

Scott Fairdosi

Practicum

Special Needs Students Assignment

Personal Journey

I have had some connections with special needs students in my past experiences; more notably in high school. For about a year I was a member of “Best Buddies”, an outreach program involving peer-to-peer help between average students and those with intellectual disabilities. Most weeks I would spend time with them one-on-one and play games with them. It was a great way for them to connect with other students and also gave me a great opportunity to learn more about some of the struggles that special needs students often times face.

I have had very little experience with special needs students in my actual classes. However, one student that I remember vividly throughout high school was a friend of mine in the percussion program. He was born prematurely and had trouble reading music due to how closed his eyelids were. I remember that the staff compensated by blowing any music that was ever given to him in order for him to see it. He was actually a very smart person musically; he simply could not see as well as the average student. I would assume that the majority of the special needs students in the school were put into their own classes, away from the normal ones. Best Buddies made it obvious to me that there were a handful of special needs students who attended the school.

Accommodations/Modifications for Special Needs Students

I am a percussion instructor at a high school during marching season. One of my students has ADD and the other is blind but she has enough technical skill to play on the snareline. For the student with ADD I would keep a timer and make sure to rehearse chunks of each piece only to the extent that the student can stay focused. Another possibility would be to have all the students stretch, or even go for a short run when rehearsal is getting slow. Making a hand sign or code specifically for the student to remind him to be on task may also be worth trying.

As for the blind student, I would have her learn the different rudiments that are most used within the music before learning it. Then as music is being learned, I would explain to her in detail how each bar is played, play it for her so she knows how it sounds, and have her learn the music before rehearsals this way. She would also have to memorize where rehearsal letters are, and I would always have to remember not to start a section saying "8 from the end", or "2 before letter B", as this could be very confusing. The real issue would be in the marching aspect. I would probably take a band alternate and have them shadow the blind student, guiding her when learning set-to-set. When learning drill, I would have the group rehearse each set 3 times; twice with the shadow and once with the blind student on her own. It would be a painstaking process but I believe in the end it would be a beautiful experience for every person involved, including myself.

Sources of information

<http://www.kellybear.com/TeacherArticles/TeacherTip49.html>

This website provides an article that includes 30 different ideas for ways to teach students with ADD and ADHD. This would be great to consult when in need for ways to help a student with ADD stay focused.

Ho, Tiffany.

She is a graduate student in speech/language pathology and specializes in students with disabilities. I know her personally and was able to interview her while writing up this assignment. She helped me in coming up with ideas on how to approach teaching the two imaginary students created above. She would be a great consultant when having to deal with special needs kids, especially those with hearing disabilities.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/225097-how-to-teach-music-to-visually-impaired-children/>

This website is a great tool to use when trying to find a way to get points across a visually impaired student. It explains how to go about teaching a blind student with specific steps.