

Special Needs In Music Education

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Creating an inclusive music setting.

The resources provided here are for general reference and provide only an over-view of points to consider when working with children with Special Needs. They are in no way comprehensive or a guarantee for each child. Many websites and Youtube sites are dedicated to the teaching of children with Special Needs and it is recommended that you take the time to research the specifics that address the students in your own classrooms.

The benefits of being involved in music programs, participating in musical activities and exposure to music are well documented — and these benefits apply regardless of abilities.

Musical activities can be incorporated into any subject or class in the school and need not be complex or even use instruments. Our voices, body percussion and movement provide a rich and accessible palette of activities for students of any age.

Inclusive learning

(AITSL) Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlight/inclusive-education-teaching-students-with-disability>

Inclusion is a concept in education most often associated with minority groups and people who experience disability, but in fact, inclusion is about everyone. Inclusion is a human right (Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons 1975) a legal entitlement to all (*Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*) and a core pillar of educational policy (Disability Standards for Education 2005).

“Inclusive education means that all students are welcomed by their school in age-appropriate settings and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school. Inclusive education is about how schools are developed and designed, including classrooms, programmes and activities so that all students learn and participate together” (DET 2015, p 2)

In the Classroom

BEHAVIOUR

- A need is not being met when behaviour is (or appears) antisocial (sensory, emotional etc).
- Learn ways to reduce the anxiety with your student (offer choices/time-out/rocking, etc)
- Keep a level voice and keep lessons structured — avoid expressing your frustration.
- Use transition activities to allow students to settle between activities and between classes.

WHEN TEACHING...

- Maintain high but reasonable standards
 - Always start with / focus on what the student *can* do
 - Remember the initial aim is about building relationships and a safe learning environment.
 - Sing in your classes as well as play — students can relate to the human voice for pitch.
 - Praise effective effort — praise the skill not the person.
 - Asking questions — allow students time to answer.
 - Asking questions — students should be given opportunities for their own self-reflection.
 - Be aware of the needs of your students and how to accommodate them.
 - Always make use of school resources. Ask for help! (Students will be on ILP's)
 - Students may benefit from visiting and exploring the room prior to lessons commencing.
 - Teach to routines.
 - Use gestures and jargon-free language. Gestures reinforce speech.
 - Consider alternative methods of communication and delivery of curriculum: PECS cards, makaton or key word signs, audio, handouts, youtube, group work, discussions, working alone, modelling, checklists, etc.
 - Visual stories and visual schedules reduce stress, help routines, provide structure to the day, ease transitions, supports learning visually, builds self-esteem.
 - Balance wider outcomes (social, emotional, etc) with musical and technical outcomes.
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LANGUAGE

The language we use with and about students always matters.

Focus on what is expected rather than what is not expected.

- In Australia, disability first language applies: person with autism, person with vision loss, person with disability. Always check with the person when possible for their preferred terminology.
 - Positive language benefits all students:
 - 'Show me your best posture' rather than 'Don't slouch'
 - 'Let's see how relaxed your hand can be' rather than 'Don't grip.'
 - 'Show me how quietly you can hold that drum' rather than 'Don't hit the drum'.
 - Labelling students should be avoided. Every person is different.
 - 'High' and 'Low' functioning should be avoided. ('High' ignores required supports, 'Low' ignores strengths).
 - Correct language is easily referenced online and is community driven (see below).
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Transition Activities

Transition activities support the students as they move from class to class or from activity to activity. They are essential to forming solid routines in the classroom and allowing students time to adjust to the new room/class/activity, etc.

- A transition activity helps a students adjust to the new class or activity with the class.
 - A class body percussion rhythm or pattern that we all do together every lesson every time. (demo knees clap clap)

- A class song or chant
- The same piece of music playing (calm music) for when a student arrives for the lesson
- The way you line up at the door and welcome each students into the room...

These activities are not just for the music class, but for any class where students might need to:

- Settle into a new environment
- Get the 'wiggles' out
- Reframe mindset

They are good for settling behaviour and should be part of a routine — students become familiar with the activities, with new activities being introduced after a known activity has been completed.

Curriculum

To reach the diverse needs of students, the curriculum must be delivered in many different ways.

- Notation/Reading
- Use of IT
- Aurally
- Memory
- Graphic Notation
- Peer-to-peer activities
- Teacher led activities

I do, We do, You do

Explicit Teaching model that is especially useful for students with diverse needs including those who need language support.

I Do: - Teacher models

We Do: Teach and student do it together

You Do: Student does it alone or with other students.

- Not a linear model
 - Teacher should model examples and non examples
 - Teacher annotates the 'thinking process' out loud
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Repertoire

- Simplify or modify repertoire if necessary.
- Provide recordings to students who need it.
- Reduce amount (or type) of repertoire when necessary.
- Arrange/re-arrange music specifically for players. May not need to be notated.
- Remember there will always be a part for everyone!
- Start with what the student CAN do.

Differentiation in the music class: examples for ensemble or class performance playing

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Some students may need to feel comfortable playing the instrument before notation is introduced. Go with the student preference here if there is disability. Music is the most important part of the lesson, not notation. If reading notation causes anxiety, delay it or use alternative symbols — note names on stick notation, coloured note names, etc.
 - Introduce notation to pieces students can already play.
 - Create ostinato parts or soundscape solos for students who cannot play in unison with the ensemble. (Very few ensembles are unison, so this will enhance the music!)
 - When arranging a part for a student, try to make the part connect to what is already being heard — a string rhythm or the melody. Independent playing of very long notes is hard.
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Resources

Inclusive Teaching

Inclusive Education

(AITSL) Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlight/inclusive-education-teaching-students-with-disability>

Meeting the Needs of Students with a Disability

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/meeting-the-needs-of-students-with-a-disability/>

The Australian curriculum: Students with disability represent a significant number of students accessing the Australian Curriculum. Students' individual strengths and abilities should be central to the teaching and learning planning process.

Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training

<https://www.adcet.edu.au>

Resources for teachers, advice for students, Inclusive teaching, webinars, training, podcast, etc.

Australian Network on Disability

<https://www.and.org.au>

The Australian Network on Disability (AND) is a national, membership based, for-purpose organisation that supports organisations to advance the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business.

Links to Queensland Department of Education - Disability

<https://education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/strategies-and-programs/every-student-with-disability-succeeding-plan>

Inclusive Language

Australian Network on Disability

<https://www.and.org.au/pages/inclusive-language.html>

Curriculum Delivery

I do, You do, We do

Evidence based teaching.

<https://www.evidencebasedteaching.org.au/the-i-do-we-do-you-do-model-explained/>

I Do, We, Do, You Do

High impact teaching strategies in action: Differentiated teaching

[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/classrooms/Pages/](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/classrooms/Pages/approacheshitsdifferentiation.aspx)

[approacheshitsdifferentiation.aspx](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/classrooms/Pages/approacheshitsdifferentiation.aspx)

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[Expired/0000highimpactteachstrat-expired.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/Expired/0000highimpactteachstrat-expired.pdf)

Four Tips for Teaching Music Fundamentals to Students with Special Needs

[https://nafme.org/four-tips-for-teaching-music-fundamentals-to-students-with-special-needs/?](https://nafme.org/four-tips-for-teaching-music-fundamentals-to-students-with-special-needs/?fbclid=IwAR13lp2KVtdFuWwI91Up91LI50QhuZatOjyIOC4TNAZWAdPxfW2Mb_7ndml)

[fbclid=IwAR13lp2KVtdFuWwI91Up91LI50QhuZatOjyIOC4TNAZWAdPxfW2Mb_7ndml](https://nafme.org/four-tips-for-teaching-music-fundamentals-to-students-with-special-needs/?fbclid=IwAR13lp2KVtdFuWwI91Up91LI50QhuZatOjyIOC4TNAZWAdPxfW2Mb_7ndml)