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Accommodations, Inclusion, and Communication With Students With Disabilities in the Music Classroom

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ACCOMMODATIONS, INCLUSION, AND COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

WITH DISABILITIES IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

ACCOMMODATIONS, INCLUSION, AND COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

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The purpose of this study was to learn how music educators create inclusivity in their classroom and how to better do that without potentially alienating the students with disabilities. For this study, inclusivity is defined as providing an equal opportunity for participation and education in the classroom. It is also to bring more awareness to disabilities and how they can and should be managed in the classroom. The goal for this study is to aid in informing educators on how to enable students with disabilities to be included without feeling alienated or having undue attention drawn to them.

As the study is focused on strategies to work with students with disabilities, the subjects in this study were PreK-12 music educators. The music educators in this study had varied levels of teaching experience. The age of the subjects ranged from 21 to 69 years.

The subjects answered questions on communication with and about students with disabilities, the inclusivity of their music classroom, and about their observation of their students' feelings of alienation. These questions were intended to provide data on what is being done currently in the music classroom for and to students with disabilities.

Most of the music educator subjects stated that they work hard to include their students with disabilities and accommodate them. The music educators felt that they had the ability to communicate with and about their students with disabilities and were adequately educated to communicate with their students with disabilities and about their students with disabilities.

This thesis is dedicated to the Shriners Hospital for Children and all of the work, time, money, and effort they put forth for me. Without them I would not be where I am today.

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I wish to acknowledge all of the professors and mentors that got me to where I am today. I really appreciate my thesis director and professor Dr. Douglas Owens for all of the work and time he put forth to help me have success throughout my time at Old Dominion University and for helping me have success on my thesis. I am also deeply grateful for my thesis committee, Dr. Nancy Klein and Dr. Taryn Raschdorf, for all the time and work they put forth to ensure I have success on my thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the music educators that took the time out of their busy days to complete my survey and help me with my research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 13% of students with some type of disability in the K-12 levels (Snodgrass, Israel, & Reese, 2016). The word "disability" has different meanings for different scenarios and changes based on the person and the context it is used in. Such disabilities can include both mental and physical and can range from minor to severe. Disability is defined using multiple models, but the most common are the social model and the medical model (Abramo, 2012).

People with disabilities did not always have the equal education that is currently available to them. Throughout American history, legislation has been created to help create a more equal and accessible environment for students with disabilities to get the education they deserve. The presence of a disability can create difficulties for educators to effectively reach, connect, and communicate with these students (De Bortoli, et al., 2012, p. 241)

The language used when communicating with students with disabilities can have a large impact on the student with disability. Using person-first language can allow people to see the person before they see the disability because a person's identity is not their disability (Abramo, 2012). Disabilities can also cause isolation for these students. Educators do not isolate these students on purpose and should strive to help all of their students feel included and equal no matter their disability.

Problem Statement

Educators need additional education regarding students with disabilities, including information on how to connect and communicate with them, the providing of accommodations, and avoiding isolation from their peers. It would be prudent to learn how music educators

already manage accommodations, and to provide additional suggestions for more effective accommodations to use with students with disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn how music educators create inclusivity in their classroom and how to better do that without potentially alienating the students with disabilities. For this study, inclusivity is defined as providing an equal opportunity for participation and education in the classroom. It is also to bring more awareness to disabilities and how they can and should be managed in the classroom. The goal for this study is to aid in informing music educators on how to enable students with disabilities to be included without feeling alienated or having undue attention drawn to them.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

  The word "disability" has different meanings that are created for the scenario in which it is used. The definition of disability changes in relation to a person's experience and the context it is used in. Before the nineteenth century, specific laws stopped certain people from participating in community, social, political, or economic activities in the United States (Francis & Silvers, 2016). In the United States women, no matter their race or ethnicity, were considered disabled by law (Francis & Silvers, 2016). This type of disability disadvantage was created by social outcomes. However, in the late nineteenth century, health related disability disadvantages were mandated and were seen as inherent in nature (Francis & Silvers, 2016). During this time, people who did not have disabilities were viewed through research studies and the average level of functioning was created as the "norm" (Solomon, et al., 2016). The average level of functioning relates to the typical biological processes you see in the majority of the population (Solomon, et al., 2016). In the twentieth century, people whose biology went against the "norm" were seen by society as defective and they had disadvantages. It was perceived that if these biological anomalies were not fixed or destroyed then social stability could decrease and humans could have less chance of survival (Francis & Silvers, 2016).

Models of Disability in Music Education

  Disability is defined using multiple models, but the most common are the social model and the medical model (Abramo, 2012). The social model looks at disability as a social position, not a physical or mental limitation (Abramo, 2012, p. 40). What constitutes disability in the medical model is based on the social construct of normal and abnormal (Straus, 2011).

Anderberg (2005) stated "…the medical model's perception of disability places the problem with the individual and sees disability as a direct consequence of an impairment" (The Medical Model Section). This could be either physical or mental conditions that limit people (Abramo, 2012). Abramo (2012), said "these limiting conditions are considered ailments that require rehabilitation, such as physical therapy, medicine, surgery, or other correction" (p. 40). The field of music education appears to be attached to the medical model of disability. Bell (2017) stated that "…the experience of disability encompasses any and all perceived differences amongst humans and is silenced throughout the preponderance of music education discussions; disability lives in the margins of the margins" (p. 110). There is a division between the majority of people who are considered to be normally able-bodied and those that have their impairments labeled as special needs, special learners, student with disabilities, and emotional disturbances (Adamek, 2001; Melago, 2014; VanWeelden, 2001; Hammel, 2004; Lapka, 2006; McCord & Fitzgerald 2006; Price, 2012). The main focus of these articles is on students' music literacy development or how they integrate into large ensembles. Focusing on music literacy and integration is important, but research on ear training and technique development should be done as well. Music educators need to make sure that they are still teaching all aspects of music to their students with disabilities and not focusing on just music literacy and integration into ensembles. Music educators should be striving to provide students with disabilities training that is equal to students without disabilities.

Music education can be perceived to focus on what the student is unable to do instead of what they can do (Bell, 2017). This current approach to music education assumes that all students need to fit into the current social structures and if they do not, the music educator's job is to figure out how they can fit (Bell, 2017; Dobbs, 2012; Abramo, 2012; Bell, et al. 2020). This

has created a problem where some music educators start 'making up people.' In this scenario, the music educators are trying to find solutions for the students that may or may not exist or focusing on one portion of a particular disability (Bell, 2017). Bell uses the example of a sousaphone chair holder being used to help students with ADHD or emotional/behavioral issues play the instrument (2017). By aiding their need to stay in one place for an extended period of time, the student is better able to focus on the instrument (Bell, 2017). The implication is that the weight of the instrument will keep them from moving around (Bell, 2017). However, this is not the only use or purpose of this design and was not what the design was originally intended for. The problem lies in the fact that only one aspect of the disability is considered in the design. This causes people to view a disability as only one impairment that needs to be fixed (Bell, 2017). Bell (2017) urges music education to "…focus on moving toward conceptualizing disability as an experience rather than a fixed individual deficit" (p. 112).

Some disability-rights advocates do not think that the medical model portrays another equally important aspect of living with a disability. This very important aspect is how it feels to be disabled in today's society (Abramo, 2012). These disability-rights advocates prefer to use the social model of disability. According to Straus (2011), "Within this new social model, disability is understood as an aspect of the diversity of human morphology, capability, and behavior: a difference, not a deficit" (p. 7). This model defines disability "…not as a limitation of the body or mind but as a social position" (Abramo, 2012, p. 40).

There are some scholars that show the difference between the medical and social models by reviewing the differences between impairment and disability. Davis (2002) defined impairment as the lack of a physical aspect, like missing an arm or leg. Davis (2002) stated "…an impairment only becomes a disability when the ambient society creates environments with

barriers-affective, sensory, cognitive, or architectural" (p. 41). For example, the design of musical instruments can be related to architectural design. If a person is in a wheelchair, they cannot go up the stairs. If a person does not have use of their arms, then they cannot play certain instruments without accommodation. From a social model standpoint, the instruments that are not designed with the impaired person in mind will prevent that impaired person from playing those instruments. The social model led manufacturers to start making modified instruments. Some examples of these instruments are flute, recorder, saxophone, trumpet, and several percussion instruments (Bell, et al., 2020). Certain woodwind instruments have toggle-key systems that allow musicians to play using one hand (Abramo, 2012). Percussion, brass and string instruments can also be played one handed. Also, new music can be composed to allow for one-handed playing. This includes piano music specifically created for one-hand piano. As such, the instrument is no longer impeding students from playing it (Abramo, 2012). It is important for music educators to assess the way they teach to determine if there are potential requirements that would impede the success of a student with disability (Abramo, 2012). Some examples of this are: asking your student with disability to perform a physical action that they cannot (i.e., sitting on the floor), sticking with one mode of learning (i.e., only through visual learning), or using language that could be potentially offensive, limiting, or negative at or towards the student with disability.

The social model of disability also applies to those with learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, and emotional disorders (Abramo, 2012). Abramo (2012), said "The social model of disability suggests that these students think about and process information and music differently than students without disabilities" (p. 42). If the teacher does not adapt their instruction to meet those with unique behaviors, they will actually create 'barriers to access' for those students

(Abramo, 2012). If the teacher can give clear, simple, directions, use consistent classroom management, and word directions in a positive manner, the students can achieve a successful experience (Abramo, 2012).

According to research, the social and medical models have been said to be too extreme (Bell, 2017; Anderberg, 2005; Dobbs 2012; Siebers, 2008). The medical model observes able persons versus disabled persons, based on diagnostic data without reviewing the context (Bell, 2017; Anderberg, 2005; Dobbs, 2012; Siebers, 2008). Relying solely on the social model is also an incomplete approach because a person can experience emotional or physical problems that did not arise from societal mistreatment (Bell, 2017; Anderberg, 2005; Dobbs, 2012; Siebers, 2008). Each individual or group of individuals experience disability or impairments differently. The Olympian Patrick Anderson tries to use these models fluidly, but he frequently cannot escape how his physical impairment is seen (Bell, 2017). Looking for basic needs like acquiring accessible parking permits and busses that are wheelchair accessible are examples of situations where the medical definition of a disability is required. Therefore, all educators must observe both models equally and apply that to the way they communicate and teach their differently abled students so that all of their students are being treated with equality while also not being limited on what people perceive they can and cannot do based on their disability.

Siebers (2008, 2010) disagrees with the social model and discusses both the positive and negative sides of the theory of complex embodiment. This theory helps with arguments about intersectionality which is where it considers overlapping identities (Siebers, 2008, 2010). Siebers (2008) stated:

The theory of complex embodiment raises awareness of the effects of disabling environments on people's lived experience of the body, but it emphasizes as well some

facts affecting disability, such as chronic pain, secondary health effects, and aging, derive

from the body. (p. 25)

Some additional identities may include race, gender, sexuality, class and disability. The goal of

this theory is to make it so questions in identity and body theory cannot be answered by the

social construction model (Siebers, 2008, 2010). Snyder and Mitchell (2006) observed how

embodiment and social ideology interact. They reviewed situations in human relationships that

create areas of violence, restriction, confinement, or lack of freedom for those with disabilities

(Snyder & Mitchell, 2006, p. x). They theorized disability as a cultural model, and it is a place of

cultural oppression where disability is seen as a dysfunction that needs to be fixed. (Snyder &

Mitchell, 2006, pp. 5-7). Overall, the existence of multiple models assert that disability cannot

be described in one way and that no approach is completely without fault.

Legislation

While creating policies in the United States, the generalized characterization of people

with disabilities allowed them to be discussed as a whole. However, the people categorized by

these anomalies could be discriminated against because the policies could take away their access

to common services or they could be put into institutions (Francis & Silvers, 2016, p. 1026).

Francis and Silvers (2016) explained that "beginning in the 1970s, Congress expanded efforts to

give people with disabilities equitable access to the public buildings, public transportation, and

education in public schools that other citizens enjoyed" (p. 1027). At this point in time, congress

wrote legislation that incorporated more of a civil rights perspective. Its goal is and was to enable

people with disabilities to fight discrimination that makes it difficult to have opportunities. These

policies were created by considering the disadvantages of disability coming from a social

discrimination and not a biological issue (Francis & Silvers, 2016, p. 1027).

Congress revised and reauthorized the Rehabilitation Act in 1973 and expanded civil rights to increase the protection of people with disabilities from being excluded from opportunities by stopping discrimination from federal contractors and any programs that have federal support (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). This means that any entity that receives federal funding cannot discriminate against people because of their disability (Abramo, 2012). In 1990, the Americans With Disabilities Act expanded civil rights to create an awareness of the intrinsic value of people with disabilities and give them personal respect. The Americans With Disabilities Act states the current definition of disability used in law, as follows:

> The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual – (A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such an impairment. (Americans With Disabilities Act, 1990, Sec. 12102)

The act and its 2008 amendment allowed people with disabilities to have "…equal opportunities and access to employment, government programs, public spaces, and transportation" (ADA, as cited in Abramo, 2012, p. 40). The Americans With Disabilities Act was created to make a national mandate to eliminate discrimination of people with disabilities and to discuss the major areas of discrimination that these people face every day both in the past and present.

Congress began to pass laws relating to education such as The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This act ensured that schools provided a free public education that gave students with disabilities the same opportunities as well as giving them as much interaction with students without disabilities as possible (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act, 1975). The Education of All Handicapped Children Act also stated that the students with disabilities should not be put into separate schooling unless their disability

makes it so instructional goals cannot be met in a normal classroom setting (Abramo, 2012). In 1976, there was an amendment written for the Higher Education Act of 1972 that gave these services to students with physical disabilities that were starting college (Abramo, 2012). The Education of All Handicapped Children Act was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990. This act increased the earlier definition of disability from the Education of All Handicapped Children Act to incorporate more students that would qualify under the new law. These two Acts started the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) which made schools create a document for each student with a disability (Abramo, 2012). This document provided a planned course of action that would be done to help the student achieve academic success in a way that suited their needs.

Language

Understanding the models can help teachers avoid turning impairments into disabilities, but the language educators use can also do this. An example of this can be observed by reviewing the negative connotations that the word "blind" has in the English language. Examples include "blind leading the blind" and "blind rage" (Abramo, 2012). In opposition, positive associations exist with the words "light" and "vision." Such examples illustrate the physical barriers and subtle discrimination people with visual impairments deal with in their everyday encounters, even if it is not intentional (Abramo, 2012). This problem causes disability-rights advocates to consider how people with disabilities are addressed and described and suggested people should use people-first language. As such, the person is considered before their labeled disability. For instance, the use of the term "a child with autism," is preferred rather than stating "the autistic child." Abramo (2012) states, "…this might appear to be a wordy game of political correctness that makes little difference, language has both subtle and profound effects on our

thinking" (p. 42). Using person first language allows the person to be seen as a person first with their impairment just as something they have. This removes the emphasis from the disability while giving emphasis on the fact that they are a person. Bell (2017) stated "The intent of people-first language is to avoid having people's impairments be intertwined with their social identities because a disability is something that you have, not something that you are" (p. 115). It is important to note that a label may not be needed at all (Abramo, 2012).

However, the viewpoint of person-first language is not unanimous among all disability-rights advocates. There are some that believe person-first language will further stigmatize disabilities (Abramo, 2012, Vaughan, 2009). They believe the awkward and wordy sentence structure draws more attention to the disability. There are some that believe person-first language lessens the thought of disability as a social position. Regardless, teachers must be aware of how language should be used both in and out of the classroom because many people find disability-first language offensive (Abramo, 2012). Teachers can do this by communicating with these individuals about how they prefer their disability to be spoken about.

Mental Health and Music

Music and the mind are connected and can be compared to how the mind stores and processes trauma (Austin, 2002; Walzer, 2021). Music is a good way for children to process and express how they are feeling after a trauma, especially when they do not have the vocabulary to properly describe their feelings (Foley, 2017). Music education promotes good mental health (Hedemann & Frazier, 2016). Scholars have moved beyond observing trauma as behavioral problems or disabilities in music education (Hess and Bradley, 2020). One model that has been utilized to address mental health issues in music is Trauma-Informed Care. Trauma-Informed Care is "…a collaborative model between the practitioner and client that recognizes and

validates the impact of painful memories and experiences" (Walzer, 2021). The first step to address trauma, is to create a safe place for these students (Walzer, 2021). Having a human connection is another part of Trauma-Informed Care (Walzer, 2021). The absence of close interaction with peers can greatly impact the making of music (Walzer, 2021). Walzer (2021) states, "Trauma-Informed Care validates that human beings have a fundamental need to connect with others" (p. 5). Musicians find this connection through these relationships: "…composer-to-performer, performer-to-audience, conductor-to-ensemble, and recording-to-listener" (Walzer, 2021, p. 5). Another aspect of Trauma-Informed Care is the modeling of healthy emotional behavior (Walzer, 2021). This aspect of Trauma-Informed Care is important because children model a lot of things from the adults in their life. Much of the behavior seen in children and adults has been learned from authority figures. These authority figures could be parents, church leadership, private lesson teachers, conductors, accompanists, band leaders, and mentors. If the educator does not take the time and space to process their own trauma, how can they expect their students to process their trauma? (Walzer, 2021).

Ensembles in music education instill teamwork, cooperation, and artistic expression while providing students the opportunity to develop many important life skills (Hedemann & Frazier, 2016). More importantly, music can express or bring out emotional experiences, so it is ideal for building emotional understanding and regulation (Hedemann & Frazier, 2016). These are skills that are good for mental health and help prevent anxiety and depression.

Music therapy can be related to music education based on the impact of music on the brain, emotions, and other biological responses. Some studies have shown that listening to relaxing music reduces people's anxiety and stress (Knight & Rickard, 2001; Biley, 2000; Henry,

1995). Among other areas, the familiarity of the music, liking the music, and having musical training can impact how much the music impacts the person's emotional state (Knight & Rickard, 2001).

Students with emotional or behavioral disorders require structure to cope with tasks during the school day (Gfeller, 1989). Students with behavioral disorders may perform poorly in school which can impact their classroom performance. This may cause them to act out against classroom rules instead of coping with the anxiety of more challenging tasks during music class (Gfeller, 1989). There are four things that can help set up successful inclusion of these students. The educator can "set up systematic placement procedures, provide adequate classroom structure, generalize programs used in special education, and attend to the students' academic deficits" (Gfeller, 1989, p. 28). The music educator should work with the special needs staff and IEP committee to determine which music class would best benefit that student with a behavioral disorder (Gfeller, 1989). Staying in constant communication with the special needs staff and IEP program committee for these students is very important because they can help you understand strategies to take to have them successfully integrated. The music educator can benefit from meeting with the student to discuss their musical preference and other interests to help better understand their student and help them be more successful in this environment (Gfeller, 1989). Educators should always notice and praise good behavior of these students so they get positive attention (Gfeller, 1989).

Students with behavioral disorders need the teachers to "…give clear and simple directions, use consistent classroom management, and word directions positively" (Abramo, 2012, p. 42). Certain measures can be taken to modify materials and methods to help students achieve success. An example of this is to record reading assignments or highlight what is

important to help them focus on what they really need to know (Gfeller, 1989). This will help reduce some anxiety for them by helping the student focus on the information they need to know without getting distracted or overwhelmed. In this way, the students can focus on the important information being presented. Educators can also break up large tasks into small sections so the student does not feel overwhelmed (Gfeller, 1989). They can change the modality, pacing, size, and color of the instructions and materials (Abramo, 2012). The different modalities educators can use are kinesthetic, visual, aural, tactile, etc. When the educator is explaining new material, they can slow down their delivery, make the information larger, and use different colors to help the students successfully process the new information (Abramo, 2012).

Special Needs and Music

Students with special needs are classified as students with cognitive disabilities, physical disabilities, or emotional and behavioral disabilities. Music can positively impact the students with special needs abilities in social skills, communication, behavior, self-esteem, anxiety, and mood (Foley, 2017). Music therapy can also help students with special needs by reinforcing academic material and helping improve their psychomotor skills (Foley, 2017). Music therapy can improve joint attention behavior, communication, turn taking and eye contact duration (Foley, 2017). Music therapy looks different in every case but it can include lyric analyzing, improvising, learning an instrument, learning expression through music, using music to help with mood and emotional stability, etc. Music can help students with special needs to better understand their emotions. It can also help the students with special needs better communicate their thoughts. Involvement with music can also help students achieve higher self-esteem, lower anxiety, and a more positive attitude towards their peers (Foley, 2017). Some special needs

students may have trouble with social communication, so music gives them a way to express themselves and communicate without words. Music can also improve the writing skills of the students with special needs.

Physical Accommodations in the Music Classroom

Some students suffer from physical disabilities and may have some mobility issues or adaptations that need to be implemented to include them in class. However, no two disabilities are the same, even with the same diagnosis. Also, the adaptations will vary from one student to the next.

The term "hacking" is defined as a modification of the functionality of an object so it can be accessible to differently abled people (Bell et al., 2020). Bell et al. (2020) stated "Inherent in hacking is the assumption or belief that the context in which disability in music is experienced can be changed" (p. 660). One such adaptation is a mallet which can be strapped to the students' hand if they have grip issues. There is also braille music for the students who are visually impaired (Abramo, 2012). Those students can also learn aurally and through recordings of just their part and recordings of the whole ensemble (Abramo, 2012). The educator can also do a recording where they talk through the details in the piece.

Many music educators would benefit from expanded education on how to accommodate disabilities in the music classroom. The language used by educators in a classroom is extremely important when communicating with these students. It is also important to observe the different models of disability and be aware to not focus on any one of them. All of the different models are important and need to be considered. Overall, the important part of teaching students with disabilities is to show them that their teacher cares and wants them to have an equal, successful, and inclusive educational experience.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn how music educators create inclusivity in their classroom and how to better do that without potentially alienating the children with disabilities. It is also to bring more awareness to disabilities and how they can and should be managed in the classroom. The goal is for students with disabilities to be included without feeling alienated or having undue attention drawn to them.

Research Questions

The study aimed to answer these questions:

RQ1: Do music educators unintentionally alienate their students with disabilities while trying to accommodate them? If so, in what ways?

RQ2: In what ways are music educators accommodating their students with disabilities?

RQ3: In what ways do music educators communicate the needs and challenges of the students with the specific students, involved educators, and the students' parents?

RQ4: Are music educators using person-first or disability-first language with their students?

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to music educators who teach students in grades pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade. This study is focused on the music educator's perspective.

Data Analysis Procedures

The responses from each survey question were analyzed using descriptive statistics from the Qualtrics website. The mean, mode, and standard deviation was calculated for each question using the statistical tools from Qualtrics. The open-ended responses were individually coded.

Selection of the Sample Population

As the study is focused on strategies to work with students with disabilities, the subjects in this study were PreK-12 music educators. The music educators in this study had varied levels of teaching experience. The age of the subjects ranged from 21 to 69 years.

Permission was sought to recruit prospective subjects via the Virginia Music Educators Association music educator email list. Also, permission was sought to distribute the survey via the following Facebook groups focused on music teaching in grades PreK-12:

- Virginia Band & Orchestra Directors Association

- Band Directors Inclusion Toolkit

- Songworks Educators - sharing group

- Music Education

- Virginia Music Educators

- Music Educators and Band Directors

Assumptions

It is assumed that the survey participants answered the questions honestly and fully.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Research Questions

The study aimed to answer these questions:

RQ1: Do music educators unintentionally alienate their students with disabilities while trying to accommodate them? If so, in what ways?

RQ2: In what ways are music educators accommodating their students with disabilities?

RQ3: In what ways do music educators communicate the needs and challenges of the students with the specific students, involved educators, and the students' parents?

RQ4: Are music educators using person-first or disability-first language with their students?

Description of Subjects

The 29-question survey was completed by 20 K-12 music educators. Specific data of the subjects' age are displayed in Table 1. The data regarding the subjects' gender are displayed in Table 2. The subjects' race and ethnicity are displayed in Table 3. Each of these questions were answered by 19 of the subjects.

Table 1.

Ages of the Subject Population (*n* = 19).

Age	Percentage of Subjects	Number of Subjects
21-29	10.53%	2
30-39	26.32%	5
40-49	42.11%	8
50-59	10.53%	2
60-69	10.53%	2

Table 2.

Gender of the Subject Population (*n* = 19).

Gender	Percentage of Subjects	Number of Subjects
Male	26.32%	5
Female	68.42%	13
Non-binary / third gender	5.26%	1
Other	0%	0
Prefer to not disclose	0%	0

Table 3.

Race or Ethnicity of the Subject Population (*n* = 19).

Race or Ethnicity	Percentage of Subjects	Number of Subjects
American Indian	0%	0
Black or African American	5.26%	1
Hispanic or Latino	0%	0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0
White	94.74%	18
Prefer to not disclose	0%	0

In survey question four, the subjects disclosed which level of instruction they taught. The subjects were allowed to select multiple answers. The results are presented in Figure 1. The subject that answered 'Other' disclosed that they were participating in or had completed student teaching.
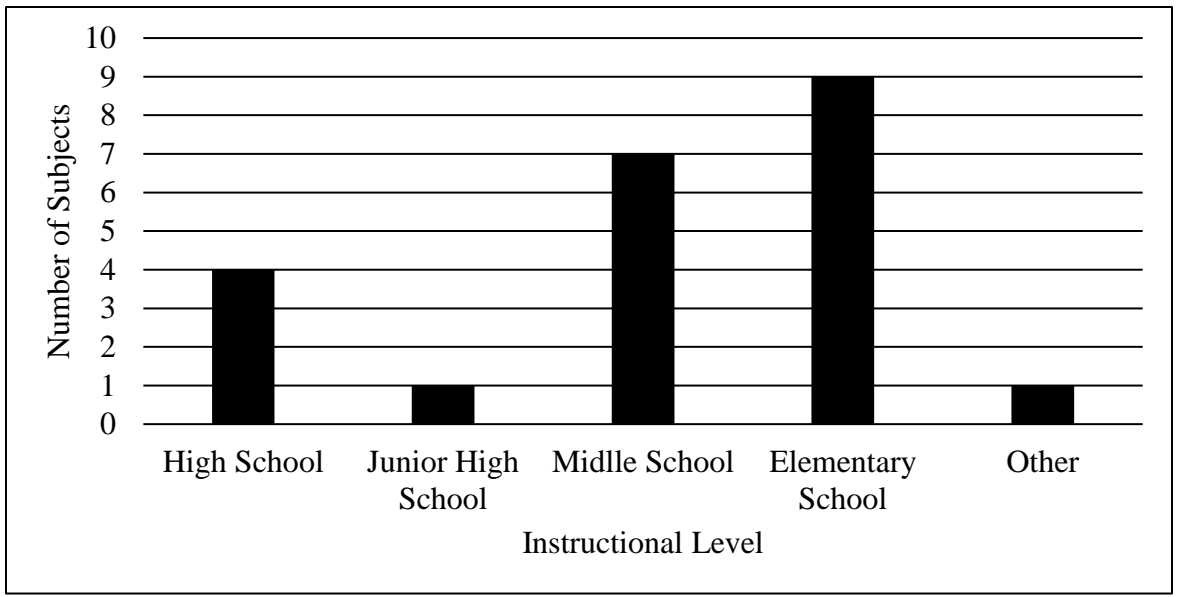
Figure 1. Instructional level taught.

When asked about how many years the subjects had been teaching, the subjects were given the ability to complete a slider scale. The average years taught by the subjects was 15.74 years with a range from one year to forty-four years. The data are displayed in Figure 2.
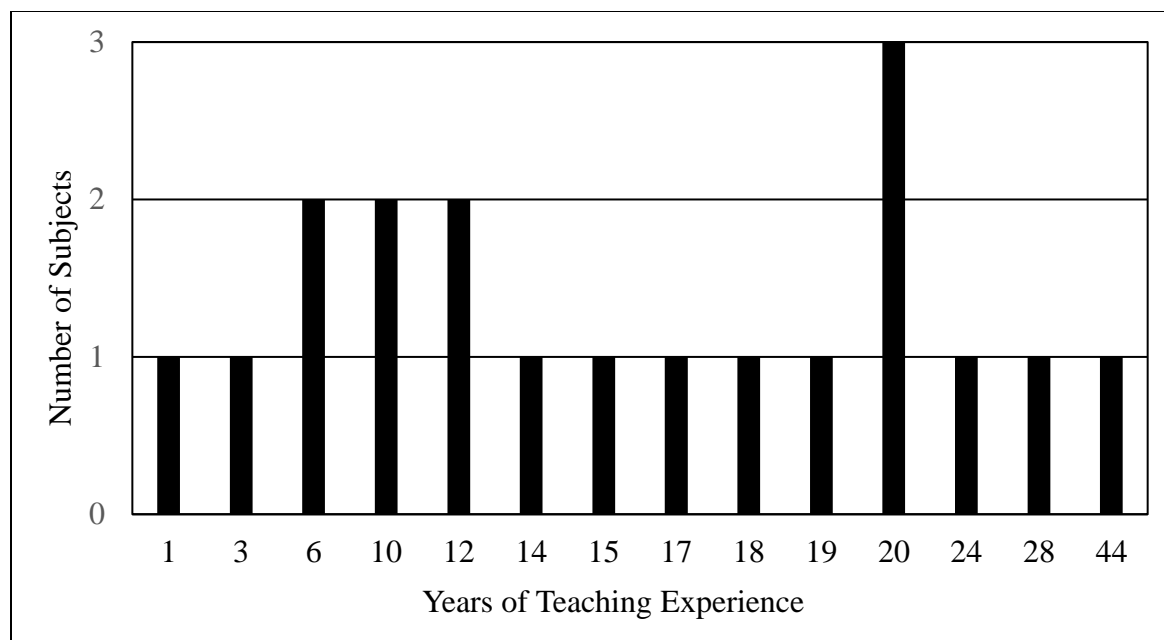
Figure 2. Years of teaching experience completed by each subject (*n* = 19).

Language and Communication Used With and About Students With Disabilities

  The subjects responded to questions pertaining to the language they used while communicating with and about their students. The survey questions that pertained to language were as follows:

  Q9. Do you use person-first language or disability first language (example: "child with autism" or "autistic child")?

  Q10. Please explain why you prefer to use person-first language, and if it has been effective to use the selected language.

  Q11. Please explain why you prefer to use disability-first language, and if it has been effective to use the selected language.

  Q12. Do you feel comfortable communicating with your students with disabilities? (Yes/No)

Q13. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

Q14. On a scale of one to five, rate your level of education regarding how to communicate with students with disabilities.

Q18. On a scale from one to five, at which level are you able to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with your specific students?

Q19. On a scale from one to five, at which level are you able to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with other involved educators?

Q20. On a scale from one to five, at which level are you able to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with the student's parents?

When asked about whether they use person-first language or disability-first language, 80% of the subjects stated they use person-first language and 20% uses disability-first language. The subjects were then asked to explain why they prefer one type of language over the other. The people who prefer person-first language said they prefer to use this language since it is the industry standard, because they do not want to single someone out. They find it more comfortable, or they want to focus on the child first. The people who prefer disability-first language stated they use this language because it comes to their mind first before they can filter their response, and another does not want to separate the disability from the person because they see it as part of who they are.

The next section of questions in the survey focused on communication with and about the students with disabilities. When asked if the subjects felt comfortable communicating with their students with disabilities, 93.33% of the subjects stated that they did and 6.67% stated that they did not. When asked to elaborate, the subjects gave a wide range of answers. Some stated that they feel comfortable and some had specialized education to make that more of a possibility for

them. They strive to let the students finish saying what they were going to say without interruption. They also strive for a high level of comfort with asking for specific help to make class more accessible and more inclusive.

In survey question fourteen, the subjects disclosed how they would rate their level of education regarding how to communicate with students with disabilities. The results are presented in Figure 3.
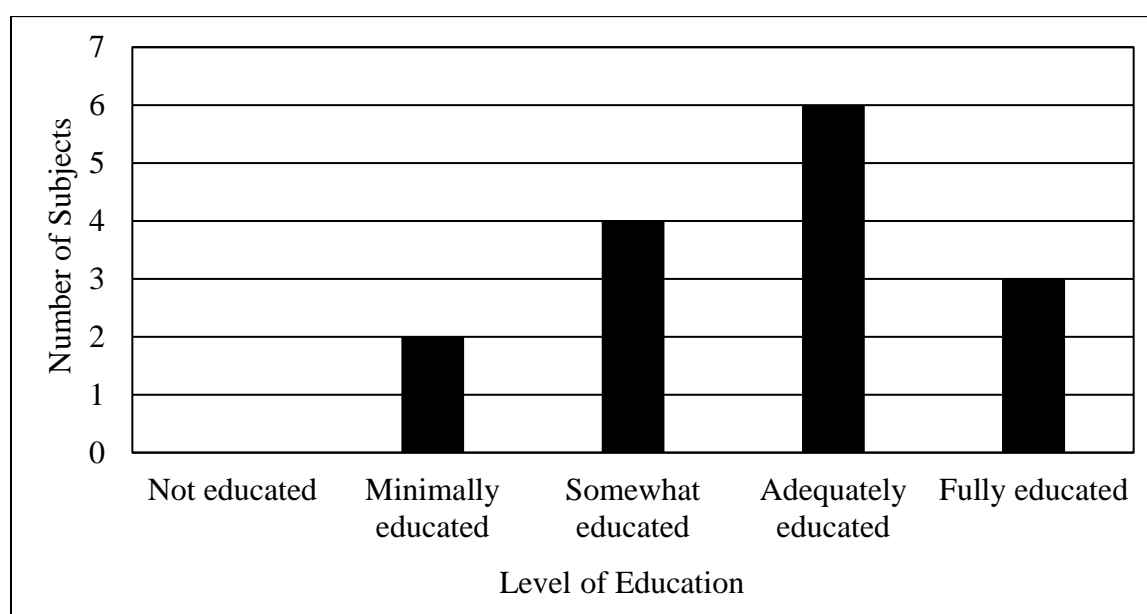
Figure 3. Level of education on the communication with students with disabilities (*n* = 15).

In survey question eighteen, the subjects disclosed how they would rate their ability to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with their specific students. The results are presented in Figure 4.
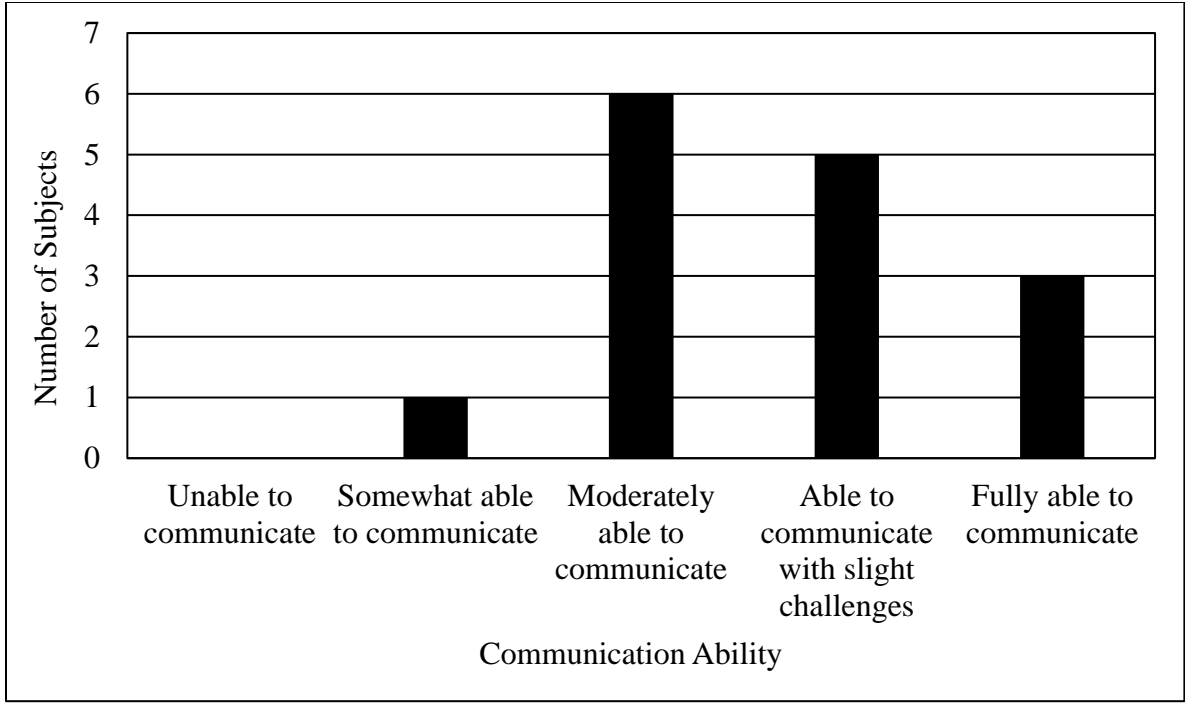
Figure 4. Communication of needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with the students (*n* = 15).

In survey question nineteen, the subjects disclosed how they would rate their ability to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with other involved educators. The results are presented in Figure 5.
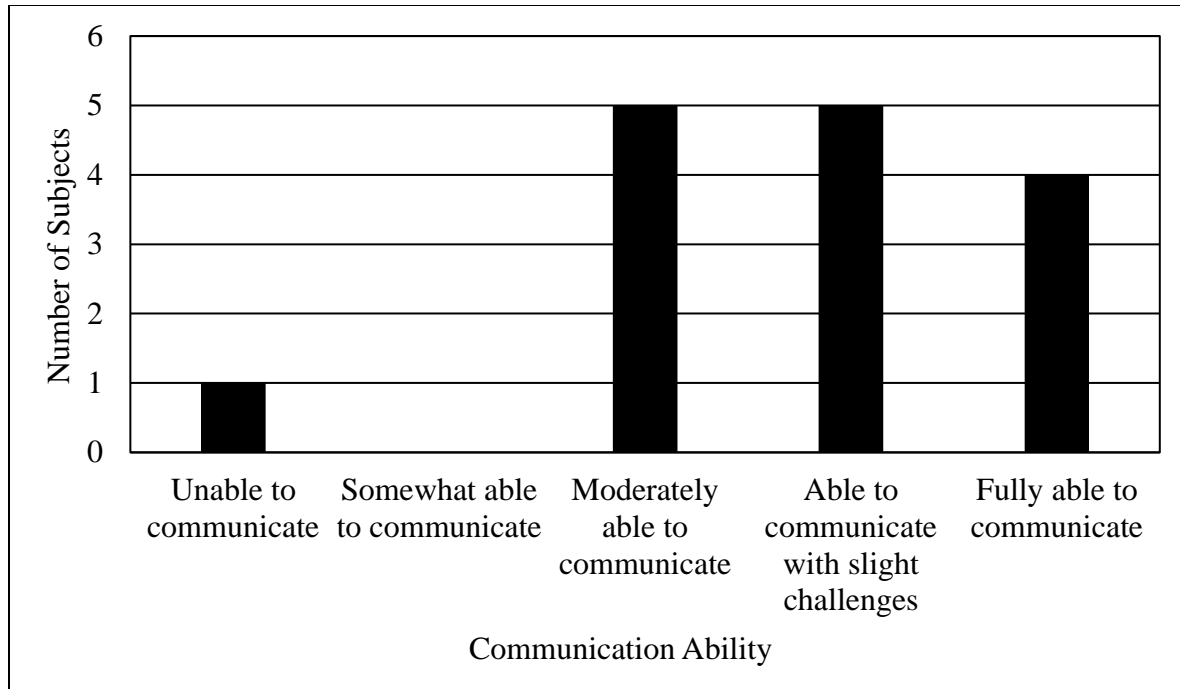
Figure 5. Communication of needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with other educators (*n* = 15).

In survey question twenty, the subjects disclosed how they would rate their ability to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with the student's parents. The results are presented in Figure 6.
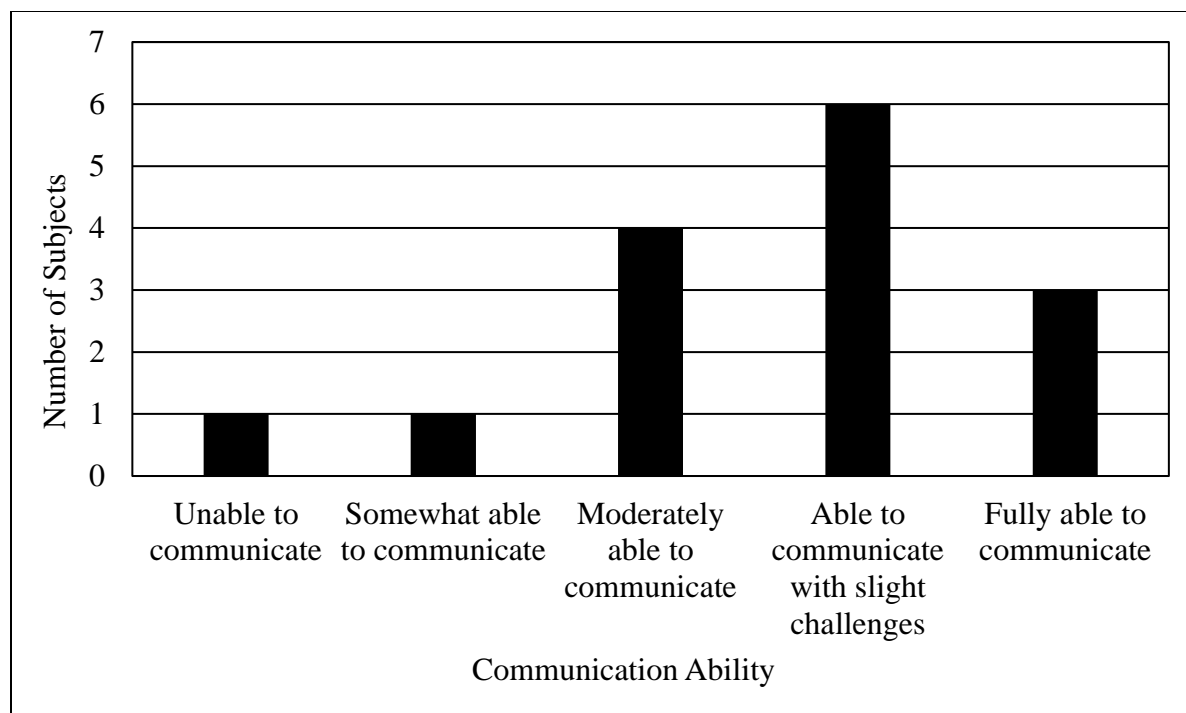
Figure 6. Communication of needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with the parents (*n = 15*).

Data on Inclusion and Accommodations

      The subjects responded to several questions pertaining to the inclusion and accommodations for their students with disabilities. The survey questions were as follows:

      Q6. Are your students with special needs included in the music classroom, instrumental ensembles, or vocal ensembles? (Yes/No)

      Q7. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

      Q8. In what ways do you strive for inclusivity in your classroom?

      Q15. On a scale of one to five, rate your level of education regarding how to accommodate students with disabilities.

      Q16. In what ways do you accommodate students with disabilities? Select all that apply.

Q17. On a scale from one to five, in your music classroom, at what level are you able to accommodate your students' needs?

Q21. On a scale from one to five, at which level are the students with disabilities able to receive equal learning through their accommodations as your students without disabilities?

Q22. On a scale from one to five, at which level do the students with disabilities communicate that the accommodations have been successful?

Q23. In your experience, does the application of accommodations unintentionally alienate the student with disability?

Q24. As a music educator, are you allowed to contribute to the accommodation process for your students?

Q25. Do you feel the accommodations have been successful?

Q26. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

Q27. On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate the comfort level of the students with accommodations.

Q28. Have you observed students who may feel alienated with their accommodations? (Yes/No)

Q29. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

When the subjects were asked if the students with special needs were included in the music classroom, instrumental ensembles, or vocal ensembles, 100% of the subjects answered yes. When asked to elaborate, the subjects stated that the students are in the classroom with the regular students either with or without an aid paired with those students. However, some students

also have an adaptive music class. Question eight asked the subjects how they strive for inclusivity in their classrooms. The subjects strive for inclusivity in their classrooms by:

- Having aids that attend classes with the students with disabilities

- Having a plethora of accommodations that ensure success in their classroom

- Individualized instruction

- Frequent parent communication

- Positive reinforcement

- Achievable assignments

- Equal treatment as their peers but with accommodations as needed

- Peer aids

- Educating their students on living composers in minority groups

In survey question fifteen, the subjects disclosed how they would rate their level of education regarding how to accommodate students with disabilities. The results are presented in Figure 7.
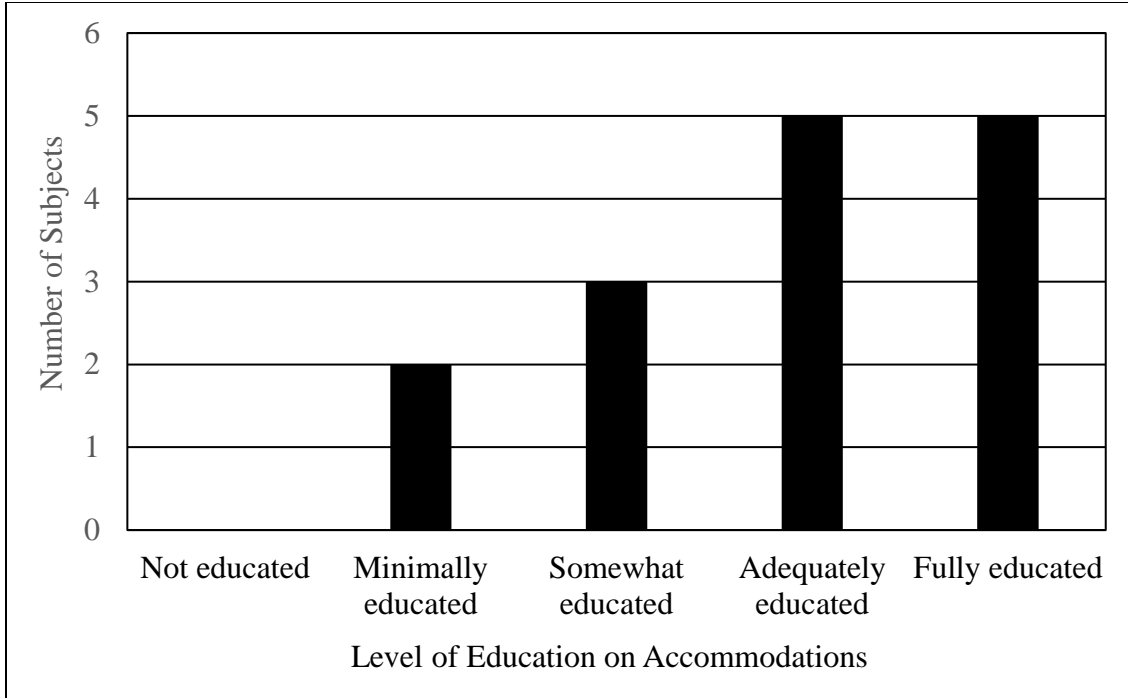
Figure 7. Education on accommodations for students with disabilities (*n* = 15).

In survey question sixteen, the subjects disclosed how they accommodate their students. The subjects were allowed to choose multiple answers. The results are presented in Figure 8.
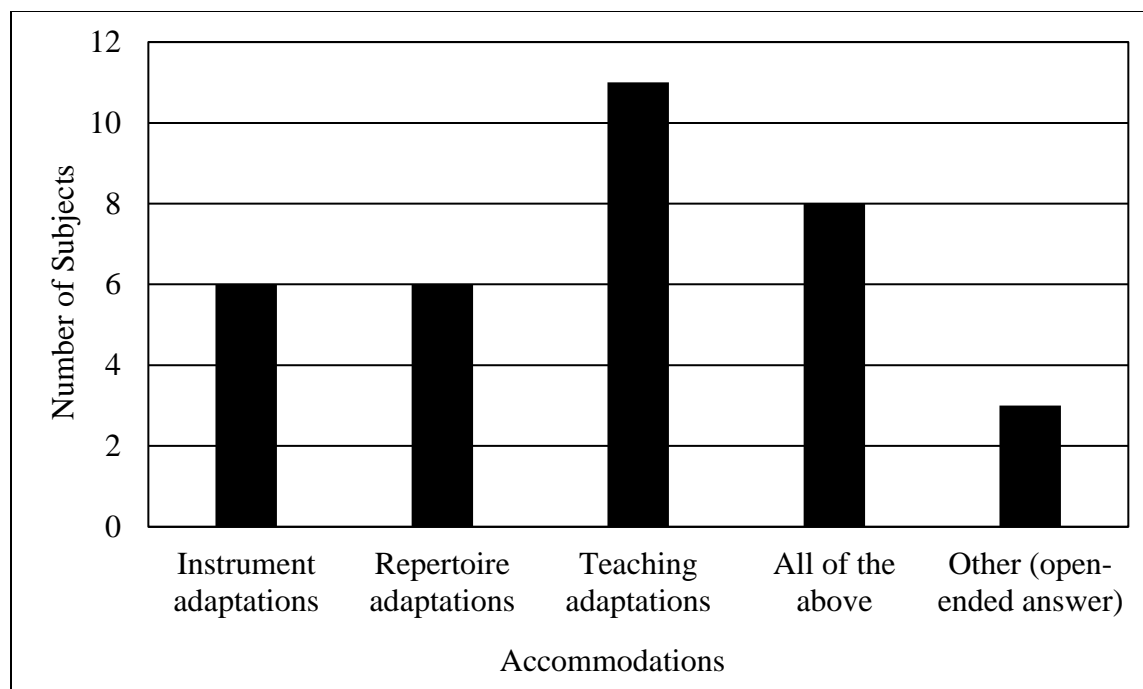
Figure 8. Accommodations provided for students with disabilities.

Those subjects that selected the open-ended answer format stated the following accommodation

approaches:

- Individualized testing;

- Being open to all types of accommodations even though they had not experienced

  all types of accommodations yet;

- Giving the students plenty of time to respond;

- Having the students watch a demonstration of the activity or their peers perform;

  the activity plenty of times until the students are comfortable;

- Making sure to invite everyone to participate as surprises can happen.

In survey question seventeen, the subjects rated their ability to accommodate their

students' needs. The results are presented in Figure 9.
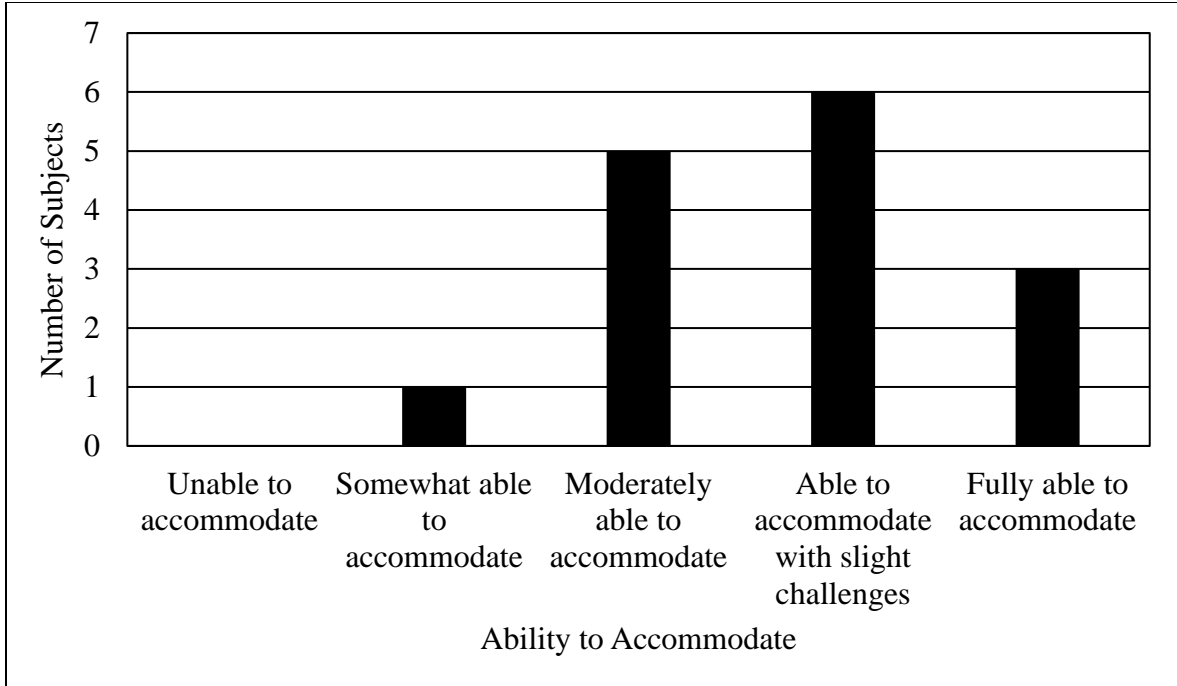
Figure 9. Ability to accommodate students with disabilities (*n* = 15).

In survey question twenty-one, the subjects disclosed how they would rate the level of ability for their students with disabilities to receive equal learning through their accommodations when compared to their students without disabilities. The results are presented in Figure 10.
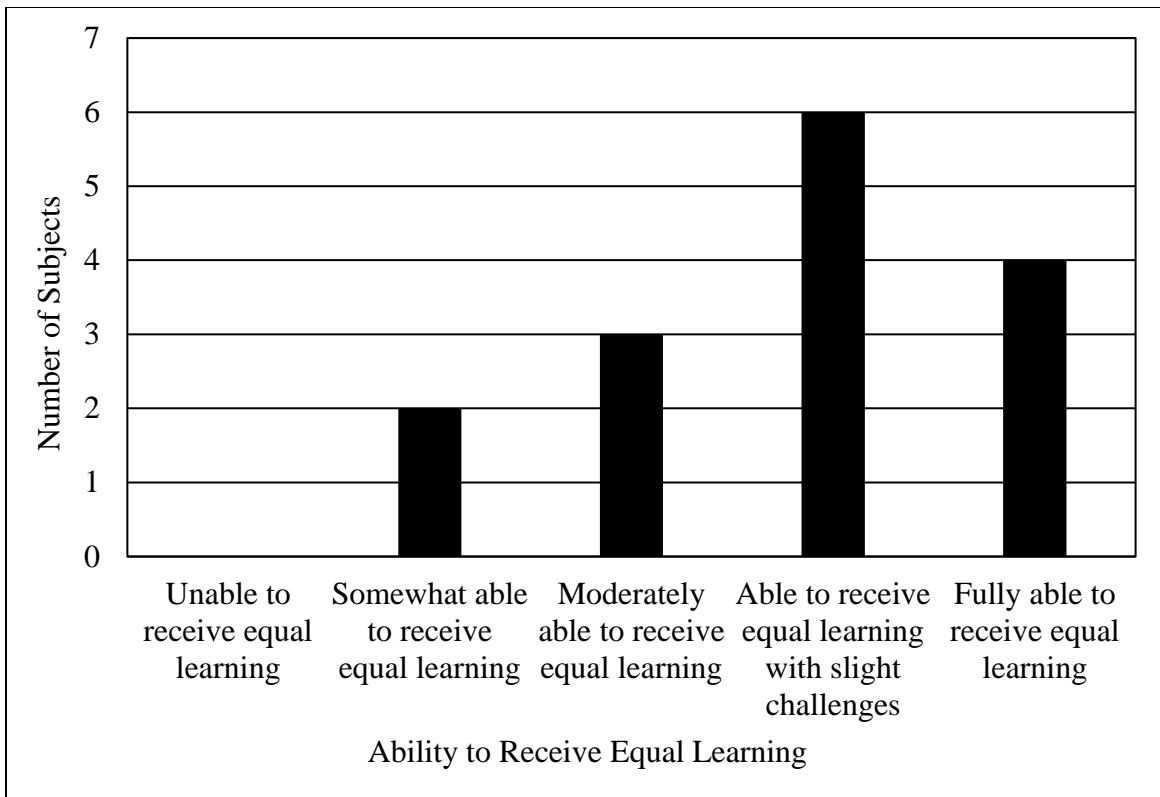
Figure 10. Ability to receive equal learning (*n* = 15).

In survey question twenty-two, the subjects disclosed how they would rate the level that the students with disabilities communicate that the accommodation has been successful. The results are presented in Figure 11.
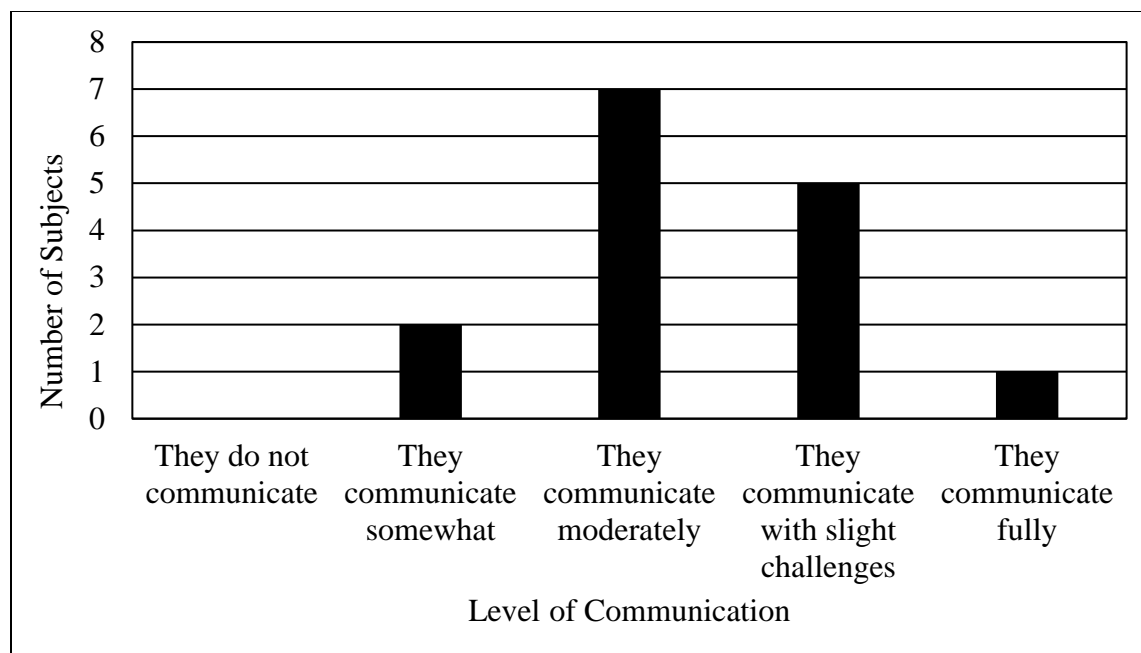
Figure 11. Communication of success of accommodations by the students with disabilities

(***n* = 15).**

In question twenty-three of the survey, the subjects were asked if the application of accommodations unintentionally alienates the student with disability. The results showed that 100% of the subjects said that they did not see the application of accommodations unintentionally alienating the student with disability. Question twenty-four of the survey asked the subjects if they were allowed to contribute to the accommodation process for their students as the music educator. The results showed that 86.67% of the subjects were allowed to contribute to the accommodation process while 13.33% were not. When asked if the subjects felt that the accommodations had been successful, 92.86% of the subjects stated that they were successful and 7.14% of the subjects stated that they were not successful. When asked to elaborate on the success of the accommodations, there were multiple answers. The results included:

- Having aids and spoke on how aids positively impacted the success of these students;

- Making the ensemble part of the process by making everyone more accountable;

- The importance of Individual Education Programs (IEP) and eligibility meetings;

- Learning from parents, classroom teachers, speech therapists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists;

- Teaching with the accommodation as the "norm" so no persons are singled out;

- Letting the students with special needs participate at their skill level and pace;

- Sometimes the subject needs to step in and modify the activity or have an aid help.

In survey question twenty-seven, the subjects disclosed how they would rate the comfort level of the students with accommodations. The results are presented in Figure 12.
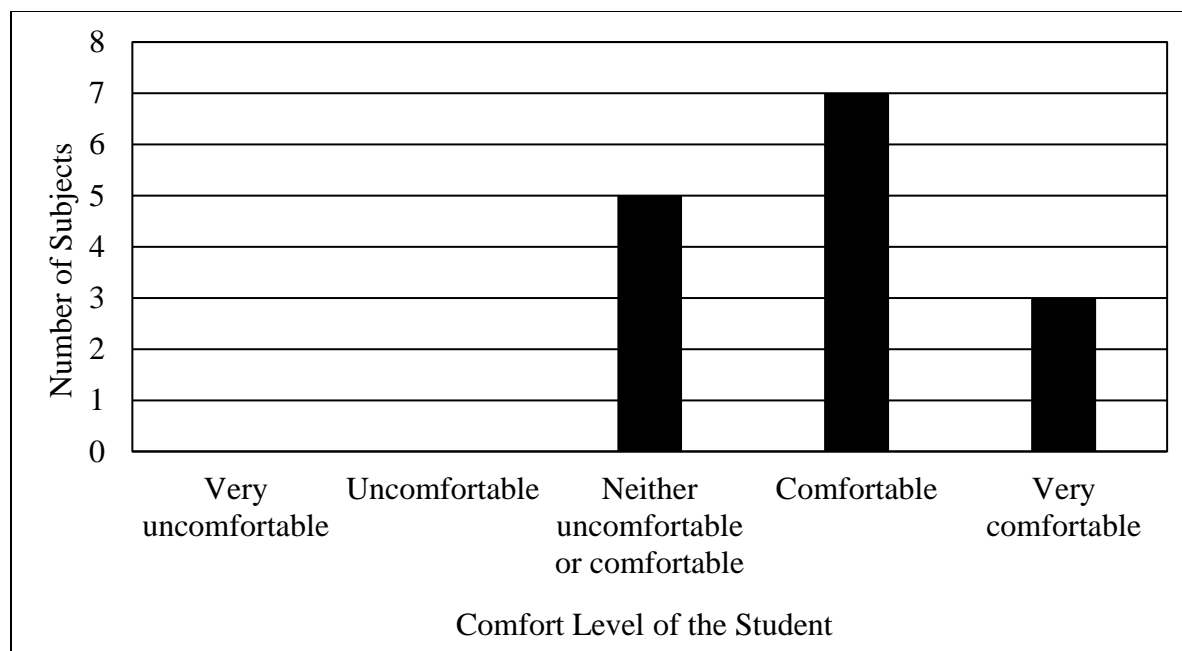
Figure 12. Comfort level of the student with accommodations (*n* = 15).

When asked if the subjects observed students who may feel alienated with their accommodations, 46.67% of the subjects said that they did and 53.33% of the subjects said that they did not. The subjects were then asked to elaborate on their observation of their students. These observations included:

- The students' emotional state when they come into the room plays a role;

- The student eventually understands that the accommodation makes them more inclusive;

- Since the students were at varying skill levels, it does not seem as noticeable with all of the moving parts in the music classroom;

- The subjects strive to keep all of the students feeling like they are a part of the class;

- If the student with a disability is struggling, the subject creates smaller groups and goes to each student.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of the survey questions were of interest to the music education field. Of particular interest is the perceived level of education of the subjects when working with students with disabilities. The educators felt at least minimally educated on communicating and creating accommodations. This was in opposition to what was thought in the beginning stages of this study. The majority of subjects from this sample indicated that person-first language was the preferred type of language to use. There was only one subject who disclosed that they use disability-first language. They mentioned having a disability themselves and thought that the disability should be first because it is a part of who they are. However, the research found that it is better to put the person before the disability because their disability is not who they are (Abramo, 2012).

Regarding the potential alienation of students, most of the subjects seemed to try their best to fully include their students with disabilities into the classroom without making them feel alienated. It is important for educators to realize that just because the student finds that they can be included in the classroom setting better with their accommodation, does not mean they do not feel alienated. It was very enlightening to see that one of the subjects teaches from the accommodation so that the whole class participates with the accommodation being the "norm." That seems like an excellent way to make the student with disability not feel alienated because of their accommodation.

Working Toward Inclusive Settings in the Music Classroom

The focus of this study is language, accommodations, and inclusion. Music educators must review their curricula and teaching materials to ensure the use of appropriate language for a

totally inclusive educational setting to be accomplished (Abramo, 2012). In this manner, the students with disabilities may be more comfortable and it serves as a model regarding how to use respectful language towards people with disabilities. The music educator must be an excellent role model for the rest of their students in the class when it comes to students with disabilities. If the educator is not using correct language in their lessons or when they are talking then the students may not feel that it is important to learn the correct language. This also applies to body language and the educator's mannerisms. Within this study, the data indicated how language can impact a student and how they are perceived.

A music educator can teach music in multiple ways in a special education setting. This includes teaching ear-training, which is the listening and understanding the differences in pitches, rhythm studies, singing studies, compositional activities, music technology, adaptive instruments, etc. (Eren, 2013). Rhythm studies include the work on reading and playing different rhythms. Singing studies that focus on the proper use of breath and voice is another important activity that they can do (Eren, 2013). A popular activity to encourage movement is interpretive dancing. Educators can also tell a story using music (Eren, 2013). Some activities educators can do with their higher-level special education students include writing and reading notes, playing and holding instruments correctly, and composition or improvisation (Eren, 2013). The current research produced similar results as Eren's study (2013) as it indicates how students with special needs can be included in the music classroom. Additionally, the current study indicates the ways that students with special needs are capable of participating and learning the multiple aspects of music.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research is very important to music education as the profession strives for greater instructional effectiveness. The focus of this study is language, accommodations, and inclusion. However, it would be beneficial to conduct additional research on each of these categories. Future research could also focus on how some accommodations can unintentionally alienate the students with disabilities. Some examples of this could include:

- Having a student sit in a chair while their peers are sitting on the ground;

- Taking the student out of the classroom for testing or extra instruction;

- Not having supportive educators and staff;

- Allowing educators and staff to have negative attitudes towards students with disabilities;

- Not giving the students a say in their education and educational placement (including IEP discussions);

- Not having remedial or support services for students without disabilities (Shoho, Katims, Wilks, 1997).

Even if the student does not realize it presently, these accommodations unintentionally alienate students. This can possibly lead to unintended negative outcomes such as bullying, making the student feel left out, etc. Some other topics that should be discussed are:

- Abelism "…is comprised of beliefs and practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other" (Smith, n.d.);

- Education for students with other forms of disabilities;

- How the students actually feel about the accommodations they have been given and how included they actually feel;

- The language articles use when educating people on students with disabilities.

Conclusion

This study aimed to discover how music educators communicate with and about their students with disabilities, how they conduct an inclusive classroom, and how they can accommodate their students with disabilities. Within this study, most of the music educators stated that they work hard to include their students with disabilities and accommodate them. The educators felt that they had the ability to communicate with and about their students with disabilities. They also felt that they were adequately educated to communicate with their students with disabilities and about their students with disabilities. It is hoped that future research in this area can continue to inform music educators regarding the best practices for the inclusion and accommodation of and communication with students with disabilities.

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APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS EXEMPTION COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Physical Address
4111 Monarch Way, Suite 203
Norfolk, Virginia 23508
Mailing Address
Office of Research
1 Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia 23529
Phone(757) 683-3460
Fax(757) 683-5902

DATE: February 28, 2022

TO: Douglas Owens, Doctor of Arts, Music, Master of Music, Bachelor of Music Education

FROM: Old Dominion University Arts & Letters Human Subjects Review Committee

PROJECT TITLE: [1865812-1] Accommodations, Inclusion, and Communication with Students with Disabilities in the Music Classroom

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: February 28, 2022

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Old Dominion University Arts & Letters Human Subjects Review Committee has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Randy Gainey at 757-683-4794 or rgainey@odu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Old Dominion University Arts & Letters Human Subjects Review Committee's records.

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Survey: Accommodations, Inclusion, and Communication with Students with Disabilities in the Music Classroom

I hope that you can assist with my research by completing this brief online survey. I am seeking the participation of K-12 music educators. The purpose of this study is to learn how music educators create inclusivity in their classroom and how to improve upon that process without potentially ostracizing the students with disabilities. It is also to bring more awareness to disabilities and how they can be managed in the music classroom. The survey consists of 28 questions, is completely anonymous and should take between 10 to 15 minutes to complete. There is no more than minimal risk involved in participating in the survey process. Your completed electronic survey responses will be sent anonymously to Dr. Douglas T. Owens, the Responsible Project Investigator and Associate Professor of Music at Old Dominion University. Dr. Owens will then give the completed surveys to me, the Investigator.

This research project has been approved for an IRB exemption by the Old Dominion University College of Arts and Letters Human Subjects Review Committee. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you can choose not to participate. However, I do hope you can help me conduct this important research in music education. Please know that if you do choose to participate, please do not reveal your name, the name of your employer, or other information that is personally identifiable. Any identifiable information will not be included in the final written research document.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Cora M. Wilson
Investigator
Master of Music Education Candidate
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, VA
cwils025@odu.edu

APPENDIX C

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1. What is your age?
- o 21-29
- o 30-39
- o 40-49
- o 50-59
- o 60-69

Q2. What gender do you identify as?
- o Male
- o Female
- o Non-binary / third gender
- o Other
- o Prefer not to disclose

Q3. What is your race/ethnicity?
- o American Indian
- o Black or African American
- o Hispanic or Latino
- o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- o White
- o Prefer not to disclose

Q4. At which instructional levels do you teach? Select all that apply.
- o High School
- o Junior High School
- o Middle School
- o Elementary School
- o Other

Q5. How many years have you been teaching? (sliding scale)

Q6. Are your students with special needs included in the music classroom, instrumental ensembles, or vocal ensembles?
- o Yes
- o No

Q7. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

Q8. In what ways do you strive for inclusivity in your classroom?

Q9. Do you use person-first language or disability first language (example: "child with autism" or "autistic child")?

Q10. Please explain why you prefer to use person-first language, and if it has been effective to use the selected language.
Q11. Please explain why you prefer to use disability-first language, and if it has been effective to use the selected language.

Q12. Do you feel comfortable communicating with your students with disabilities?
  o Yes
  o No

Q13. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

Q14. On a scale of one to five, rate your level of education regarding how to communicate with students with disabilities.
  o 1. Not educated
  o 2. Minimally educated
  o 3. Somewhat educated
  o 4. Adequately educated
  o 5. Fully educated

Q15. On a scale of one to five, rate your level of education regarding how to accommodate students with disabilities.
  o 1. Not educated
  o 2. Minimally educated
  o 3. Somewhat educated
  o 4. Adequately educated
  o 5. Fully educated

Q16. In what ways do you accommodate students with disabilities? Select all that apply.
  o Instrument adaptations
  o Repertoire adaptations
  o Teaching adaptations
  o All of the above
  o Other (open-ended answer)

Q17. On a scale from one to five, in your music classroom, at what level are you able to accommodate your students' needs?
  o 1. Unable to accommodate
  o 2. Somewhat able to accommodate
  o 3. Moderately able to accommodate
  o 4. Able to accommodate with slight challenges
  o 5. Fully able to accommodate

Q18. On a scale from one to five, at which level are you able to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with your specific students?
  o 1. Unable to communicate
  o 2. Somewhat able to communicate
  o 3. Moderately able to communicate
  o 4. Able to communicate with slight challenges
  o 5. Fully able to communicate

Q19. On a scale from one to five, at which level are you able to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with other involved educators?
- o 1. Unable to communicate
- o 2. Somewhat able to communicate
- o 3. Moderately able to communicate
- o 4. Able to communicate with slight challenges
- o 5. Fully able to communicate

Q20. On a scale from one to five, at which level are you able to communicate the needs and challenges of the students with disabilities with the student's parents?
- o 1. Unable to communicate
- o 2. Somewhat able to communicate
- o 3. Moderately able to communicate
- o 4. Able to communicate with slight challenges
- o 5. Fully able to communicate

Q21. On a scale from one to five, at which level are the students with disabilities able to receive equal learning through their accommodations as your students without disabilities?
- o 1. Unable to receive equal learning
- o 2. Somewhat able to receive equal learning
- o 3. Moderately able to receive equal learning
- o 4. Able to receive equal learning with slight challenges
- o 5. Fully able to receive equal learning

Q22. On a scale from one to five, at which level do the students with disabilities communicate that the accommodations have been successful?
- o 1. They do not communicate
- o 2. They communicate somewhat
- o 3. They communicate moderately
- o 4. They communicate with slight challenges
- o 5. They communicate fully

Q23. In your experience, does the application of accommodations unintentionally alienate the student with disability?
- o Yes
- o No

Q24. As a music educator, are you allowed to contribute to the accommodation process for your students?
- o Yes
- o No

Q25. Do you feel the accommodations have been successful?
- o Yes
- o No

Q26. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

Q27. On a scale from one to five, please rate the comfort level of the students with accommodations.
- o 1. Very uncomfortable
- o 2. Uncomfortable
- o 3. Neither uncomfortable or comfortable
- o 4. Comfortable
- o 5. Very comfortable

Q28. Have you observed students who may feel alienated with their accommodations?
- o Yes
- o No

Q29. Please elaborate on your answer to the previous question. (open-ended)

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Cora Wilson earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Applied Music, and Psychology in 2020 from Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach, VA. Ms. Wilson continued her studies, and is completing the Master of Music Education degree, Research Concentration, at Old Dominion University. While at ODU, Ms. Wilson held the Graduate Administrative Assistant position with the Monarch Athletic Bands. Ms. Wilson is a member of National Association for Music Education. Ms. Wilson will seek a school music educator position upon graduation.