students with disabilities, the introduction of new techniques in the music classroom, and a new understanding of how disability should be treated in the classroom, students with disabilities should receive a more worthwhile educational experience and non-disabled students should gain culture capital from being exposed and presented with new social opportunities to interact and participate with students they traditionally would not see very often. With this instilled understanding of disability, perhaps society will begin to see disability differently and in a more positive light. Music can be a binding entity that unites all cultures and forces into a singular goal: joy.

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This is the link to the survey that was taken by the educators:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/D0Z_2BFhxMnAO0_2B0DMIESKAJ_2Fr4rgBZrVvQ

[WY3hjxFeGo_3D?tab_clicked=1](https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/D0Z_2BFhxMnAO0_2B0DMIESKAJ_2Fr4rgBZrVvQ_WY3hjxFeGo_3D?tab_clicked=1). The following is a transcription of the questions and the

responses. Some of the responses were eliminated because the number of responses was zero:

1. What Grade Levels do you teach in the Classroom Setting?
 - a. K-5 (6)
 - b. 6-8 (5)
 - c. 9-12 (5)

2. On average, how many students with IEPs do you teach in the classroom?
 - a. 1-3 (4)
 - b. 4-6 (6)
 - c. 7-9 (2)

3. What Disabilities are represented in the classroom
 - a. Developmental Delay (9)
 - b. ASD (12)
 - c. SLD (11)
 - d. ED (7)
 - e. OHI (11)
 - f. Speech or Language Impairment (9)
 - g. Visual Impairment/Blindness (2)
 - h. Deafness (1)
 - i. Hearing Impairment (4)
 - j. Deaf-Blindness (0)

- k. Orthopedic Impairment (3)
 - l. Intellectual Disability (3)
 - m. TBI (2)
 - n. Multiple Disabilities (6)
4. List Anything you have done to advocate for the inclusion of students with disabilities?
- a. Strive for an Inclusive Classroom, posters with representation
 - b. Always allow them to be in an ensemble, make sure students understand that my classroom is a safe place
 - c. Taught lessons specifically for EBD students, offer them opportunities outside of the classroom, contact their families
 - d. Think, pair, share; cluster groups
 - e. Including students in our annual performance
 - f. Students with disabilities have the same music class instruction times
 - g. Always include them in band
 - h. I have opened my class for students with severe disabilities to allow them to experience education in a way that other classes do not allow
 - i. I do not have to advocate
 - j. Group tutoring, Seating preferences
 - k. Students that are self-contained for most of the day can experience my class in its entirety
 - l. Actively recruiting for participation
5. Do you feel as though your training as an educator prepared you for the inclusion of students with disabilities?

- a. Yes entirely (2)
 - b. Yes mostly (1)
 - c. Somewhat (3)
 - d. No not enough (4)
 - e. No not at all (2)
6. On average, what percentage of the class time do students with disabilities participate?
- a. 100% (12)
7. How often do your students with disabilities interact with their non-disabled peers?
- a. Very Often (10)
 - b. Somewhat Often (2)
8. Do you feel as though your students enjoy the music class?
- a. Yes (11)
 - b. Somewhat (1)
9. On average, do your students with disabilities understand the content you teach?
- a. Yes, absolutely (2)
 - b. Mostly (10)
10. List any way you have accommodated for students with disabilities?
- a. Open-Ended questions, personalized feedback, talk to them about their needs
 - b. Repeat questions, think time, offer extra help outside of class
 - c. Sound-dampening devices, Large-print materials, specialized writing tools
 - d. Group tutoring, monitoring the room
 - e. Instructional aids, visual aids, alternative assignments and assessments
 - f. Interpreter, Peer-tutoring, Collaboration

- g. Listed Above
- h. Adjusted time, give written instructions rather than verbal
- i. Repeat instructions, provide extra physical support, build relationships with the students
- j. Read above
- k. Extended time, peer tutoring
- l. Longer time for assignments, assessments at their level, more work between student and teacher