

More Education Required!

The percentage of students we teach requiring greater accommodations and adaptations has risen, and so, the amount of education regarding students with disabilities and special needs, for incoming music teachers, has risen as well. As more students are identified and placed with IEP's and 504 Plans than ever before in history, and schools have become much more in tune with accommodating students with special needs (i.e. greater inclusionary practices), even many of our veteran teachers have sought out advice and further education to better teach this population of learners.

Dr. Rachel Robertson and Dr. Ann Huang are professors at Duquesne University. Though they typically teach future special education teachers, they are now regularly teaching classes in special education to music education majors as well. As we begin a new school year, I thought it would be insightful to have them share information about the classes they teach and accommodations and strategies that their students are employing while in the field. This article will provide general information about new legislation and special education classes that undergraduate music education students are required to complete for graduation. The next two publications of *PMEA News*, will review effective or ineffective strategies that were encountered during student field study.

New Special Education Requirements for Pennsylvania's Preservice Music Educators and Some Efforts to Meet Them-Dr Robertson and Dr. Huang

Including students with special needs in general education settings, including music settings, to the greatest extent possible has become both a legal and civil right nationwide. Therefore, all teachers need to know how to best serve these students. In response to this need, the Pennsylvania Department of Education recently amended Chapter 49 regulations to require that all students seeking teacher certification, including those seeking certification in music education, receive at least nine credits of instruction and field experience in accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Additionally, students must receive at least 3 credits of preparation in meeting the needs of English Language Learners.

These are the categories of competencies in which new Pennsylvania music and other educators will now receive additional training:

- I. Types of disabilities and implications for learning
- II. Cognitive skill development to ensure achievement of students with disabilities
- III. Implementing and interpreting assessments
- IV. Literacy development and instruction
- V. Effective instructional strategies for students with disabilities in inclusive settings

In response to the new requirements, Pennsylvania's higher education institutions have changed the way they prepare music educators by providing them with more instruction and field experience in accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

Making this content relatable to future music educators can be a challenge for special education faculty who may not be as familiar with music education theory and pedagogy. Outlined below are the goals and assignments of one inclusive education course, Implementing Inclusive Education, now required for music education majors at Duquesne University.

Goals: Students are to take the special needs knowledge they have acquired thus far and apply it in creating adaptations, accommodations and differentiated instruction related to their specific content areas, which for music education majors may include elementary music class instruction, band, choir, orchestra or individual or small group music lessons.

Class Assignments:

- Students complete weekly assignments in which they learn about an adaptive strategy and create their own example that they could use in a music setting or lesson.
- Students meet in small groups and teach each other the specific strategies they learned for the week and the example they created.
- Students work in groups to create a differentiated unit of instruction based on content of their own choosing. This unit includes differentiated goals, lessons and assessments that are accessible and challenging to students with and without disabilities.

These “in-class” experiences culminate with a field placement in which students create and implement an instructional adaptation in a music setting for a real student with a disability. Host teachers assess the success of the adaptation provide feedback to students and the instructor. Secondly, students observe and write a report on the needs and goals of target students with special needs and how specially designed instruction is implemented for them in their host classroom.

As special education faculty, we believe the additional preparation received by current music education majors will better equip these future teachers to serve students with special needs in general education settings and thereby provide an enhanced music education for all students.



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A Note from the Special Learners Coordinator:

As the PMEA Special Learners Coordinator, I’m very much interested in increasing the awareness and dialogue regarding special needs students in our music classrooms. If you are a Facebook user, you can be part of our PMEA Special Learners Forum. After logging in to your existing Facebook account, simply go to our www.pmea.net site and, in the left column, click the Special Learners link. You can also contact me at jcooper@colonialsd.org with any questions or suggestions for future articles. I’m looking forward to hearing from you.



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Rachel Robertson, Ph.D is an assistant professor of special education at Duquesne University. She teaches courses on adaptive strategies for students with disabilities in inclusive settings and conducts research on positive behavior supports for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders.



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