

Voices from the Classroom: Students with Special Needs in an Elementary Music  
Classroom

Ashley Farley and John Sargent

East Texas Baptist University

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### *Introduction*

Music educators were some of the first educators to work with students with special needs in the public schools. In 1975, Congress passed the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (Public Law 94-142), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This law allowed all children, including students with special needs the right to a free and appropriate public education. They were to have the same rights as those students without special needs. This law also mandated that students with special needs be instructed in the least restrictive environment. Many educators believe that the least restrictive environment for all students is in the regular classroom.

Prior to the passing of PL 94-142, music educators had already been involved with students with handicaps or disabilities. Most of them spent at least one class period a week teaching all the students with handicaps at the same time.

It is important that music educators understand how to incorporate students with special needs in their classrooms. Students with special needs deserve the opportunity to explore music and learn to be creative. Involving these students in a music classroom gives these students the opportunity to learn ways in which they are gifted and/or talented. If music educators incorporate their students with special needs properly, it will give the students an opportunity to discover things they might not have ever had the chance to do in a self-contained classroom.

Non-music educators also need to understand the importance of incorporating students with special needs in the music classroom so they will notice the value of it and support music educators seeking to accomplish this.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this action research study was to examine one classroom and its way of incorporating students with special needs. By doing so, readers of this study have the opportunity to use the aspects of this study that they find suitable to their own situation. *Research Question*

How are students with special needs incorporated in an elementary music classroom?

### *Definition of Terms*

Action research- Deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted. It is characterized by spiraling cycles of problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, data-driven action taken, and, finally, problem redefinition (Johnson, 1993).

Students with Special Needs- Those with a disability that impacts their ability to access educational benefits (Wisconsin Education Association Council, 2001)

Individualized Education Program (IEP) - a contract between the school and the parents that controls almost all aspects of the students' supplemental education; in developing an IEP, the Individual With Disabilities Education Act requires that the IEP team consider placement in the regular education classroom as the starting point in determining the appropriate placement for the child. If the IEP team determines that the least restrictive environment appropriate for a particular child is not the regular education classroom for all or part of the IEP, the IEP team must include an explanation in the IEP as to why the regular education classroom is not appropriate (Wisconsin Education Association Council, 2001)

Mainstreamed (Mainstreaming) - the selective placement of special education students in one or more 'regular' education classes (Wisconsin Education Association Council, 2001)

### *Limitations of the Study*

There are two limitations of this action research study. First, this study was conducted in two kindergarten music classes over seven weeks. Therefore, the research might not be an accurate account of all the ways to incorporate students with special needs in an elementary music classroom and may differ greatly if it were done in other classrooms for longer periods of time.

The second limitation is the personal biases of the researchers. We believe students with special needs can and should be incorporated in all music classrooms, especially elementary. We also believe many music educators are not incorporating these students and could benefit from learning ways in which to do this.

### *Literature Review*

How can you incorporate students with special needs in an elementary music classroom? Many who have researched this question provide a variety of methods in which to incorporate these students. They agree that to incorporate these students successfully, the music teacher must become involved in planning the Individual Education Program for each special needs student and work very closely with other teachers, especially the special education teachers, to learn more about each student's needs and gain ideas as to how to adapt the curriculum and make modifications for these students so they can participate in the music classroom.

The first step a music teacher should take in incorporating students with special needs is to get to know these students and find out as much information about them as possible. One way to do this is by taking part in planning each child's Individual Education Program (IEP). It is important to special education children that all of their teachers be involved in the development of an IEP in order to alleviate any misconceptions or false expectations (Cassidy, 1990). Although time and scheduling constraints often make it difficult for music educators to attend IEP meetings, it is imperative that these teachers be involved in the IEP planning process (Hock, Hasazi, and Patten, 1990). If attending meetings is difficult for the music teacher to do, they could meet with the Special Education teachers before the meeting to come up with a list of suggestions and desired outcomes for the IEP.

Cassidy (1990) affirmed another way to gain information on students with special needs is to get acquainted with them. This can be done by observing the student in the special education classroom and asking such questions as what physical limitations does the child have? Does he or she socialize with others in the class? How do others communicate with him or her? Cassidy also stated that it may be a good idea to meet with the child before the first mainstreamed class. The music teacher could even set aside some time for individual music lessons with the students with special needs. During the lessons, such things can be taught as a hello song or the appropriate way to play a rhythm instrument. These lessons might also include a few nonhandicapped students brought into the special education classroom. These lessons should take place in an environment that is familiar and nonthreatening to the student. Having these lessons gives the music teacher an opportunity to practice teaching music in an integrated setting, and allows

nonhandicapped peers to learn appropriate ways to help the handicapped child Cassidy further avowed that as a result of these lessons, the student with special needs may feel more comfortable with mainstreaming because he or she will not be looked at as an outsider but will feel a part of the class because they have friends in the class.

The second step a music teacher should take in incorporating students with special needs is to learn how to alter the curriculum to adapt to the students' individual needs. Through instructional modification, the needs of students with handicaps are met by changing and improving instruction for all students (Hock, Hasazi, and Patten 1990). One way altering the curriculum can be accomplished is through the help of the special education teacher. According to Hock, Hasazi, and Patten the key to successfully incorporating students with special needs is an effective partnership with the special education teacher. The special educator and the music educator need to work together, one educating the other, to make music a viable component of every student's education. The special educator will have knowledge from past experiences that will help the music educator make the modifications to their curriculum.

O'Brien (2004) states the following adaptations are practical for students with special needs in the music classroom: breaking tasks down into the simplest components necessary, using color coding to teach music concepts, make recording available of songs to listen to, give lots of praise for correct behavior, repeat, repeat, repeat, change activities often and try to work with the student individually as much as possible.

According to Pontiff (2004), strategies useful for the music teacher to utilize in his or her classroom are: (a) planning, planning and more planning,

(b) thinking outside the box, (c) slow the pacing down, (d) structure, structure, and more structure, (e) using all the senses in learning, (f) stations, (g) microphones, (h) visuals, (i) modeling, (j) homework, and (k) a rolling chair so you can get to the kids fast.

McCord (2001), argues for these recommendations in teaching students with special needs: (a) hands-on, or kinesthetic learning activities, (b) modified curriculum, (c) small group learning structure, (d) individualized instruction, and (e) use of a computer to aid learning.

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore and observe ways in which an elementary music educator incorporated her students with special needs. We hope the readers of this study will be able to understand these methods and develop ways to use them in their own classrooms. This study was done using naturalistic inquiry or qualitative research.

Qualitative research provides the means to investigate the complex ways people interact in their everyday lives and enables classroom and school practitioners to increase their understanding of the events they observe. In particular, they gain greater insight into the ways people interpret events from their own perspective, providing culturally and contextually appropriate information assisting them to more effectively manage problems they confront in classrooms and schools” (Stringer, 2004).The data for this study will be gathered through observation, researcher reflection, and an interview with the teacher.

### *Setting*

The setting for this study is an elementary school with approximately 330 students in the East Texas area. The population of the school is 51.2% African American, 30%

Hispanic, and 17.8% Caucasian. Ninety-one percent are economically disadvantaged and twenty-two percent have a limited English proficiency.

### *Sampling*

The type of sampling used for this study is called purposeful sampling. This type of sampling seeks to ensure that the diverse perspectives of people likely to affect the issue are included in the study (Stringer, 2004).

This study took place over a period of seven weeks between January 2004 and March 2004. Research included observations, reflections made by me, and an interview with the teacher.

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were the students in the two kindergarten classes, the music teacher, and me. I am a senior music education major at an East Texas Baptist University. I had a prior interest in learning more about incorporating students with special needs in elementary music classrooms. The research question was formed due to this particular interest.

The music teacher, Ms. Smith is a graduate of East Texas Baptist University with a degree in Music Education. She has been teaching elementary music approximately twenty years.

### *Data Collection*

#### *Observations*

In my observations, the I examined ways students with various special needs were or were not incorporated in the elementary music classroom. Observations included a



detailed account of the activities that took place in the classroom and the ways in which the teacher attempted to include the students with special needs.

#### *Reflections*

Reflections were kept to reflect on activities that took place in the classroom that day and the feelings I experienced during and after the observations.

#### *Teacher Interview*

Interviews with the teacher were conducted. These interviews sought to get the teacher's opinion on incorporating students with special needs in elementary music classrooms and the process she went through in order to understand and incorporate these students into her classroom.

#### *Validity*

Validity was increased by using low reference descriptors, peer debriefer, seeking of negative cases, and member checking.

#### *Bias*

Bias was addressed by using a field log, peer debriefer, member checking when applicable, and by recognizing the fact that bias did exist.

#### *Data Triangulation*

Data Triangulation was achieved through the use of observations, interviews, and reflections.

#### *Data Analysis*

Constant Comparison was used to determine if certain categories, patterns, or themes were occurring (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000).

## *Results*

### *Research Question*

How are students with special needs incorporated in an elementary music classroom?

### *Main Themes*

After completing my coding, I found four themes emerged throughout that address the issue of incorporating students with special needs in an elementary classroom. My themes are as follows:

1. There was a lot of moving, listening, thinking, playing, and creating activities used. There was also a lot of teacher prompting.
2. Many of the activities were simply routine, every day activities.
3. Much time was spent correcting misbehavior, disciplining, and punishing.
4. There were many interruptions and disruptions.

### *Moving, listening, thinking, playing, and creating activities*

The first theme emerging in my study concerned the number of activities used in this classroom that sought to instruct students in different areas of learning including moving, listening, thinking, playing, and creating activities.

In a reflection from February 19, 2004, I wrote : “They did these rhymes while keeping a steady beat.” Here I am referring to several rhymes they did often to incorporate critical thinking. “They then did these rhymes in their high, medium, and low voices and they talked more about them.” “To help the students further understand high, medium, and low voices, she played high and low sounds on the piano and had the students raise their hands in the air if the sound was high and bend over and drop their hands if the sound was low.” “The children showed the same movements for both the

high and low songs. Then they discussed what animals the sounds from the songs represented.” “The ‘high’ piece they listened to was called ‘the Aviary.’” “The students then listened to ‘Stars and Stripes Forever’ by John Phillip Sousa.”

“They, too, talked more about the high and low voices.” (Second kindergarten class) “They, too, listened to the sounds Ms. Smith played on the piano and did the appropriate movements I referred to earlier.” “They also listened to the same selections and did the appropriate movements and then talked about what animals they thought the sounds represented.” “They answered an elephant.” “They also talked about the song ‘The Aviary’ that was played and Ms. Smith explained again that an aviary is a type of bird.” “The students then listened to ‘Stars and Stripes Forever’ and walked around in a circle just like the last class.” “They sang a song called ‘Five Baby Bunnies’ and kept steady beat while singing.”

In a reflection on February 24, 2004, I wrote that: “When I came in, the first kindergarten class was quietly listening to a recording of Ella Fitzgerald.” “They were tapping their knees and their shoulders to the beat.”

“Ms. Smith was playing slow saxophone music as they were walking in. They stretched and listened to the music.” (second kindergarten class). “They, too, listened to Ella Fitzgerald and tapped the beat on their shoulders and knees.” “We also listened to another song (I can’t remember what it was) and passed a ball around on the strong beats in the song.” “Then we played the spaceship game; that is everyone except Zach.”

In a reflection on February 28, 2004, I wrote: “During the first kindergarten class, we listened to another song by Ella Fitzgerald.” “The children walked around in a circle and pretended to play the instruments they heard.” “Ms. Smith had to help them decide

what some of the instruments were, but they recognized most of them.” “Then they played ‘Where is Thumpkin’, etc.”

“When the class came in, Ms. Smith had soft, easy-listening music playing.” (second kindergarten class) Then they listened to Ella Fitzgerald and pretended to play the instruments they heard.” “She put on a record that had a game similar to ‘Where is Thumpkin’ on it.”

During data collection on January 29, 2004, I observed the following: 10:40 a.m.: “Students begin recognizing sol, mi, and la on board.” 10:42 a.m.: “Students begin to derive the rhythm of the song on the board.”

During data collection on February 29, 2004, I observed the following: 9:45 a.m.: “Smith plays high and low sounds on the piano- the students have to raise their hands if the sound they hear is high and lower them if the sound they hear is low- they also talk about the different voices- high, medium, and low.” 9:50 a.m.: “Smith plays two selections from a CD: 1 high and 1 low; again students did the appropriate movements for each selection.” “Listened to ‘The Aviary’- talked about what an Aviary is (a type of bird) - talked about what kind of animals make high and low sounds.” “Listened to ‘Stars and Stripes Forever’ by John Philip Sousa and walked around in a circle.” 10:18 a.m.: “Students listen to high and low sounds played on the piano and do appropriate movements- George participates with the help of the aide.” “Listen to two selections on a CD: 1 high and 1 low; students do appropriate movements.” “Talked about what kinds of animals make high and low sounds.” 10:52 a.m.: “Students listened to ‘The Aviary’ and talked about what the word meant.”

During data collection on February 24, 2004, I observed the following: 9:40 a.m.: “Students played ‘The Spaceship Game’ - Smith stepped out in the hall; the aide and I more or less took over.” “Students listened to a song by Ella Fitzgerald- tapped the steady beat on their shoulders and knees- talk about Fitzgerald and who she was and what kind of music she sang.” 10:20 a.m.: “Listen to a song by Ella Fitzgerald; keep the steady beat on shoulders and knees- talk about Fitzgerald and who she is and what kind of music she sings.” 10:25 a.m.: “Students play ‘The Spaceship Game.’”

During data collection on February 26, 2004, I observed the following: 9:40 a.m.: “Listened to a song by Ella Fitzgerald-walked around in a circle-pretended to play the instruments they heard played in the song.” 10:10 a.m.: “Students come in-get in their spots in the circle; listened to soft, easy-listening music and did stretches to it.” 10:15: “Students listen to a song by Ella Fitzgerald and walk around in a circle pretending to play the instruments they hear played in the song.”

Ms. Smith was very skillful at using these activities to get students involved and get their minds working.

### *Routine Activities*

The second theme that emerged was that many of the activities that occurred were simply routine, every day activities. In a reflection on January 27, 2004, I wrote that: “One thing I thought was interesting was the system the school system the school used for rotating the classes between music and P.E.”

In a reflection on February 19, 2004, I wrote that: “The next kindergarten class came in, and got in their spots.” “Then they left.”

“The first grade class then came in and got in their spots.” “Ms. Smith warmed them up by having them make different sounds with their voices.”

In a reflection on February 24, 2004, I wrote that: “The next kindergarten class came in.” “The class left and then the first grade class came in.” “When Ms. Smith came back in, she began their activities with them.” Here I am referring to what happened when Ms. Smith came back in the first grade classroom after she had briefly stepped out.

In a reflection on February 28, 2004, I wrote that: “Then they lined up by the first letter of their first names to go to P.E.” (first kindergarten class) “The next kindergarten class was basically the same except for a few differences.” “Then the students lined up.”

During data collection on January 27, 2004, I observed the following: 9:35 a.m.: “Students come in-put jackets on the floor.” 9:38 a.m.: “Smith warms up students-checks the roll by singing ‘Good Day, boys and girls, how are you today?’” 10:10 a.m.: “Students come in-Smith warms them up.” (second kindergarten class) 10:12- approximately 10:17 a.m.: “Smith checks roll by singing.” 10:35 a.m.: “Students exit the room.” 10:36 a.m.:

“First grade class comes in-gets in their spots.” 10:39 a.m.: “Warms up students.” 10:40 a.m.: “Smith begins calling roll by singing ‘Good Day, Boys and Girls...’”

During data collection on January 29, 2004, I observed the following: 9:30 a.m.: “Students come in-get in their assigned places.” 9:35 a.m.: “Students warmed-up and Smith called the roll by singing ‘Good Day, Boys and Girls, How are you today?’” 9:59 a.m.: “Students begin to line up (line up by color of their shirts)” 10:05 a.m.: “Students come in and get in their place in the circle.” (Second Kindergarten class) 10:10 a.m.: “Smith warms them up and calls roll by singing ‘Good Day, Boys and Girls...’” 10:30

a.m.: “Students line up at the door and exit the room.” 10:32 a.m.: “Students come in and get in their place in the circle.”

During data collection on February 19, 2004, I observed the following: 10:10 a.m.: “Students come in and get in their spots-Smith has to take two points away.” 10:33 a.m.: “Students come in-get in spots in the circle.”

During data collection on February 24, 2004, I observed the following: 10:15 a.m.: “Students come in and get in their spots in the circle.”

During data collection on February 26, 2004, I observed the following: 9:45 a.m.: “Students lined up by first letter of first name.” 10:10 a.m.: “Students come in-get in their spots in the circle; listened to soft, easy-listening music and did stretches to it.” 10: 35 a.m.: “Students come in and get in their spots in the circle.”

### *Correcting Misbehavior, Disciplining, and Punishing*

The third theme that emerged was there was a lot of time spent correcting misbehavior, disciplining, and punishing. After completing my research, I learned that correcting misbehavior and disciplining and punishing are common responsibilities for a teacher in an elementary music classroom if he or she is to have good classroom management.

Although Ms. Smith has excellent classroom management, she still has to spend a lot of class time correcting misbehavior and punishing. It appears that this is inevitable at the elementary level.

Ms. Smith has to deal with various misbehavior and discipline problems. In a reflection on January 27, 2004, I wrote: “It’s the kinds of things you have to deal with in

these two grades that make me feel this way.” I was referring to a comment I made when I said that I did not think I wanted to teach elementary music.

In a reflection on January 29, 2004, I wrote: “Although the students’ behavior was better, Ms. Smith did have to take away a point and do some fussing when the students were lining up at the door.”

In a reflection on February 19, 2004, I wrote: “Ms. Smith had to take away two points from this class because they were so disruptive.” “Also, she had to get on to Tyler J.” “She made him get up against the wall and hold his ankles.” “He had to miss P.E. and stay in the music classroom throughout the next class.” At one point in this class, Ms. Smith made two boys spit out something they had in their mouth. “I never knew what it was but she made them spit it out.”

Many times the class would start a rhyme or a game and Ms. Smith would have to stop them because they were misbehaving. I wrote in this same reflection that “She has to stop them twice because they were getting out of hand with this activity.

In a reflection on February 24, 2004, after I had to manage the classroom for a second while Ms. Smith stepped out, I wrote: “I was constantly having to tell them to be quiet.” “The aide was also.” I also wrote that “After she (Ms. Smith) came back in and fussed a little bit, they seemed to calm down.”

In a reflection on February 28, 2004, I wrote that “Ms. Smith had to take two points away because the children were not being cooperative.” “She also made them give her back thirty seconds of silence because they took thirty seconds to quit talking in line.” “She had to start the thirty seconds over three times because they kept talking.”



“Zach, the Downs Syndrome child (who had been participating in the activities with the help of the aide) would not get up, when his aide asked him to.” “She tried and tried to get him up, but he would not budge.” “So she left the room thinking that he would think she had left him and get up and leave, but this didn’t work either.” “He continued to sit there.” “So, Ms. Vines and I left the room and Ms. Vines turned off the light and shut the door, trying to get him to think that everyone was leaving.” “She finally, had to go back in and get a ruler out and swat him on the legs.” “He finally got up.”

During data collection on January 27, 2004, I observed the following: 10:31 a.m.: During a game the class was playing, “Ms. Smith has to stop the game because students aren’t doing it right; she corrects them-and they start over.” 10:31 a.m.: “Smith has to stop them again for the second time.”

During data collection on January 29, 2004, I observed the following: 9:59 a.m.: While lining up, “Smith had to take away a point because they were talking in line.”

During data collection on February 19, 2004, I observed the following: 9:50 a.m.: “Tyler J. got in trouble and was told to go to the corner and hold his ankles...he had to miss P.E. and stay in the music class during the next kindergarten class.” 10:10 a.m.: “Students come in and get in their spots-Smith has to take two points away.” 10:40 a.m.: “Smith has the students practice taking deep breaths-has to stop them a couple of times to correct them.”

During data collection on February 26, 2004, I observed the following: 9:45 a.m.: “Students lined up by the first letter of their last name- Smith took points and made them give her thirty seconds of silence.”

*Interruptions and Disruptions*

The fourth theme that emerged was there were many interruptions and disruptions. As a result of these interruptions, students' attention is lost and they tend to get off-task, causing instruction time to be lost. I realize, though, that in any public school classroom setting, interruptions are bound to occur and the sign of a good classroom manager is one who can maintain students' attention despite the interruption and continue instruction without ever missing a beat.

In a reflection on January 27, 2004, I wrote that: "One little boy in the second class I observed would not ask if he could go to the bathroom, but really had to go, so he just used it on the floor!"

In a reflection on February 19, 2004, I wrote that: "Ms. Smith is checking to see what two boys are chewing on." "I never knew what it was, but she made them spit it out." While singing a song, "Ms. Smith has to stop twice because the students were getting out of hand with this activity."

In a reflection on February 28, 2004, I wrote that: "One girl was crying about something another child had done or said to her." "Ms. Smith had to step inside of the restroom there in the classroom with the girl to talk about what had happened."

After finally getting Zach to leave the classroom, "the first grade class was late getting into the classroom." Consequently, they were late starting their lesson.

During data collection on January 27, 2004, I observed the following: 9:36 a.m.: "A student tattles on another student." 9:37 a.m.: "Smith talks to the student that was tattled on." "Aide come in with a few extra students-students with special needs-George doesn't sit in the circle, but in a chair beside the aide." 9:41 a.m.: "Another teacher comes

in...says Christopher is in her class, but has been going to music with the wrong group.”

“Aide leaves to take a phone call...brings George with her.” 9:47 a.m.: “Aide comes back.” 9:52 a.m.: “A student pokes head in the door, then leaves.” 10:17 a.m.: “A student tattles on another student- Smith talks to the student that was tattled on.” 10:18 a.m.: “A student used the bathroom on the floor because he was too sacred to ask permission to get up and go.” 10:22 a.m.: “Aide takes student that used the bathroom on the floor to the office to get cleaned up-another aide goes and gets a mop- cleans up the mess.” 10:31 a.m.: During a game they were playing, “Smith has to stop the game because students aren’t doing it right; she corrects them- and they start over.”

During data collection on January 29, 2004, I observed the following: 10:11 a.m.: “Vines has to help a boy tie his shoe.” 10:32 a.m.: “Two other students come in late to class.”

I had two other codes in my data that emerged often, but not enough to be considered overall themes. One concerned “incorporating students” or “incorporation of students.” What I found as a result of my research, was students with special needs are only incorporated through the assistance of an aide or through the special attention from the music teacher given to the student with special needs when the teacher is able to do this.

Another code that emerged often was uninvolved. What I observed in this setting was most of the students with special needs were uninvolved most of the time. I think this was a result of three things: (a) the special needs student was not motivated enough to want to participate in the activities with the assistance of the music teacher or the aide, (b) even though Ms. Smith does an excellent job of incorporating students with

special needs in her class, there was not enough done to incorporate these student, and.

(c) for the most part, the aides involved did not take enough responsibility in helping the music teacher motivate the students with special needs to participate in the activities.

### Implications

My themes did not emerge the way I thought they would. I was disappointed that I did not have more themes that could better answer my research question. I was also disappointed that my interview with Ms. Smith did not contain any of the overall themes that emerged. I was looking to use this interview extensively because I felt that there was a lot of information that was very valuable and that answered my research question perfectly.

After analyzing the themes that did occur, I found that they could answer the question in some ways. My first theme was that many moving, listening, thinking, playing, and creating activities were used in the classroom I observed. These are great and beneficial activities and Ms. Smith does an excellent job of incorporating these activities into her lesson.

However, I found that students with special needs can not be incorporated into most of these activities without the assistance of an aide. When there is not an aide available, students with special needs are forced to sit and observe, unless the music teacher is able to move the student next to her and assist them in the activity, while at the same time, instructing the other students. Ms. Smith was very good about doing this when she was able.

My second theme was many of the activities were routine, every-day activities. I was especially disappointed with this theme. I felt that it did not answered my research

question. However, this theme might answer my question was that music teachers should be careful to incorporate students with special needs in all activities, even the routine activities, and not overlook them.

My third theme was a lot of time was spent correcting misbehavior, disciplining, and punishing. The more time the music teacher spends on correcting misbehavior and punishment, the less time will be spent in instruction and consequently, the less number of opportunities a special needs student may have to be incorporated into the activities. To solve this problem, the music teacher should strive for the best classroom management possible. This is in the interest of all students.

My fourth theme was there were many interruptions and disruptions. As I said earlier in this paper, interruptions and disruptions are inevitable in any public school classroom setting. As with correcting misbehavior and punishment, interruptions and disruptions can waste instruction time, thus eliminating opportunities for students with special needs to be included. Also, from what I observed, the fact that students with special needs tend to come into the classroom late and often leave early, can be an interruption or distraction. Again, to solve this problem of interruptions and disruptions, the music teacher should strive for good classroom management.

The elementary music teacher must give individual attention to students with special needs, doing as much as possible to motivate the students with special needs to participate in the activities, and stress to the aides their personal responsibility in assisting students with special needs in classroom activities. All of these solutions will greatly improve the incorporation of students with special needs in the elementary music classroom.

Overall, I found that teachers can incorporate students with special needs best in an elementary music classroom by becoming familiar with the IEP and individual needs of each student, getting to know the students with special needs personally by visiting them in the classroom and meeting them on their level, treating them like all of the other children and encouraging them to participate just like the other students, and finally, by doing as much as possible to make yourself available to assist them in all activities, thus increasing their incorporation in the activities of the classroom.

This action research study allows readers to make decisions and apply them to their situation based on the results, analysis, implications, and conclusions this researcher provides. The reader must judge the applicability of the findings based on the information given and his or her unique situation.

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