

Bridging the Gap: Identifying Resources Used by Successful Music Educators in Order to Make Music Education More Inclusive for Students with Emotional Support Needs

Despite today's climate of inclusive education, some populations may still find obstacles to successful mainstreaming, especially in the area of music education. The community of students in need of Emotional Support (E.S.) is one such group. Due to the nature of the wide scope of varying disabilities within the E.S. community, and the need for specialized resources and materials, some schools may not be able to meet specific educational needs in all subject areas (Ryan Detty, 2013). A review of the literature presented some scholarly documentation about available resources to both students with E.S. needs and music educators (teachervision.com, 2017) and (educationcorner.com, 2017). Additionally, the researchers identified reputable online sources which proved valuable in gaining access to web-based materials available to assist those individuals in need, along with their families and teachers. The National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) is such a resource that provide valuable educational resources to teachers and students alike. The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the accessibility of resources to both emotional support students, and the music educators who regularly teach these students. The research questions which shaped this study are: (1) What materials exist to assist music educators who are teaching students with E.S. needs? (2) How accessible are teaching aids and emotional support materials to music educators in public schools in Pennsylvania? (3) How can teaching aids intended for emotional support students be implemented into the music education setting? Using the 2017 Pennsylvania database of public school districts, the 50 largest school districts in the state of Pennsylvania were determined. These 50 districts will form the subject set of this grounded theory research. By accessing school district websites, researchers will investigate which districts offer programs for students with E.S. needs, and what specific resources are available to these students. Upon completion of this ongoing study, the researchers will identify core themes through data coding in an attempt to highlight common themes present in successful inclusive programs.

Discussion

Regarding research question 1: What materials exist to assist music educators who are

teaching students with Emotional Support needs?

The researchers have determined that many reliable and valid online sources (both free and paid subscription) are available for students with E.S. and their teachers, schools, and administration. These resources include; teachervision.com, nationalartsstandards.org, educationcorner.com, k12.niche.com. These resources aid in the effective teaching of students with Emotional Support needs. The researchers have identified that many schools use original resources for students with E.S. needs. In addition, most of the 50 largest districts in the state of Pennsylvania do implement some sort of online teaching aid for students with these needs.

Regarding research question 2: How accessible are teaching aids and emotional support materials to music educators in public schools in Pennsylvania?

The researchers have noticed that most school district websites do not include direct links on their main page to teaching and learning aids specifically for emotional support students. Some special education teachers who teach students with E.S. offer links to online resources on their teacher webpage that is connected to their district or school webpage, but we have observed no music teachers' pages containing such links. Because teacher and student accessibility is not clearly identifiable by analyzing district websites, it has been determined that further research is needed to properly answer this research question. It is the hope of these researchers that a quantitative study containing a survey be sent directly to music teachers who report teaching students with Emotional Support needs. The goal of this future study will be to identify first hand exactly what online resources teachers are utilizing in their classrooms.

Regarding research question 3: How can teaching aids intended for emotional support students be implemented into the music education setting?

This question is proving difficult to answer without a clear answer for research question number two, and is the question that the researchers continue to try to answer through careful analysis of district and teacher websites. Scrutiny of specific links music teachers are sharing on their personal school websites along with a review of the literature is proving helpful in determining the appropriate implementation of such resources.