

## MENC: The National Association for Music Education

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# *Mainstreaming*



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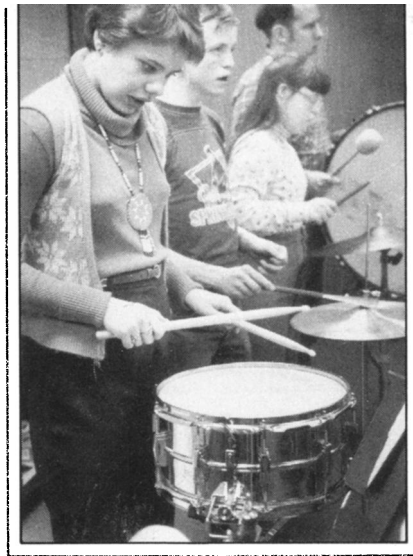
## Beyond Mainstreaming

### *Dealing with Diversity*

by Alice-Ann Darrow

*A classroom is truly integrated only if the teacher makes an effort to include special students rather than just to accommodate them. Alice-Ann Darrow, assistant professor in the music education department of the University of Kansas, suggests twelve specific strategies to help all students "belong."*

The term *mainstreaming* is no longer an educational catchword. It is a concept whose time has come and gone. Special students are no longer magnanimously mainstreamed into the regular classroom. They are now well-established members of the so-called regular classroom. This fact has required music educators to adopt instructional strategies that may differ from those they initially expected to use. More fundamentally, perhaps, it has also required an educational philosophy that emphasizes students' similarities, values their differences, and desires the inclusion of students rather than their exclusion. Because instructional strategies are formulated on the basis of educational beliefs, it is imperative that music educators first assume an unbiased



need to change are the instructional methods by which these goals are met. There are, however, important conditions that must exist before effective instructional strategies can be formulated.

#### **Preliminary conditions**

The literature has identified three important factors as critical to the success of music education for special students in the contemporary classroom: adequate preparation of teachers who work with special students; adequate administrative support (e.g., sufficient preparation time, use of teachers' aides when necessary); and teacher participation in decisions as to placement of special students. Knowledge and experience regarding disabilities are extremely useful; however, it is the last two factors, administrative support and participation in placement decisions, that are critical. Experience, knowledge, and the best of strategic instruction cannot compensate for the lack of these conditions in the educational process.

Given the aforementioned conditions, music educators can focus their attention on the music objectives of their programs. This is not to say that, given these conditions, music instruction can proceed as if there were no special students in the classroom. With these conditions in place, however, music educators have a much greater range of instructional options. These options are the key to successfully meeting program objectives.

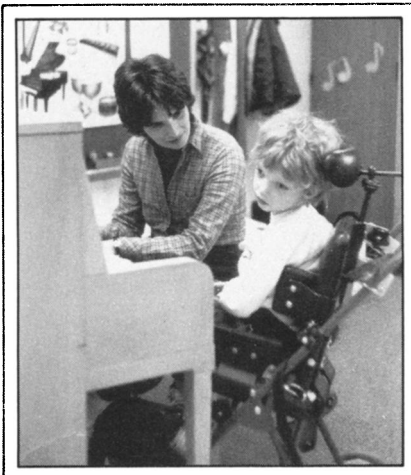
Instructional strategies or options also depend on the amount of available instructional support, the administrative style of the school

system, ongoing in-service education, participatory planning by school personnel, and a number of other educational factors usually beyond the control of the music educator. Nevertheless, there are some general instructional strategies that should prove effective for the music instruction of all students. These instructional strategies must be prefaced with the assumption that their use will benefit the class as a whole, not specific students. Individualizing musical goals for each child is difficult, if not impossible, within the structure of group instruction. Musical goals should and can remain the same for all children. In order for all children to meet these musical goals, however, criteria levels may need to be individualized and instructional strategies may need to be modified.

#### **Instructional strategies**

- *Formulate lesson objectives, whether for instrumental, choral, or general music instruction, that are multilevel and, if possible, multisensory (aural, visual, kinesthetic).* This is to the advantage of the unidentified atypical learner as well as the special student. Student diversity is found in every classroom, because of music instruction outside of school, the student's school music background, length of time in the present school music program, cultural background, personal learning styles, and a number of other reasons of which we may not even be aware.

This multilevel approach allows for the participation and success of many students rather than a select few. For example, the musical ob-

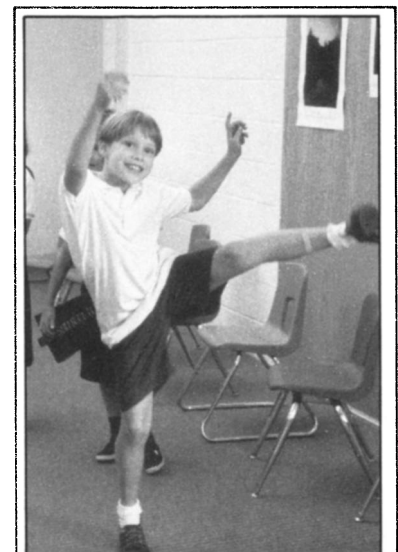


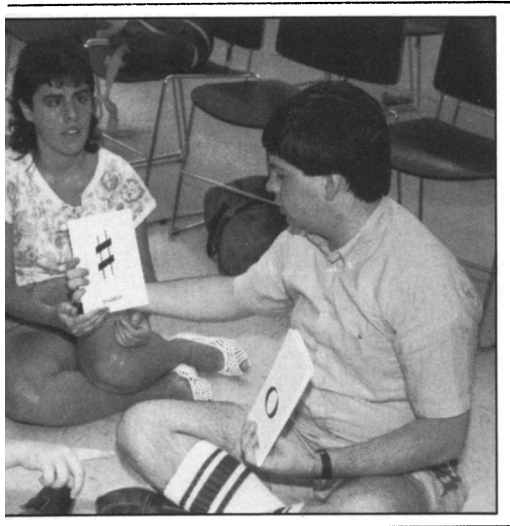
Photograph by Karen Fields

philosophy that recognizes the potential and the educational rights of all students.

Once the music educator has adopted the appropriate educational philosophy, he or she programs for special students rather than around them. The importance of an appropriate philosophical foundation cannot be overstated. It is the motivation and positive attitude of the music educator that make the successful implementation of instructional strategies possible.

The general goals of music education as outlined in the MENC publication *The School Music Program: Description and Standards* are the development of musical skills, knowledge, and values.<sup>1</sup> These goals need not and should not change because of the composition of the classroom. What may





jective for a fourth-grade general music class may be: The student will be able to play, sing, or clap "All Day, All Night" with no more than two errors by the end of three class periods. Several students may be playing the melody on recorders as they read the written music, others may be playing a simple descant, others (perhaps with poor visual skills) may be singing only, others (perhaps with limited verbal skills) may be reading and playing a simple rhythm score, and still others may be listening as they gently clap the beat. In addition, several types of music reading (traditional written notation, special coded notation, or braille music) can be used. Various sensory abilities and musical skills are also accommodated in this example. Several of the following strategies can assist in the classroom management of multilevel instruction.

- *Sequence lesson material carefully, maximizing successive approximations to a desired goal.* Some students with specific cognitive skills can eliminate one or more "steps" to accomplish a given task. They have a keen ability to "fill in" for themselves where instruction is lacking. These students do not suffer from redundancy as much as typical or special students do from "missing links" in instruction. Musical goals must be broken down into sequential objectives that carefully proceed from basic to complex, concrete to abstract, and structured to unstructured. For example, some students might be able to sight-read a new rhythm easily because of their ability to transfer

information from an earlier lesson. Most students, however, would benefit from counting or clapping the rhythm first. While good educators always teach for transfer and provide reinforcement when it occurs, it is probably erroneous ever to assume that transfer has taken place. Music educators should also be aware of the cognitive and psychomotor development of children in order to properly sequence learning objectives. For example, it may be difficult for a class of five-year-olds to march or clap to a steady beat, but quite easy for them to swing their arms or slap their thighs to a steady beat. An understanding of cognitive, psychomotor, and affective development also provides the educator with additional information useful in formulating multilevel objectives.

- *Adopt a "theme and variations" approach to instruction.* The introduction of initial skills and concepts can be followed by meaningful repetitions presented in a variety of other ways, though the presence of special students does not necessarily require repetitive instruction. The need for repetition can be determined by following the progress of all students.

- *Provide peer tutors for all students needing additional attention.* Special students should also be identified as tutors whenever possible. This tutorial system promotes interaction between special students and their peers and also provides instructional support for the music educator. Many students are less timid about seeking assistance from a classmate than from the teacher.

- *Request that teachers' aides accompany special students to music class whenever necessary.* Administrative personnel often believe that aides are not needed in the music classroom. The criterion should be that if they are needed to assist special students in the academic classroom, they are also needed in the music classroom.

- *Make use of volunteers from the community.* Music instruction is demanding. Music educators are often required to direct, instruct verbally, sing, play, move, and operate record players, overhead projectors, or recorders. There is no

such thing as quiet "seat work" in the music room, when the teacher can give additional instruction to students needing special attention. A parent, a volunteer, or an interested music student can often serve a supportive role.

- *Schedule special study sessions.* Special students, slow learners, atypical learners, new students, and students who have been absent for an extended period can all benefit from special study sessions given once a week by the music educator, a student teacher, a parent, or a volunteer. This time can be used to reinforce previous instruction, focusing on material that the students did not master in class, or to prepare students for future class work. A preliminary introduction to the lesson material often allows special students to succeed in class along with their peers.

- *Ask special education teachers in the school to assist in the development of materials* such as braille music or large-print music for the visually impaired, coded music for the learning disabled or the mentally retarded, adaptive instruments for the physically handicapped, or visual cue cards for the hearing impaired. Most special educators are very willing to provide support for their students and for the classroom or music teachers who work with them. Special educators can



Photograph by Karen Fields

# Music educators should not regard the inclusion of special students in their programs as additional work.

provide useful suggestions for the adaptation of existing instructional materials.

- *Encourage and support the participation of special students.* Student involvement is important for all students but particularly for the special student. These students learn much more quickly by doing than by watching or listening. Too often teachers leave special students to participate last, assuming that the observation of other students will provide the necessary additional instruction. The interest and attention of special students, which may initially be lacking, can best be maintained through their active participation. Music educators should not resent the need to court the attention or interest of special students. Gratification will come through observing their musical growth and successes.

- *Set aside scheduled practice time.* The development of performance skills may require additional practice for special students. Supervised practice with the music teacher is particularly useful. If this is not possible, students should be allowed to take instruments home or their parents encouraged to rent or purchase instruments for them.

- *Encourage private instruction outside of school, particularly if special students are experiencing difficulty in developing performance skills.* College students majoring in music therapy or special music education and high school students interested in majoring in either of these areas are excellent resources for private instruction.

- *Develop resource materials and equipment.* There are now a number of computer programs that allow students to develop music concepts and skills at their own pace and without the assistance of

an instructor.<sup>2</sup> These computer programs can be used for makeup work, remedial instruction, or background instruction, or as advanced organizers for future instruction. The TapMaster and PitchMaster are other instructional devices that can be useful for special students.<sup>3</sup> A special section of the room can be set aside for use of such material and equipment or the devices may be lent to the special education classroom.

## A need for equality

If special students are placed in the appropriate music classroom or ensemble, the music educator should expect corresponding music behavior. Lowered expectations should be avoided in favor of using the suggestions given above for special assistance. Special students may require some degree of atypical or supplementary instruction in order to acquire music skills like those of their peers, but the music objectives for these students should remain the same.

Handicapping conditions do not affect one's need for aesthetic experiences. It is the responsibility of the music educator to see that the cultural and aesthetic needs of all students are met. Music educators should not regard the inclusion of special students in their programs as additional work. The inclusion of special students may, however, require a different kind of work or

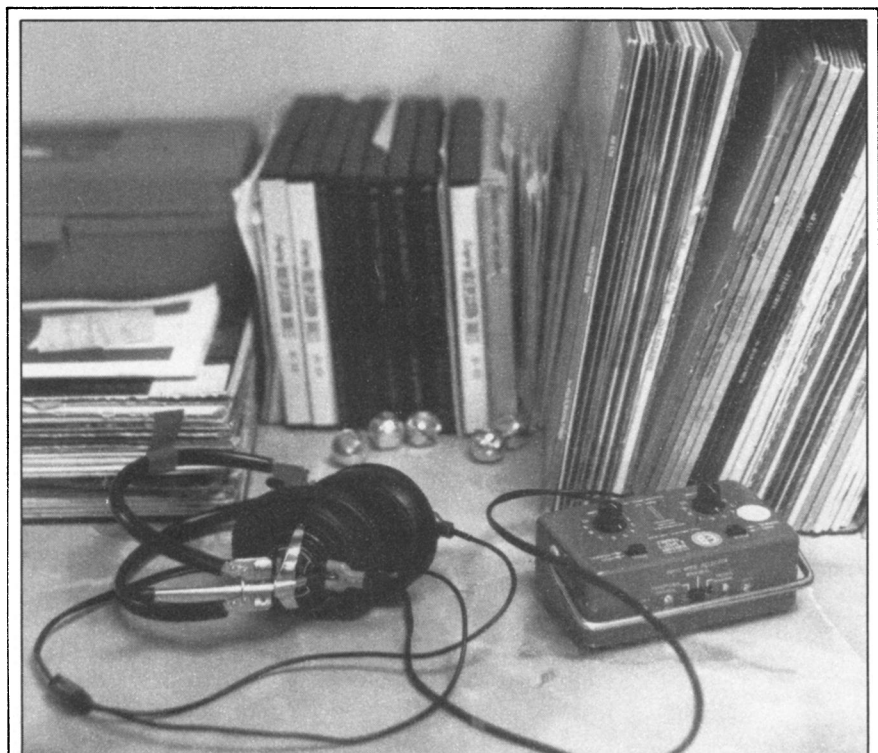
lesson preparation. Perhaps in another decade, special students will no longer be regarded as "special," "mainstreaming" will have disappeared from our educational vocabulary, and comprehensive music education will be the norm.

## Notes

1. Warren George, Charles Hoffer, Paul Lehman, and Rebecca Taylor, eds., *The School Music Program: Description and Standards*, 2d ed. (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 1986).
2. "Computers and Music Education" (special issue), *Music Educators Journal* 73, no. 4 (December 1986). See also Gail Schaberg, "Music Technology for Special Learners: Adaptive Devices," the "Technology for Teaching" column in the February 1990 issue of *Music Educators Journal*, pages 62-66.
3. Manufactured by Temporal Acuity Products, 300 120th Avenue, N.E., Building 1, Suite 200, Bellevue, WA 98005.

## Suggested readings

- Forsythe, Jere, and Judith Jellison. "It's the Law." *Music Educators Journal* 64, no. 3 (November 1977), 30-35.
- Gfeller, Kate, and Alice-Ann Darrow. "Ten Years of Mainstreaming: Where Are We Now?" *Music Educators Journal* 74, no. 2 (October 1987), 27-30.
- Gilbert, Janet, and Edward Asmus. "Mainstreaming: Music Educators' Participation and Professional Needs." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1981), 283-89.
- Graham, Richard. "Barrier-Free Music Education: Methods to Make Mainstreaming Work." *Music Educators Journal* 73, no. 5 (January 1988), 29-33.
- Thompson, Keith. "Music for Every Child: Education of Handicapped Learners." *Music Educators Journal* 68, no. 8 (April 1982), 25-28. □



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