THE VALUE OF ASSESSMENT FOR THE INCLUSIVE GENERAL MUSIC CLASSROOM

By Mary Elizabeth Quigley
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Approved by:
Dr. Kathryn L. Wert
Dr. Andrew T. Phillips
Abstract

This project contains an analysis of the current inclusion and assessment practices of the middle school (7th and 8th grade) general music classroom. There are many studies concerning inclusion of students with special needs and the importance of assessments in teaching music. However, there are very few studies that connect assessment techniques with inclusion, demonstrating that music teachers are teaching to each student’s ability.

This study used the case study methodology in the qualitative approach with teacher interviews, surveys, and several classroom observations to analyze the data. The data was coded, and names of people and the school district were anonymized to protect the privacy of those involved. After the data was analyzed, the best strategies for assessment as well as how to use those assessments were provided. The purpose of this project is to present findings on how methods of assessment can increase the success of all students in the inclusive general music classroom.

Keywords: inclusion, differentiation practices, summative assessment, formative assessment, special needs, general music.
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The Value of Assessment for the Inclusive General Music Classroom

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

With the increasing number of special learners and the No Child Left Behind Act, educators are trying to differentiate instruction amongst all learners. While some special needs students may still be taught in a non-traditional classroom, it is still the right of those learners to be included in the least restrictive environment. ¹ In the general music classroom, students with special needs thrive in ways that have a positive impact on “cognitive, emotional, and overall well-being.”³ To ensure that all types of learners reach their objectives, effective assessment strategies must be incorporated into the general music curriculum. Assessment is a tool that measures student knowledge and skills. Effective assessments will not only measure what students learn but also indicate if the curriculum objectives can be reached by all, including those with special needs.⁴

Background

In this thesis project I explored the most effective assessment techniques in general music classrooms. During this project, I also explored inclusive practices in general music in order to determine how assessment can further the learning goals of students with special needs. I believe that this research is beneficial to the music education community because there is a continuous need for inclusive learning environments for students with special needs.

When I started this project, I was particularly drawn to the topic of special needs in the general music classroom due to my own personal experience with these students. Before I began teaching full-time general music, I gained experience as a substitute teacher as well as a paraprofessional educator. A substitute teacher’s job spans a variety of roles depending on how willing he or she is to work in the grade level, subject or specialized classroom. As a substitute, I worked alongside learners of all levels in traditional classrooms, inclusive classrooms, and special needs-specific classrooms.

As a full-time paraprofessional, I worked with a first grader with severe behavioral, social, and cognitive disabilities. It was during my time with this student that I observed his interaction with classmates and the general music instructor. Students in this elementary music class participated in activities such as singing, listening, moving, and playing games. Many times, this student was very sensitive to the smallest type of stimulation and could not remain in class. Even with this student’s reactions to musical activities, the teacher did not use differentiation practices among the students. This was a challenging situation stemming from the difficulty of this student’s social interaction with his peers. While this experience was often emotionally difficult, I understood that this child had the right to receive the best education. I realized that this experience would help me in the future as a music educator, because I began to understand that I cannot teach every child the same way.

Music teachers should understand how to help every student grow musically with appropriate assessment techniques. Methods of assessment are widely discussed, and important in music education to show its validity as a vital part of the public-school curriculum. Officially, music education has been part of America since the 1620s with the arrival of the Pilgrims. However, public school music was developed in 19th century by education reformers like Lowell
Mason and William Channing Woodbridge. They established singing schools, which paved the way for music in public schools. In the late 1800s to early 1900s, the first educational organizations were formed.\(^5\) In 1924, the National Association for Music Education pronounced that music should be part of every child’s well-rounded education.\(^6\) Unfortunately in recent years, budget cuts have pressured schools to cut arts programs.\(^7\)

Although assessment is done in music classrooms, studies show that music teachers use it sporadically.\(^8\) Music is not usually treated like other subjects because it is not assessed in the same way as math or language arts. Some music teachers believe that they do enough informal (formative) assessment in their classes so that more (formal or summative) assessment is not needed. Some believe that assessment practices can be too rigid or mechanical. However, psychology shows that when assessments are conducted properly, they positively impact student learning.\(^9\) When teaching in an inclusive environment, the use of assessment could be useful to demonstrate that music is for all learners. No matter what aptitude students demonstrate, or whether they are labeled with a specific learning disability, these students should have the opportunity to succeed in their music learning goals.

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Purpose of Study

The purpose of this project was to discover the strengths and weaknesses that exist in assessment in the general music classroom. A secondary purpose that is connected and just as important is that by bringing these assessment practices to light, the music educator can create more inclusive classroom. Assessment and inclusion are connected because without a knowledge of foundational assessment strategies, music educators will not be able to provide students a variety of ways to achieve their goals as musicians.

Research Questions

This project examines the type and frequency of assessment in a single middle school classroom. The main research question I asked when beginning this project was:

1. If assessment is used, how are new student learning goals put in place once assessment is done?

Two other important research questions were:

2. What does an inclusive general music classroom look like?

3. How do assessment practices, if used in the general music classroom, help students with special needs to achieve learning goals?

The aims of assessments should be specified to meet individual learner’s goals in musicianship. If objectives are appropriate for the learner, then the general music classroom will become more accessible to all. The music educator can use the evaluation of student assessment to adjust the objectives depending on student performance. By doing this, the music educator will adjust and improve teaching practices.

The student population of the school that I observed contained students with a variety of learning needs. In my study, I hoped to learn whether learners with special needs participated in
general music. I also hoped to survey the teacher’s professional development involvement and determine if that included training in inclusive and assessment practices. Furthermore, I wanted to find out if the music educators within the same school district had similar philosophies about assessment as it is related to inclusion. If the music educator is provided with solid training in the areas of assessment and inclusion, then he or she will become more comfortable putting these tools into practice when faced with a variety of learners.

**Glossary of Terms**

*Assessment*- In education, *assessment* can be summative (or evaluative) or formative (informal). It refers to the variety of tools educators use to determine a student's progress, achievement, or the specific needs.\(^{10}\) Summative assessments are usually given at the end of an instructive period or unit. Formative assessments help to highlight a student’s strengths and weaknesses and are usually offered in the middle of a unit.\(^ {11}\)

*At-risk*- A child with this label does not have an Individual Education Plan but is identified with being “at-risk” for dropping out of school based on low academics.\(^ {12}\) The inclusion of the term “at-risk” can apply to any student who has learning needs, even if his or her learning needs are not immediately identifiable at a young age. The at-risk student may also have learning needs based on social, economic, or other situational influences.\(^ {13}\)

*Differentiation*- a series of strategies used by educators to accommodate students with differing abilities. Whether they have disabilities, or they have exceptional abilities, teachers need to be

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\(^ {12}\) Jellison, 6.

aware of and adapt to a variety of instructional needs. Differentiated practice can be connected to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), but with the key difference that instead of having a proactive instructional design, its design is more formative. More information on UDL is given under its definition.

*Inclusion*- Although definitions have been contested by researchers and are most commonly identified with those who have a disability, *inclusion* is generally defined by Cathy Nutbrown as “the values, practices and attitudes around creating communities of learning which involve and ‘belong to’ all members of that community: pupils, parents, staff and others connected with the setting in some way.” This topic is the focus of this project and will be thoroughly discussed. In this paper, inclusion will refer to classrooms that include students of a variety of abilities but can also apply to inclusion of students from a variety of cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

*Individual Education Plan (IEP)*- “A written plan for a child who is eligible for special education services.” An IEP is a detailed educational process that follows a student throughout his or her life, first as an academic plan but also as a plan to help the student function in society as an adult. The purpose of the IEP is to provide the most appropriate education for a child with disabilities, with continual effective communication between home and school. The use of the IEP is based on the student’s current performance, which is always being evaluated with the future of the student in mind.

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16 Nutbrown, 125-128.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act- This act was established in 1990 to help further promote the rights of individuals with disabilities to a free and appropriate education, a law that was amended from previous legislations in 1975, 1982 and then later amended again in 1991, 1997 and 2004. The 1990 legislation brought about changes in labeling “handicapped” children to children (or individuals) with disabilities. This language promotes the person before the disability. Because of these legislations, positive changes took place to promote inclusion in schools for those who had disabilities. Furthermore, services could not be denied to individuals with disabilities, regardless of severity. The IEP was developed because of these acts and contributed to the No Child Left Behind Act.

Least restrictive environment- under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the law states, “to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities will be educated with those who are not disabled” as well as “the environment where a student learns best.”

Label-free education- This refers to moving away from the label that a child may have given his or her disability, and instead, consider the individual that is being taught. Moreover, label-free education develops strategies that can be applied to a wide range of learners. Hammel and Hourigan explain that the idea of “label-free learning” comes from Keefe who says that although this term places importance on students with slower cognition some distinctions are needed. Often, music educators adapt to these students. However, teachers must also consider students who learn at a faster rate than their peers.

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20 Hammel and Hourigan, 34.
21 Ibid. xii.
22 Hammel and Hourigan, xiii.
No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)- This is a legislative act passed in 2002 mandating that schools give yearly student assessments to determine which schools achieved proficiency in reading and math.\textsuperscript{23} This act changed the way that students were assessed in the classroom by pressuring schools to reach high standards in math and reading. It also grouped students into categories based on social, economic, race, and disability status. Unfortunately, students who do not meet the standards are often kept from extra-curricular subjects such as music in order to improve test scores.\textsuperscript{24}

Special Needs- A term used to generally describe the physical and/or learning needs that impact the educational needs of a child.\textsuperscript{25} Although students that have special needs are referenced, the purpose of this project is to present findings on how methods of assessment can increase the success of all students in the inclusive general music classroom, including those whose abilities are at the traditional level and above average.

Universal Design for Learning- The philosophy of Universal Design for Learning promotes inclusion. According to Brillante and Nemeth, "Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework that helps all teachers in all classrooms adapt to meet the needs of each individual child."\textsuperscript{26} It helps teachers realize that with the increasing diversity in school environments, they cannot have a “one-size-fits-all” mindset in their teaching styles.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} Dee and Jacob, "The Impact of No Child Left Behind on Student Achievement," (2011): 420.
\textsuperscript{24} Hammel and Hourigan, 35-36.
\textsuperscript{25} Nutbrown, 130.
\textsuperscript{27} Brillante and Nemeth, 2.
Significance of the Study

This is the vision of the ideal general music class; students are playing a variety of instruments, singing, composing, and dancing together. These students are of different abilities, cultural backgrounds, and social groups, yet they work together to create music. Teacher modeling takes place, but students also model for each other, creating a sense of true “musicking.”

This project consists of an analysis of current models of instruction in a general music classroom. It also analyzes the use of both formative and summative assessment techniques and how they lead to better inclusion.

There exists a need for better and consistent assessment techniques within the classroom, as well as a more inclusive music classroom for varying abilities. This project demonstrated the need for better teacher training in areas of inclusion in the music classroom. Studies show that although most music educators use assessments in their classrooms, they do not assess their students consistently. Even more importantly, there is not much literature regarding the outcome of these assessments. The special education population is impacted greatly by the proper or improper use of assessments. If teachers know how to assess, the overall learning goals of their students are likely to improve.

Method

During this project, I used data collected from one public schools’ music program to answer questions about the effectiveness of assessment methods. I determined if assessment is used consistently (or at all) in this general music classroom. The best assessment strategies, if

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30 Salvador, "Assessment and Individualized Instruction in Elementary General Music,” 19.
done consistently, can then be used to create better accommodations for a student with a disability. They can also help students create new learning objectives by focusing on their strengths and highlighting their needs.31

I chose a middle school classroom for my research. This classroom was chosen at random in the Bakersfield School District. Prior to the selection of this classroom, data was collected from teacher surveys. After the classroom was selected, data was collected from classroom observations, and a teacher interview. The observations were passive with no participation from the researcher. The data from this classroom was compared to data from practices that have been discussed in academic journals and books from the past twenty years. I hoped to discover through observation of student interaction with classroom instruction what assessments are being used and whether they influence student learning goals. I also hoped that through this project, the best or improved assessment techniques could be used by music educators and adapted accordingly in their own school districts and communities.

**Statement of the Problem**

Many educators believe that when special needs students are included into a regular classroom setting, the experience is overall positive. Research shows that all students, regardless of their learning needs, benefit from the social interaction of peers who are different from themselves.32 However, educators may lower their academic expectations on the basis that a child is labeled “special needs” because of lack of professional training in inclusive strategies.33

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Despite the evidence that teachers need more training in the area of special needs, there exists an emphasis on high stakes testing, which demonstrates the results of summative assessments for educators, students and the community.\textsuperscript{35} This is can contradict the goal of instructing concepts and skills.\textsuperscript{36} Music educators have attempted to use different forms of assessment based on those used in other subjects for meeting the criteria of high stakes testing.\textsuperscript{37} Although music educators have used this model provided by high stakes testing, these assessments have shown to be inconsistent and not beneficial in the inclusive classroom.\textsuperscript{38}

Proper training on assessment techniques should be a requirement for music educators. According to Karen Salvador, "Surveys of middle school general music teachers reveal that most assess their students, but infrequently, and the most commonly used assessments were observations of groups, not individual students."\textsuperscript{39} Teachers have a variety of excuses for this infrequency from teacher load to having to accommodate Individual Education Plans (IEPs).\textsuperscript{40} It is for this last reason that music educators should learn how to adapt the information that they gain in assessments to the learner’s goals, not just for the purpose of assigning grades, but to enhance learning.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Limitations of the Study}

Before beginning my study, I received approval by the Institutional Review Board as well as the public-school district. The length of this study from approval process to the end of

\textsuperscript{37} Colwell, \textit{MENC Handbook of Research Methodologies}, 200.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 199-200.
\textsuperscript{39} Salvador, 19
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
research took place over four months. Because this study only took place in one school district in such a short period of time, it was a limited study. The main limitation of this study is that it only covered project data a single population of a school district. Because it is a single population, it is considered a case study. Although this limits the representation of larger communities, it is understood that the methods used in this middle school general music class are unique to the instructor’s teaching style and that assessment techniques used at this level may not be the same as those for other grade levels.

The results of this study will show that the main area of research was assessment in the general music classroom. The reason for this is that there were no students with special needs enrolled in the general music class observed. However, much of the information in this study can still be applied to create a more inclusive classroom.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Recommendations for future study include a comparison of similar school districts who also have general music programs. This would be helpful to determine if other school districts use assessment practices to inform the inclusive classroom and if they use them in similar ways. In addition, future studies could also compare these same practices at different grade levels. This study was limited to the middle school level, although many ideas should apply to both elementary and high school music classes as well.
CHAPTER 2  
LITERATURE REVIEW  

Introduction  

The following literature review highlights two main aspects of this study: the need for better inclusion strategies in music education and the selection of assessment practices in the music classroom. Part of creating better inclusion strategies is having assessments that benefit all students, regardless of their specific learning needs. This literature review reveals that while much has been said on both topics, it is still uncomfortable for many music educators to connect these two ideas. Using assessment strategies to create a more inclusive environment is discussed by only a few scholars. Using the concepts of assessment and inclusiveness together could be applied more widely, especially in music education.  

In the first part of this literature review I will discuss the history behind inclusion in the United States and beyond. Progress has been made for inclusion in public schools as well as in music education. The legislation that is pushed by private organizations have suggested that there are many positive outcomes for those with disabilities in recent years. There are many music educators who are passionate about working with school administrators, special educators, parents, and the community to improve assessment and inspire change.  

The second half of this literature review discusses assessment in the general music classroom; what has been done among notable music educators and some improvements that need to be made. I will use the examples of specific music educators who have developed effective assessment methods. I will also discuss how creating better assessment strategies can benefit the inclusive music classroom.  

In regards to assessment, Edwin Gordon said, “A serious problem in music education is many teachers rarely measure students’ achievement, yet they continuously evaluate it (more
popularly called assessment) often using subjective results to indirectly appraise effectiveness of their own teaching. This literature discusses several aspects of assessment such as what defines assessment, what types of assessment exist, and what roles these types of assessment play in a music curriculum. It also demonstrates that misunderstandings exist about assessment which leads to misapplication. Some studies offer music educators methods they can use to incorporate assessment in their classrooms. This shows that assessment can either tend to use a traditional approach by emphasizing the importance of grades, or it can become too informal. A balance of both summative assessment and formative assessment is necessary in music education.

Section I: Inclusion in Music Education

The Advancement of Inclusion in Public Education

Efforts for an appropriate education for those with special needs have been pushed as early as 1972. In 1986, the early intervention age was expanded to a range from ages 3-21 and eventually became part of the law passed known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990. Since this act was passed, the inclusion of students with disabilities among their non-disabled peers is required for schools.

When IDEA was passed in 1990, the idea of "person-first" language was encouraged rather than “disability-first” by saying, "a person with disabilities" rather than "a disabled person." IDEA also became important because it helped educators with planning, implementing, and


evaluating a student's special education. Many changes were made to this act after 1990 which enabled teachers to provide a classroom environment where students with disabilities could succeed, including the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, the IEP team composition, and provision of services to students with specific learning disabilities. Music educators have also become a part of the IEP team and are responsible for communicating with other team members and understanding their role to help a student with special needs become successful.

The history of the education of students with special needs is important when discussing inclusion in music education. Many scholars reference it to support their ideas, including Edward C. Hoffman when he discusses the role of the National Association for Music Education (formerly known as MENC but now NAfME). Even before this national legislation, music educators recognized the right of every child to receive instruction in music. In 1924, MENC’s slogan was "Music for every child—every child for music." NAfME has issued a “Child’s Bill of Rights” at a past in-service in New Orleans. It includes

As their right, all children at every level must have access to a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential program of music instruction in school taught by teachers qualified in music.

And

As their right, all children must receive the finest possible education in music, every child must have an equal opportunity to study music, and the quality and quantity of children’s music instruction must not depend upon their geographical location, social status, racial or ethnic status, urban/suburban/rural residence, or parental or community wealth.

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45 Hoffman, 5.
46 Hammel and Hourigan, 29.
49 Hoffman, 6–7.
50 Ibid, 9.
“All children” includes children that have special needs. This assumption is supported in the “Vision 2020” Housewright Declaration which says, “All persons, regardless of age, cultural heritage, ability, venue, or financial circumstance deserve to participate fully in the best music experiences possible.” A child’s right to music is not only part of an American education, but has also been acknowledged throughout the world. While IDEA was being passed in 1990s, the United Nations were holding The Convention of the Rights of Children. Articles discussed in this convention addressed a child’s right to enjoy a full life including recreation and "fullest possible social integration" which includes "cultural and spiritual development" but also identifies the importance of promoting the child’s right to “participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

Efforts of Music Educators towards Inclusion

Many educators have recognized that students with special needs have a right to a music education. Many recognize that an effective way to help children access these rights is to enlighten educators as well as the community about centering on the person rather than the disability. They see the potential that a student has for learning, regardless of his or her disability. This is done by changing the language that has been used for many years regarding special education.


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offer many valuable ideas that are the foundation for why inclusion exists in music education. Jellison and Flowers discuss the labels that have been given to students with disabilities. When labels exist in a classroom, the teacher’s expectations for a child are lowered and that can affect learning goals. There is not as much importance placed on standards met by a student with learning needs than for a student without.\textsuperscript{54} Although it was written almost thirty years ago, this article begs the question of whether music educators still have the same expectations for these students when they are labeled.

Alice Hammel and Ryan M. Hourigan write in the preface to \textit{Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach} that, “A focus of this book is that a student with special needs is an individual who deserves a music education that is free of labels.”\textsuperscript{55} Instead of discussing different types of disabilities, as has been done in undergrad studies, Hammel and Hourigan offer student-centered and unbiased phraseology throughout. They say that the strategies in their book can be applied to a wide range of learners, not just those with special needs.\textsuperscript{56}

These beliefs mirror Jellison and Flowers who say that although a student may be labeled “disabled” he or she is not necessarily musically disabled, and that there are many similarities in the musical knowledge of a wide range of learners.\textsuperscript{57} Jellison continues to support her own ideas in \textit{Including Everyone: Creating Music Classrooms Where all Children Learn}.\textsuperscript{58} She says that there are few studies on the achievements of special needs students in music unless they are

\textsuperscript{55} Hammel and Hourigan, 2017, xxiii.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, xii.
\textsuperscript{57} Jellison and Flowers, (1991), 331.
musical savants. However, studies exist to show that some students with special needs can show musical aptitude at or above the same level as their peers.59 Blair also states that it is the teacher's responsibility to create meaningful experiences for all learners, not just those who are talented.60 Not only do these scholars help music educators learn person-first terminology, but they also give music educators practical ideas that they can use immediately.

**Practical ideas on Inclusion in the General Music Classroom**

Music education scholars have given insight on how inclusion should take place in the music classroom. By discussing steps that apply to many types of learners, these noted scholars can help music educators become successful. Through an awareness of these practical ideas and practice, music educators will feel more comfortable differentiating their curriculum and creating an accessible classroom.

*Differentiation* is a key term in the creation of an inclusive classroom. Alice-Ann Darrow discusses the definition of differentiated instruction in her article, "Differentiated Instruction for Students with Disabilities: Using DI in the Music Classroom."61 She says that it is not the same as working with individual students. Instead, differentiated instruction is working with a group of students and individualizing the objectives for different students in the group. There are three areas that may be differentiated: the content, the process, and the products of the learning objectives. Darrow also discusses how formative assessments are a key feature of guiding

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differentiated instruction. This demonstrates that for an inclusive music classroom to exist, the music educator must use assessment to guide the learning objectives.

Unfortunately, many music educators do not practice differentiated learning because they do not have enough experience. Many music educators are unaware of professional development activities that will help them become more comfortable using differentiated practices. Deborah V Blair’s article, “Making it Happen: Creative Pedagogy for Learners with Special Needs” is relatable for the music educator who feels unprepared in inclusive practices. She emphasized putting in extra time to observe a student with special needs in different classrooms outside of music in order to better implement differentiation strategies. It may be necessary for the music educator to use planning time to get to know students outside of the music classroom, to find out about their musical interests, and to observe academic strengths and weaknesses. Part of understanding differentiation may include becoming familiar with a student’s physical and cognitive challenges. There are also a number of ideas that apply to physical adaptations of the instruments, printed music and classroom. Stephen Zdzinski says that individual evaluations are necessary before beginning instruction to assign an instrument that will not hinder a child from playing, even if the child has physical limitations. When helping a student learn to adapt to

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62 Darrow, 30.
an instrument, the most important consideration is the student’s preference in instruments, as this can motivate a student to succeed in performance.\(^6^7\)

Communication with other educators, especially special educators, is vital to an inclusive music classroom. Darrow says that “Understanding and employing concepts and initiatives in special education are only a beginning to improved instruction for students with disabilities."\(^6^8\) Being a part of the IEP team will create a cohesive education for the child with special needs. When communication is clear among all that are involved in a child’s education, the music educator will better understand the needs of the student as a person and not as a student with a disability.

Hammel and Hourigan discuss this idea of a student-centered classroom in their book, *Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach*. They say that oftentimes, inclusion starts with a well-prepared environment. The music instructor must have effective classroom management strategies such as close supervision and monitoring, clear rules, and a chance for student response and contingent praise.\(^6^9\) Other suggestions include creating special signals between instructor and student to guide in behavior, with the instructor offering a variety of kinesthetic, oral, and visual ways of learning in a consistent classroom environment. Praise is also a very important part of encouraging the student in the learning process and can be used with all students.\(^7^0\)

**Inclusion in Relation to Culture and Society**

Inclusion goes beyond accommodations. It also involves thinking about every child in the general music class regardless of ability, race, class, and culture. When educators teach students

\(^{6^7}\) Zdzinski, 27.
\(^{6^8}\) Darrow, 31.
\(^{6^9}\) Hammel and Hourigan, 97.
\(^{7^0}\) Ibid, 99-100.
about the value of diversity and acceptance of others despite apparent differences, they help students become a part of the success of an inclusive music classroom. Although the following article deals more with social inclusion than inclusion of students with special needs, "Socially Inclusive Practices in the Music Classroom: The Impact of Music Education used as a Vehicle to Engage Refugee Background Students" highlights aspects of this issue that apply to many areas of education. Author Renée Crawford’s main emphasis is that 

Music education has the potential to be a major vehicle for enhancing the development of such a new social reality through its emphasis on cross-cultural learning and sharing as a fundamental tenet of musical activity, and its commitment to school and community performances so that the outcomes of transculturation arts-based learning are disseminated to the wider community.  

Although she referenced refugees in Australia, her article discussed an aspect of music education that is beneficial to students who are not skilled in other subject areas such as math or English. In these cases, the skills that these students learn in music may help them improve in other academic areas. Crawford also says that in a music class, despite skill level or cultural background, no student is left out when the goal is that students work together.  

Section II: Assessment in Music Education

Defining the Roles of Assessment in Music Education

In his book, Teaching Music Musically, Swanwick talks about how assessment is part of everyday life and helps individuals make decisions. It is important for music educators to understand why and how to assess in music education. Assessment has always been a part of evaluating how and why student learning and educators are aware of assessment as it is tied into

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72 Crawford, 5-8.
the curriculum objectives. While assessment takes place in music education, it is not always used in a way to demonstrate student growth, especially when the student has specific learning needs.

Sheila J Scott discusses three roles of assessment: (1) assessment of learning, (2) assessment for learning, and (3) assessment as learning.\textsuperscript{74} In her article, "Rethinking the Roles of Assessment in Music Education," Scott defines “assessment of learning” as passive learning, and the most traditional approach. This is considered summative assessment, where grades are assigned.\textsuperscript{75} According to Heidi L. Andrade and Gregory J. Cizek, summative assessment usually takes place at the end of instruction, such as the end of a unit. Its purpose is not to be used to critique a student about his progress but to provide evidence for promotion of the student to the next level.\textsuperscript{76}

Summative assessment is prioritized throughout education due to the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), which required that students participate in standardized testing in the areas of reading and math.\textsuperscript{77} Summative assessment has also been attached to high stakes, which demonstrates the results of these assessments for educators, students, and the community.\textsuperscript{78} By requiring schools to administer standardized tests, schools that are falling below the “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) are more easily identifiable. Those schools that meet AYP are given sanctions and rewards. Because each school’s progress is publicized, the hope is that schools are motivated into meeting standards.\textsuperscript{79} Many critics do not agree that NCLB positively motivates schools to meet standards, instead they believe that high stakes puts pressure on educators and

\textsuperscript{74} Scott, "Rethinking the Roles of Assessment in Music Education." (2012): 31.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Andrade and Cizek, 3.
\textsuperscript{77} Thomas S. Dee and Brian Jacob, "The Impact of no Child Left Behind on Student Achievement," Journal of Policy Analysis and Management 30, no. 3 (2011): 418.
\textsuperscript{79} Dee and Jacob, 418.
schools during assessment. Some believe that it can cause educators to purposefully neglect
subjects such as social studies, art and music. Many music educators do not evaluate in the
same manner as core subjects, and fear that the arts will not be funded.

Most music educators tend to use formative assessment practices in the classroom.
Formative assessment is important in music because it is a performance driven subject, used to
give students feedback on learning, helping teachers plan curriculum, and demonstrate a
student’s strengths and weaknesses. Assessment can be formal or informal, but the latter is vital
when students self-evaluate. Through research and practice, defining the roles of summative and
formative assessment in music education can improve how music educators use it in their
curriculums.

Scott uses the example of a teacher who uses a rubric to assess a student’s singing tone. The
teacher may take this assessment and assign a grade to show evidence of successful completion
of student objectives. The teacher may also compare various students’ progress. Some students
do well when they take part in summative assessments, however this is not best for students with
anxiety. A student with special needs may not do well with traditional testing unless the test is
modified to meet the student’s needs. The music educator should consider what kind of
adaptations to current curriculum may be necessary to conduct assessment of learning. The
music educator should also consider how the student best learns; visually, aurally, or
kinesthetically.

80 Dee and Jacob, 419.
81 Richard Colwell, ed. MENC Handbook of Research Methodologies, Cary: Oxford University, 199-200,
83 Scott, 32
84 Hammel and Hourigan, 124.
“Assessment for learning” can be a teacher’s feedback to the student about what he or she learned. The student is not compared with others, but with curriculum objectives. This type of learning is influenced by constructivism.\textsuperscript{85} Constructivism is a learning theory which has been widely discussed and used in education. It is loosely defined as “learning as a social process.”\textsuperscript{86}

Both assessment for learning and assessment as learning are formative assessments.\textsuperscript{87} Formative assessments are usually conducted in the middle of a unit and are not for recording grades but to help the instructor and the student meet specific learning goals.\textsuperscript{88} In “assessment as learning” the student reflects on his or her own learning.\textsuperscript{89} A student at this stage is an “active learner.” He or she takes part in comparing what he or she has learned to the curriculum objectives. It may take a student time to learn how to assess his or her own learning and may even require the instructor’s help.\textsuperscript{90}

Studies show that self and peer-assessment can be very effective. In their article “Applications of Peer Assessment and Self-Assessment in Music,”\textsuperscript{91} Christopher Valle, Heidi Andrade, Maria Palma and Joanna Hefferen demonstrate that when teachers facilitate a system of guided questioning with detailed rubrics, students can successfully assess their own performances. In self-assessment, a student can critique his or her own work when given goals or criteria. After this, a student should be able to revise his or her performance to meet or go beyond the expected standards. This is not an evaluation where students give themselves grades, but an opportunity for students to see their own gaps and strengths in learning. In the same manner,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{85} Scott, 32.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Hammel and Hourigan, 122.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 33.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Andrade and Cizek, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Scott, 32.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid, 33.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Christopher Valle, Heidi Andrade, Maria Palma, and Joanna Hefferen, “Applications of Peer Assessment and Self-Assessment in Music,” \textit{Music Educators Journal}, 102, no. 4 (2016): 41-49.
\end{itemize}
peer-assessment can be a valuable tool for students to give each other feedback using similar criteria and guided expectations. Students should be taught to use constructive language in the peer-assessment process. They can ask clarifying questions, identify strengths, and identify areas that need to be improved. In this study, teachers explain and model the criteria to their students using standards from a previous model. The article contains an example of a piano performance rubric that is specific to the concepts of pitch, beat and rhythm. It is personalized to the student and lists expectations using first-person. An example under pitch would be “I kept my hands in place.” Another example for beat would be “I felt the tick-tock inside while I played” and for rhythm, “I kept the rests silent.” Because this rubric uses personal and straightforward language, a student can answer these questions clearly after he or she performs.

Swanwick says that assessment can take place in many ways. When a music educator decides how to assess a student, whether it be formal or informal, he or she must have a clear understanding on how the assessment will inform daily teaching practices. The problem is not in the use of assessment to guide one’s teaching practices, but to either continuously assess in the moment or to only use assessment as a means to guide students to test or perform with the teacher’s exact criteria. Neither assessment model is incorrect, however, a balance of different types of assessment will lead to an awareness of how these assessments effect the curriculum as well as guide student learning.

**Inconsistencies in Assessment Practices in Music Education**

Music educators tend to emphasize one type of assessment or the other. Karen Salvador’s article, "Assessment and Individualized Instruction in Elementary School General Music: A Case
Study” addresses the issues of inconsistent assessment practices. Through a series of surveys, interviews, observations, and reading of teacher journals, Salvador discovered that assessment leads to generalization of instruction. She states that although teachers have reported that they use assessment to inform instruction, “little published work describes how teachers apply the results of assessments to their instruction.” Salvador’s findings were taken from surveys conducted from 1997-2010. The surveys revealed that most teachers assess their students in groups. Many of the reasons that teachers either do not or inconsistently assess their students include: “teaching load, lack of time, pressure to perform, discipline problems, attendance issues, and accommodating Individual Education Plans.”

Salvador writes about a classroom in which Ms. Stevens, the elementary music educator, uses group observation to assess her students. Although this elementary teacher observed the whole group, she was still able to meet the individual learning needs of one student. In this example, Ms. Stevens teaches a song by rote. Students individually sing phrases back to her. She can encourage several students to experiment with their singing while encouraging one child to meet the challenge of singing on pitch by repeating singing phrases to him.

Salvador used a case study to find out how and when an elementary general music teacher uses assessment to individualize instruction. She also discovered how these assessments informed the teacher of what students could or could not do. Salvador believes that, "Assessments should be explicitly tied to specific curricular goals and outcomes in order to be

96 Salvador, 19-20.
97 Ibid, 19
98 Ibid.
effective in their primary purpose: improving teaching and learning.” Her study served as a model for the present study; it demonstrates how assessment affects inclusion in music education.

Salvador reported that the inclusive practices in instruction were mixed with the assessments that Ms. Stevens provided. Salvador stated that “…the tapestry of Ms. Stevens’ music teaching included nearly omnipresent threads of assessment and individualized instruction—threads that were often so intertwined as to be somewhat indistinguishable.” Individualized instruction was structured according to the needs of each student in her class, which meant varying the difficulty level or complexity of the task required of that student. Sometimes the assessments were open-ended and allowed students to guide their own instruction, and sometimes assessments could be used as a means of instruction.

Ms. Stevens developed several assessments that she used throughout the year. Some assessments were used every class. Examples of frequent assessments are Learning Sequence Activities (LSA’s) and embedded performance assessments. Ms. Steven’s tracked student progress in a binder through a series of hash marks. The LSA assessments consisted of a series of singing prompts that were often based on Gordon’s Rhythm or Tonal LSA Books. LSA’s were brief and only used about five minutes of class. They could be individual or group prompts. Embedded assessments included singing/movement games (which included a variety of concepts), student accompaniment and student improvisation. These were assessed using a rubric on a numeric scale. Other assessments that Ms. Stevens used less frequently include written assessments, aptitude tests and report cards.

99 Salvador, 22.
100 Ibid, 24.
101 Ibid, 27.
102 Salvador, 23.
When Ms. Stevens used her assessments to guide individualized instruction, it was often in the moment, but always based on previously demonstrated skills. Ms. Stevens recorded vignettes about a student’s performance in a journal. This helped her adapt future lessons to the skill level of that student. By using rating scales, she was able to determine how far a student progressed in a specific music performance category.\textsuperscript{103} Salvador observes that Ms. Stevens can individualize in the moment successfully because she knows her student’s needs. In addition, she used classroom management strategies to create a learning environment that makes individual responses normal, safe, and expected for her students. If a student is performing individually, Ms. Stevens can use it both as an assessment and to individualize instruction. She can have the student respond musically on his or her own level, to help the student meet his or her goals or to challenge the student to go beyond what has already been achieved.\textsuperscript{104}

While this study focuses on a music teacher who delivered a variety of effective assessments, Salvador also suggests that this is a rare case. In general music education, better assessment techniques should be used. Salvador has not seen as much individualized learning in other classrooms. Many of Ms. Stevens’ assessments utilize Gordon’s Music Learning Theory (MLT). Salvador suggests that if elementary teachers do not have time to develop their own assessment tools, they could use those that are based on MLT, specifically Learning Sequence Activities.\textsuperscript{105} Ms. Stevens’ methods serve as a model for music educators who are not aware of the resources that exist on assessment used to individualize learning. Ms. Stevens’ practices reflect her personal teaching philosophy that every child can progress and grow in music, regardless of natural ability.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{103} Salvador, 26.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid, 32.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 30.
The problems of how, why, and when to assess precede the early 2000s. Swanwick analyzes problem areas in the development of assessment models in the 1990s. At this time in the United States, criteria for assessing musical performance was based on complexity, which meant quantity of musical elements, rather than quality. Swanwick says, “Complexity by itself is no virtue. Performing a wide range of complex music without evidence of understanding would definitely not count as a high level of achievement. And it is certainly possible to perform, compose and enjoy a high quality of musical experience without any great complexity.” Instead of evaluating music by complexity Swanwick suggests that music be evaluated in several layers. These layers include awareness of and in control of: sound materials, awareness of and in control of expressive qualities in music, awareness of and in control of form, awareness of and in control of how one’s personal culture relates to the value of music.

When developing these layers in music curriculum, it is important to consider the types of activities and the outcomes of learning. Richard Colwell reinforces this statement in the chapter, “Assessment’s Potential in Music Education,” by saying “…There must be a direct match between the curriculum and what the student is expected to know and do in the assessment.” He believes that this is often not the case, when schools are solely focused on high stakes testing. If educators provide summative assessments, the questions that are included must be valuable to the student’s learning. Swanwick believes that layers of music should not only include performance but also creativity. Students begin to develop freedom and responsibility when given the chance to interact with music in multiple ways.

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107 Swanwick, 68.
109 Ibid, 71.
110 Colwell, 201
111 Colwell, 200.
112 Ibid, 77.
Gordon’s MLT supports the idea that assessment integrated correctly in music instruction can offer students freedom to reach their potential. Gordon’s music aptitude tests were uniquely developed to help instructors and parents understand what a student can achieve in music based on his or her natural potential and not based on judgements from self or others. The LSA’s that Gordon developed are not adapted to student learning differences by altering the type of skills. The skills addressed are generally singing, chanting, reading, writing, creating, or improvising. Regardless of type, they can be altered according to difficulty. Gordon believed that when instruction is adapted to the student’s individual skill level, he or she will be able to maximize potential. However, if the instructor teaches all students as if they are average or below, then students will only learn at a mediocre level.

Gordon’s music aptitude tests have several purposes, with one of the most important as diagnosing student strengths and weaknesses and helping teachers determine how to individualize instruction. His philosophy is that all students can grow in music, despite labels they have been given according to their disabilities. His philosophy also supports the idea that self-assessment can help a student become aware of his or her potential in music, pushing the student to go beyond expectations.

Some critics say in order to let assessment guide the curriculum, student-led learning in an informal musical environment can lead to longer lasting outcomes. According to John McCarthy in his article, “Student-Centered Learning: It Starts With the Teacher,” student-led learning is when students are allowed to share in the decisions of learning, which helps them gain confidence in leadership roles and remember what it feels like to learn. He also says that it may

113 Gordon, 44-45.
114 Ibid, 48.
115 Ibid, 49.
116 Ibid, 54.
be challenging, but teachers need to change from a “do as I say” role, to a more consultative “based on your needs” role. Many music educators believe that cooperative music, which naturally occurs in society, is informal learning.

In a project conducted in London from 2004-2006, 13 and 14-year old students in seven schools participated in a program in which informal learning practices of popular musicians were brought to the formal environment of the school classroom. Students found that because they learned to create music in a similar manner to studio musicians, they were able to apply what they learned immediately. For these students, this style of learning was more valuable to them than what they had learned in a traditional music classroom.

Lucy Green, author of *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*, describes her study through vignettes of students. The interviews revealed that although many of them had learned to play a musical instrument before the project, they did not consider it learning. These students did not call themselves musicians, but in spite of this, they became more confident in playing an instrument. One teacher who was part of this project explained that although students were of varying abilities, they were able to, with some input from the teacher, simplify a chord or beat so they could succeed through the learning choices they made.

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119 Ibid, 64.
120 Ibid, 136.
Conclusion

This literature revealed that music teachers feel unprepared to teach students with disabilities. This literature demonstrated that although music educators receive an undergraduate education that includes creating a sequence of objectives, enhancing skills and other creative aspects in the classroom, individualization of instruction is not emphasized as much as in other areas of education. Among the reasons for this is that many music educators receive field experiences in their undergraduate education but are not encouraged to plan lessons that are both sequential and meet the needs of different types of learners.\textsuperscript{121} Despite the evidence that many music educators feel unequipped in the areas of assessment and inclusion, studies show that resources are available to music educators. They also demonstrate that efforts are being made to improve assessment in general music while being aware that this can create a more inclusive environment.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Data Needed

For this project, I sought out current practices on assessment and their impact on inclusion in the general music classroom. Throughout the discovery of this data, patterns were revealed as to the frequency of these assessment practices (if assessments were used at all) and the results of these assessments. Questions were answered about the relation of assessment results to overall student music goals for the year. I had hoped to conduct observations in general music for all levels, but the concern was mainly for those with specific learning needs.

The principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act have had a great impact on the rights of special needs students in all aspects of education, including music education. Before legislation put these rights into place, leaders in music education have espoused that music is the right of all children. Despite their efforts, music educators still struggle with adapting teaching practices for special needs learners. Zdzinski states, “The wide variety of cognitive, physical, and social abilities and disabilities possessed by "special learners" makes the task of inclusion a challenge especially for the instrumental music teacher who must keep in mind the individual modifications and instructional goals needed…” If music educators are to have a successful inclusive classroom, they need to understand how to differentiate their learning objectives.

122 Hammel Hourigan, 28.
124 Ibid, 11.
125 Zdzinski, 27.
Differentiation is a key to the success of an inclusive classroom. Differentiation can be defined as, “a process where educators vary the learning activities, content demands, modes of assessment, and the classroom environment to meet the needs and to support the growth of each child.” There are many aspects of a child’s music education which can be differentiated to fit learning abilities. According to Alice-Anne Darrow, “Although the focus of the subject matter—the essential concepts—is the same for all students, individual students are learning the curriculum content at different levels of complexity and are expressing what they know at different levels of sophistication.”

What can be differentiated is the content of the curriculum, the process of the curriculum and the product of the curriculum. Differentiating curriculum is not the same as working individually with students. Working individually with a student is something that a teacher can do every day to provide a student with personal attention in his or her learning, but true differentiation deals more with specifics in the curriculum. It is the curriculum that must be altered according to the student’s needs. This does not mean that a student with learning disabilities will be learning a different curriculum than other students, or a curriculum inappropriate for their grade level, but instead, different layers or aspects may be highlighted so that these students can express what they know at their own level.

Music educators can become more proficient in differentiated learning by partnering with educators in other subject areas, especially paraprofessionals and special education teachers. Also, understanding appropriate terminology when part of the Individual Education Plan team

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127 Ibid, 30
128 Ibid.
provides better communication with other educators, parents, and administrators.¹²⁹

Differentiation is an important aspect of the inclusive classroom and should be considered when music teachers assess their students. Through conducting surveys, observations, and an interview, I wanted to find out in what ways (if used at all) differentiation was part of in the general music classroom, especially for the purpose of assessing students.

**Tools, Procedures, Discovery Goals**

Among a group of public-school general music programs, I selected a single public school in the district. This school district contains three elementary schools, an upper elementary school (grades 5-6) as well as the middle school (grades 7-8). I did not include the high school because the high school has music electives, such as band and chorus, rather than a general music program. There were three steps in discovering the effectiveness of assessments in general music: a teacher survey, classroom observations and a post-observation interview.

I selected a teacher’s classroom to observe from the survey participants. Mr. Brown was chosen because he could accommodate my study. I wanted to observe three consecutive classes at a school to understand how Mr. Brown conducted his curriculum. I was looking for a progression in student learning and the outcome of that learning through assessment practices used in class. I was also looking for ways that the music teacher individualized instruction if this took place at all. The hope was that through these surveys, observations and the interview, themes would emerge about the strengths and weaknesses of assessment practices in a public general music classroom. In addition, I hoped to understand more about the attitudes of general music teachers, and the district as whole about inclusive education. In this district, 7th and 8th

¹²⁹Darrow, 29.
grade students meet every day for forty minute classes, for a total of ten weeks. Music is considered a “special,” which means that students alternate between extracurricular subjects for each of the four quarters that exist during the school year. Each of Mr. Brown’s general music classes have around twenty students. When I went to observe his classes, I observed the 8th grade piano class for three consecutive mornings in one week. Although they met around the same time each morning, I saw two groups of 8th grade students because of the slight alteration in class schedules each day.

**Process of Finding Information**

The findings on classroom assessment and inclusion were processed through an anonymous teacher survey, a series of three classroom observations, and an interview with the middle school general music teacher after observing. I took notes and audio-recorded both observations and the interview. To record this data, I sought approval from the school district, as well as the Institutional Review Board. I chose the classroom for observations after conducting teacher surveys and the teacher interview took place after the observations.

**Value of Participant Involvement**

For the first step in my research, I sent surveys to several general music teachers in one district. In the surveys, I asked teachers questions on assessment and their methods of differentiation in an inclusive classroom. I learned what methods of differentiation they used if they used any at all when assessing. I also learned what their views on assessment and inclusion, whether they should be a part of a general music education. Finally, I asked questions on attitudes towards continuing education about these topics.
The classroom observations came next and were conducted in a single general music classroom. I attended three middle school general music classes, during which time I took notes and recorded parts of Mr. Brown’s instruction on piano and music theory. I looked at samples of student work, as well as the rubrics showing expectation of learning outcomes. I also observed students during class and took notes on what they did after Mr. Brown instructed them, as well as how he assessed each of his students.

After observing these three classes, I wanted to ask Mr. Brown more specific questions on his curriculum, his method of instruction, and his assessment methods. I also had questions on the school districts views and methods of inclusion as part of the music program. By analyzing the data gained from the interview, surveys, and observations, I began to draw conclusions about the current practices in assessment, and whether the patterns are consistent with what has been said in academic literature.

**Methods of Collecting**

The methodology used for this study is a case study using a qualitative approach. Usually, when conducting a case study, either a specific instance or specific population is the focus. The purpose of conducting a case study in this research project was to reveal a broad trend or issue related to assessment in music education.\(^{130}\) This particular design was chosen for reasons such as the fact that a small school district was used, as well as the desire to compare general trends that occur throughout the American education system. The time for this project was limited, and because it focused on one general music program in one specific school, a case study was the best research design.

Originally, I wanted to work with a local city district that was large and diverse enough to receive a variety of practice methods among music educators of that district. Although the process of selecting a school was difficult and the outcome was different than anticipated, much information was gained from the school district that was willing to participate in this study, which ended up being a small suburban school district.

I was still able to collect the necessary data on methods of both summative and formative assessment in the music classroom. Summative assessments can include a written test given at the end of a unit or the end of the quarter. Andrade and Cizek say that the purpose of summative assessment “is to categorize the performance of a student or system.”\textsuperscript{131} They also say that in general, a test is a good example of a summative assessment because it helps in assigning grades and showing evidence for or against promotion. Summative assessments are often related to performance-based testing and show obvious outcomes. The purpose of these is not for individual diagnostic. Formative assessment, on the contrary, can be a diagnostic test, because it is usually given mid-unit and helps students to understand the strengths and weaknesses of what they are learning. It also helps them become more independent learners, helping them to revise and self-evaluate their own work.\textsuperscript{132} There were no summative assessments given in Mr. Brown’s class.

These were examples of formative assessments provided by the music instructor: Teacher observation of individual students’ piano performance with feedback as needed. After receiving these examples, I was able to draw conclusions about assessment as well the existence of differentiation in the middle school I observed.

\textsuperscript{132} Andrade and Cizek, 4.
**Ramifications**

The results of this study were used to suggest techniques for adapting a curriculum for students with special needs as well as assessment ideas for the general music teacher, especially for one teaching middle school. In order to make these suggestions, it was necessary to discover what types of assessments were used, if any, how the assessments affected student learning goals, and what teacher attitudes existed towards using the results of the assessments to improve inclusion in the general music classroom.

The recommendations of this project not only extend to improving the music education for students with apparent disabilities, but also to all children, including traditional learners, second language learners and those who are labeled “at-risk” but do not have an IEP. In Renee Crawford’s study, “Socially Inclusive Practices in the Music Classroom: The Impact of Music Education used as a Vehicle to Engage Refugee Background Students,” she mentions that much research supports the idea that music and the arts have a positive "cognitive, emotional and overall wellbeing" impact on students. Although her focus was on social inclusion, her research demonstrates the vital part that music can play in showing children the value of and the celebration of their differences. The goal for this research project was not only to provide recommendations for the school district that I worked with but for the improvement of music education for all students, no matter what type of school culture exists, and especially those with special needs.

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133 Jellison, 6.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

At the beginning of this project, my purpose was to discover which assessment methods, if any, existed in the current general music classroom. I also wanted to evaluate how assessment was used to create an inclusive environment. My main curiosity in these subjects stemmed from reading articles about the subjects of assessment and inclusion in music education, specifically in general music. Both subjects have been discussed and researched in relation to music education, however what has not been discussed is how proper assessment techniques can create a better classroom environment for all types of learners, including those with special needs.

Studies have been referenced in this paper to show how assessment is widely used in general music but without consistency. Salvador’s idea about inconsistent music assessment in general music classrooms was developed in a study in which she discussed the many reasons for this inconsistency, and the primary reason was lack of time. In this case study, Salvador offered insight through observations, interviews, and journal entries of Ms. Stevens, an elementary teacher. Ms. Stevens offered effective assessment tools that many teachers might find practical in their situations.136 There are many resources available to help music educators in this area; however, teachers are often not aware of this, or they are overwhelmed by the requirements of their school districts, keeping them from utilizing these techniques. Another reason for inconsistent assessment is that music educators do not know how to define assessment, and do not use it correctly in their curriculum.

136 Salvador, 18-42.
Through my research I addressed assessment inconsistencies when talking with general music teachers in the designated school district. The following questions became the basis of my research:

1. After assessment is done, if used at all, how are new student learning goals put in place?
2. What evidence of differentiation exists in the general music classroom?
3. How do assessment practices, if used in the general music classroom, help students with special needs to achieve learning goals?

**Procedures**

**Part I: Teacher Surveys**

Bakersfield Public Schools are in a suburban area. The school district contains three elementary schools which include kindergarten-fourth grades, one upper-elementary school containing fifth and sixth grades, a middle school containing seventh and eighth grades and one high school from ninth to twelfth grades. In Bakersfield, general music is taught from kindergarten through eighth grade. It was my goal to collect surveys from all the music teachers at these levels. However, because it is not a large school district, only five general music teachers received this survey, one from each of the schools. The elementary and middle schools also have band and choral directors whose classrooms were not relevant to this study.

After permission was granted by the school district, I sent the survey link to the general music teachers of Bakersfield via their school emails. The survey tool used was Google Forms which could be easily accessed through a link. There were twenty questions, including multiple choice, short answer, and long answer. There were questions about feelings towards teaching in an inclusive classroom, as well as questions about how often they assess and what types of
assessment are used. A few questions asked for teachers to answer on a scale of “least comfortable with assessment” to “most comfortable with assessment.” Other questions asked how often they received professional development in the areas of assessment and inclusion as well as their opinion on the importance of these trainings. For a full list of survey questions, see Appendix A.

Of the five music educators who were asked to fill out the survey, two participated. Despite the low number of participants, the feedback received from these two music educators was valuable. At the beginning of this survey, the music educators were asked questions about the characteristics of their student population. Each of these schools are a medium size, one containing 450 students and the other 600 students. One school was an elementary school and the other was the middle school. At both schools, 25% or less of the students had special needs (See Figure 4.1). In addition, 25% or less of the students have extraordinary ability.

Figure 4.1. Graph showing the percentage of students with special needs in a general music classroom. February 1, 2020
Next, these music educators were asked about the types and frequency of assessments used in their classrooms (See Figure 4.2). Both answered that they use performance assessments and written assessments, neither use music aptitude and only one uses project-based assessments. Both teachers answered that they use each of these assessments weekly. These teachers feel comfortable using assessments most of the time. When they are not comfortable, they reported reasons such as student resistance to learning a new concept or student resistance to performing in class. Both teachers agreed that assessment is necessary to “actively track what students know” as well as “gauge student progress.” Although both general music teachers agree that assessment is a valuable tool, one stated that a reason for not using assessment is that “Music should be about exploration. Students are assessed enough in other classes.”

137 Mary Quigley, “Survey on the Value of Assessment for the Inclusive Music Classroom,” Merrimack, NH, Published by the author, February 1, 2020.
The next part of the survey focused on inclusion and professional development in the areas of inclusion and assessment. Both general music teachers feel very comfortable teaching in an inclusive setting, however, they would like to receive more training (Figures 4.4 and 4.5).
Both teachers said that it is valuable to assess students that have special needs. One teacher referred to his previous answer about the value of assessment in general, adding that “Given that some assessment may be modified depending on the needs of the student, we can still assess to determine where to bring them to the next level in the education.” The other music educator claimed that sometimes these students go beyond expectations.

13. Which of these situations applies to you?
2 responses

Figure 4.4. Graph showing teacher comfort level in inclusive teaching. February 1, 2020.

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Mary Quigley, “Survey on the Value of Assessment for the Inclusive Music Classroom,” Merrimack, NH, Published by the author, February 1, 2020.
When asked if they had received professional development in assessment techniques, both teachers answered “no.” When asked if they would be interested in attending workshops on either assessment or inclusion, one teacher answered “yes” and the other “maybe.”

![Figure 4.5 Professional Development Experience. February 1, 2020.](image)

After completing the survey, these music educators were also asked to be observed teaching general music a total of three times. The music educator who was selected for these observations was the general music teacher at Bakersfield Middle School. This teacher shall be referenced as Mr. Brown.

**Part II: Classroom Observations**

Mr. Brown has been teaching at Bakersfield Middle School for over twenty years. He teaches general music to grades seven and eight. The academic year is divided up into four quarters. Middle school students are taught in general music class for ten-week stretches which is the length of one quarter. After they finish the quarter, they move on to a different special subject. Mr. Brown teaches a combination of music history focusing on rock and roll and group
piano lessons. When I scheduled the classroom observations with him, I arranged to go to three 40-minute classes in one week. During my observations, I used an audio recording device to assist in taking notes on anything significant that I might miss while typing my observations.

I observed the following:

- Teacher instruction
- Student response and interaction with both teacher and peers
- Differentiation of instruction among different learning levels
- The presence of any type of assessment during class which could include a quick performance assessment through teacher observation either individually or in a group, a summative assessment of a performance using a rubric, a written assessment, an aptitude test or even the presence of student gathered work into a portfolio or project

In the second and third observations, I took notes on the same criteria above, but additionally hoped to find:

- Teacher follow-up to former lessons that revisited prior assessments
- Evidence of the teacher focusing in on student strengths
- Evidence of the teacher using prior assessment to help students identify and master weak concepts
- Evidence of student growth in the subject taught
- Use of identifying student learning needs and adapting to them

I would have preferred to observe these classes over the ten weeks that music is taught to one group of students, however, time constraints prevented this. I was still able to gain information by watching the progression of two classes of seventh grade students in one week. This grade
was chosen based on my schedule, but it would have been as equally valuable to observe eighth
grade if given the opportunity.

The Bakersfield Middle School schedule consists of 40-minute periods, but like many
schools, they work on a rotation. Each week is different and each day class times may be slightly
altered. The first day I observed, students attended an assembly during part of first period, which
altered the schedule. During this specific week, Mr. Brown taught piano class in the morning and
music history in the afternoon, therefore, I observed a piano class. During the first class, there
were around ten students attending, where there usually would be nineteen or twenty, due to the
assembly that occurred that day.

When I arrived, students were already sitting at long tables placed against the walls
around the classroom. Keyboards were stacked on one table and at each table there was a plug
board. The white board was located behind the teacher’s desk at the front of the room, on which
the directions for class were clearly stated. For this period and the next, of which I observed part
of each, the students created piano charts. The purpose of the piano chart was to help students
understand how the pitches coordinate with the keys. The students were expected to use the
piano charts as tools as they learned new songs. This also meant that the instructor did not have
to label the keys on each keyboard. Each student was given a handout (see Appendix B) which
had a picture of a keyboard with two octaves labeled, plus a coordinating staff with treble clef
notes from the staff. There were also wooden models for students to reference that were painted
and labeled with the same two octaves. These keyboards had both white and black keys, but only
the white keys were labeled with notes. The students were instructed to use up the whole space
on the rectangular construction paper to make their charts as close to the actual size of the
keyboard as possible.
The students were busy with their work as soon as the teacher gave them instructions. Most of the students chatted quietly with their neighbors while continuing to work. Mr. Brown monitored the student work, answering questions as necessary. He also gave students advice on how to space their keys appropriately. Other than this, there was no more instruction given for this class. The second period students arrived, and this class was very similar to the first one. I stayed for part of the second class just to see if there were any changes from one group to another. The instructions were the same, and the seventh-grade students interacted with the material given to them in the same way. I noticed that although most students understood that their charts should be life-size, to easily place them near their keyboards when playing, a few of the students drew their keyboards much smaller. The instructor did not comment on this to those students.

The second observation of the piano class was more structured than the first. Mr. Brown informed me that half the class period is usually dedicated to practice while the other half is used for teaching and reinforcing music theory. In this class, there were 18 students who entered in first period and sat at the long tables. Mr. Brown wrote the instructions and the time of the class on the white board behind his desk. They finished the piano charts from the previous class, then practiced “Let’s go Fly a Kite” and finally, worked on a music theory sheet. Students learned an easy version of this Disney song which only contained the treble clef melody and had the note names written in. Mr. Brown instructed students to use the piano charts to help them find the correct notes as they play.

As the students practiced their songs, I observed that most used two hands to play the melody, although many used multiple fingers rather than one finger at a time. I noticed many used the piano charts; some used them to play in multiple octave ranges, some shifted the keys
accidentally, while others did not use the chart at all. Those that used the charts had the most success in performance. The only instruction that Mr. Brown gave aside from asking students to use the charts was to be aware of F# which is a black key. It was apparent that the students knew this song because their rhythms were mostly accurate. I asked Mr. Brown if any of these students experienced music education outside this classroom in the form of lessons or participation in an ensemble. He told me that the students that attend general music usually do not have any other musical experience, and therefore are not instrumentalists. All middle school students have the option of taking either general music, band, or choir.

Halfway through the class, Mr. Brown redirected the students to instruction on music theory. Mr. Brown gave his students a note-reading handout which was a review for the seventh grade, but a reinforcement that Mr. Brown felt they needed since they had not been exposed to note reading since the previous year. The worksheet contained an exercise in drawing the treble clef as well as practice drawing notes on the correct lines and spaces (See Appendix C). The seventh graders also practiced identifying and naming the notes on the staff. Students worked on these sheets in the same manner that they did their piano charts. Some worked together while chatting quietly, while others worked independently. It appeared that students enjoyed playing piano more than completing the worksheets because about a quarter of these students were off task during this time, whereas only one or two students were off task when playing. While students worked on their handouts, I asked Mr. Brown about grading and assessing the students. Mr. Brown told me that students receive a weekly grade. Mr. Brown’s weekly rubric can be found in Appendix D.

During the third classroom observation, I asked Mr. Brown again about how and when he will assess his students. He told me he would assess that day but seemed reluctant. This class
was very similar to the second class. Students continued to practice “Let’s Go Fly a Kite,” and Mr. Brown assisted students as they had questions as they practiced. Mr. Brown also edited the sheet music for the students, telling them that the ending does not sound like the original song, therefore, they should cross out the last stave.

Mr. Brown assessed his students about halfway through the period. His method was to walk around to each student’s keyboard, listen to him or her play through the song and move on to the next student. Sometimes he gave tips, but for most he simply listened and moved on. It was not apparent that these assessments were part of the formal grade, since he did not write anything down as he listened to his students play. After he finished listening to each student, he assigned the students a music theory worksheet called “Spell Words with Treble Pitches,” which they worked on for a few minutes before class ends. Mr. Brown did not address the assessment process during the remainder of class, nor did he appear to document assessment at any time.

**Part 3: Post-Observation Interview**

After observing Mr. Brown’s class, I had the opportunity to interview him over the phone for clarification about his teaching methods. I took written notes about the way his teaching style supports his philosophy on assessment and inclusion in general music in middle school. These questions helped me to understand Mr. Brown’s philosophy about teaching general music to middle school students.

I first asked Mr. Brown “What piano skills are students expected to achieve by the end of the quarter?” Mr. Brown responded by saying that he is concerned with physical skills: if students hear the song and feel the beat of the song. In his words, “It’s extremely simple; making
sure they are tuneful and “beat-ful.” He does want them to learn to use the correct fingers, but more than that, he wants them to work on playing by ear. He considers the concept of learning by ear to be very important.

I next questioned him about assessment. Mr. Brown assesses his students weekly. When he assesses them, he is asking himself, “Are they able to play? Are they trying to practice and are they making an attempt to learn a new skill?” Mr. Brown believes that students should demonstrate problem solving ability. At the beginning of the quarter, many students do not see the importance of music class because they do not need it to be promoted to the next grade level. However, Mr. Brown believes that when he emphasizes skill development, this motivates his students to learn the piano.

When Mr. Brown assesses his students, and uses a system based on a 100-points scale which is laid out in his rubric. Brown uses this system for both piano and music history. He does not give out written tests in his class because when he did this, the grades he received back from students appeared to be inconclusive. They received either A’s or F’s but nothing in between, so he changed his method of assessment. He does not assess them for music theory, but he instead gives them music theory sheets to help them practice concepts. Brown said, “They do music theory sheets that give them practice, that will help them to relate [to life]. Completing the sheet is an accomplishment for class.” When asked about grading students on performance, Mr. Brown told me that he does not do this either. Students often become stressed when informed that they will be taking a test, and some students will not come to class at all. Students are

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140 Ibid.
instead only graded on participation and out of the 150 students that Mr. Brown has in the class there are only a few who fail because of non-participation.

My next few questions focused on inclusion and Mr. Brown’s views on teaching to an inclusive classroom. In the classes I observed, it was not obvious that any of his students had special needs. However, when I asked Mr. Brown if he had taught students with learning needs, he affirmed that he had. Bakersfield Middle School provides regular services for students with special needs such as paraprofessional educators, resource centers, tutoring and therapy. Mr. Brown has seen one-on-one aides accompany students to his class. If these students can attend general music class, their aides do not necessarily stay with them the whole time, but periodically check in. Some students with severe special needs cannot attend a regular general music class. According to Mr. Brown, these students may be sensitive to sound. Lastly, I asked Mr. Brown about his differentiation practices. Mr. Brown told me that differentiation takes place in his class on a case by case basis. For example, when teaching piano, if a student struggles with a song he might alter the song so that a student can stay on pace with the class.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The hope for this thesis project was to provide guidelines for assessment in the general music class. I explored assessment by researching prior studies of music educators and analyzing their effectiveness. I hoped to determine if assessment can help music educators create an inclusive classroom environment. I also investigated studies that demonstrated the need for more professional development in these areas. Although there are many studies written on assessment, there is not enough information on using assessment techniques in the music classroom, neither are teachers prepared to use these methods. Through this study I hoped to demonstrate to music educators that the results of in-class assessments can be applied to create manageable learning goals for students with special needs. As I engaged in this study, I had many questions to answer in my research regarding current practices in general music. I used these questions to guide to the in-school research that took place in the Bakersfield School District.

Analysis of the findings

My first research question was, “After assessment is done, if used at all, how are new student learning goals put in place?”

Through the classroom observations, it was not apparent to me how assessment took place. I did not see the teacher record any information about his students as he listened to each of them play, neither did I observe active goal creating with any student. However, during the post-observation interview, I did discuss assessment and differentiation practices with Mr. Brown.
Mr. Brown claims that he differentiates for students if he sees that a student is struggling with the piece of music that he assigned to the class. His method of differentiation is not premeditated but occurs in the moment. This is also how he assesses his students. Achievement is reflected in the end-of-quarter grades and based solely upon student participation in classroom activities. It is my conclusion that he does not lay out specific goals for every student either written or verbally.

I learned through the surveys that assessment is generally accepted as part of the teaching process. However, the practical application may be different for each teacher. For example, while both teachers who participated claimed to use written assessments in their classrooms, the survey did not show the method of written assessment. Mr. Brown did not believe written tests were necessary. Each teacher also claimed to be comfortable assessing students, but one teacher admitted that any discomfort comes from the belief that “Students have already predetermined they should not succeed in music.”141 The other teacher stated that the students do not want to perform individually, making individual assessment difficult. In the case of the Bakersfield School District, it appeared that group observations were more often used than individual observations. According to the survey, when individual assessment was used, it was unobtrusive and informal.

These statements reflect earlier data in this study which discussed the reasons teachers do not regularly assess their students individually. At the middle school level, students are more self-conscious, which makes performance in front of others a source of anxiety. Teaching general music in middle school can be challenging for many reasons. According to Robin Giebelhausen, middle

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school is a time of immense change for most people.\textsuperscript{142} It involves physical, emotional, and environmental change. At this time students are beginning puberty and these physical changes can happen quickly. At the same time, they are transitioning from their Elementary to High School years.\textsuperscript{143} Giebelhausen believes that a safe environment is important for gaining the trust of middle school students. She says, “I was always aware that for many students in my music classroom, this might be their last formal music education experience.”\textsuperscript{144} Because of this, it is important to create a classroom environment where middle school students feel like they can participate in front of their peers, with encouragement and acceptance. Kenneth Foster shares the views of D.G. Gordon who believes that “the teacher should create a learning environment that is humane, fair, consistent, and devoid of criticism, innuendo, condescension, power plays, and favoritism.”\textsuperscript{145}

Middle school general music teachers are often unprepared to handle the changes that adolescent years bring and therefore, for ease of classroom management, participation may be the main goal in music. Music teachers find more challenges at the middle school level because many have not received specific training for this age group in their undergraduate studies.\textsuperscript{146} According to Foster, if most of a music educator’s time is spent disciplining students, then teaching musical skills becomes replaced with teaching non-musical skills. An educator prepared with good classroom management training will help students learn discipline and control.\textsuperscript{147} Mr. Brown maintained his classroom well. His students listened to him when he gave directions and for the most part they obeyed. Mr. Brown expressed the importance of music class to his students

\textsuperscript{142} Robin Giebelhausen, “In the Beginning of the Middle: Curriculum Considerations for Middle School General Music,” \textit{General Music Today} 29, no. 1 (October 2015): 41.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid, 42.
\textsuperscript{146} Giebelhausen, 41.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, 65.
by emphasizing a non-musical skill, which is to learn a new skill. While this is a valuable trait for students to carry through their lives, it does not focus on the intrinsic value of learning music. The music skills these students learned in this class appeared to be assessed only based on effort, rather than challenging them in a specific musical area. When looking at the rubrics, I could see that each category provided a description of skills completed. Each of these categories described non-musical skills such as completion, participation, and willingness to perform a piano piece.

Music educators must base their assessment primarily on music skills. If their students do not have an interest in music, then they should create ways to increase student motivation in music activities. This motivation will come when students believe that they can succeed in music, that music is relevant to life, that the instruction methods are interesting, that they have some control in the environment of the classroom and that the music teacher cares for each student. Music educators may consider using Gordon’s concepts and assessments from Music Learning Theory.

The second research question was, “What evidence of differentiation exists in the general music classroom?”

Through the survey that was given to the music teachers of Bakersfield, I learned that they are comfortable teaching to students of special needs. I also learned that students with special needs participate in music class depending on the severity of their needs. The participants of the survey mutually believed that it is important to assess students with special needs. They stated that adjustments may need to be made to assessments which demonstrates the teachers’

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belief in the importance of differentiation. Although not observed, I discussed accommodations made for students with special needs with the general music teacher. It appears that if a student is too sensitive to the sound of instruments in music class, he or she does not attend the class. It was difficult to observe this at Bakersfield Middle School because I was not aware of specific cases of students and their needs. This reflects a problem that Jasmine Faulkner discussed in her article, "Teaching the Recorder in a 4th Grade Inclusion Setting."\textsuperscript{149} She says that teachers need to have the knowledge about sensory modifications, and that many do not have this knowledge.\textsuperscript{150} Although her article was on teaching the recorder, the concept can easily be applied to teaching other instruments. Faulkner suggests that an educator can provide a student with least restrictive environment using color coded music, partnering students who can assist in learning as well as allowing a student to learn through observation of another student or the teacher.\textsuperscript{151} A music educator cannot maximize the potential of that student without awareness of possible modifications.

My third research question was: “How do assessment practices, if used in the general music classroom, help students with special needs achieve learning goals?”

Here is a summary of the goals in Mr. Brown’s general music class according to his class rubric. For the full rubric, see Appendix D. This is a description of those who were “Highly Effective.”

1. A student should be prepared for class, setting a positive example to other students.
2. A student should complete and correct all worksheets.

\textsuperscript{150} Faulkner, 10.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, 9.
3. A student should practice well and be a good model of practicing and playing.

4. A student should perform in a professional manner and listen to other classmates.

There are also descriptions of those who were “effective,” “basic,” or “does not meet the standard” within a variety of achievement levels. According to Mr. Brown, these learning goals were assessed weekly. These assessments can be generally applied to any student in Mr. Brown’s class, even those with special needs. However, they do not speak specifically to differentiated learning. Mr. Brown stated that students with special needs may receive different songs if they are on a lower level, but I did not see specific rubrics or ideas in place that show methods of differentiation.

**Conclusion**

**Creating Assessment to Benefit Inclusion**

Alice Hammel and Ryan Hourigan write in *Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach*, “Evaluating your curriculum and considering best practice…for students with special needs and learning differences is really just good teaching.”\(^{152}\) The music educator does not have to only focus his or her program on those with special needs, but to all students on individual learning levels. When music educators consider their current curriculum and measure it against student outcomes, then they assess themselves and their programs.

Music educators need to ask the following questions when evaluating curriculum. First, is the curriculum the same for all students or does it contain layers of complexities to reach all students in the manner they learn best?\(^{153}\) When the teacher is aware of a student’s specific needs, especially if he or she has an IEP, then the teacher should be in continuous

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\(^{152}\) Hammel and Hourigan, 126.

\(^{153}\) Darrow, 30.
communication with the IEP team in order to be informed when making decisions about complexity for that student. Some adaptations may involve curriculum modification for that individual student. Some adaptations may mean accommodating the student—which will not necessarily change the expectations but may provide a different type of access to the curriculum than others have. There are many examples of adaptations for students that have special needs, and these adaptations can vary depending on the student’s IEP. Communication with other educators who work with a student with special needs is vital for creating adaptations to the learning plan.

In Mr. Brown’s program, I did not observe differentiated learning for students with special needs and was not aware of any students with IEPs. However, differentiation should take place according to each student, no matter what level they are at, because research supports that student learns effectively with a variety of methods. Although Mr. Brown had rubrics that he used to assess each student, he did not have a written rubric which would allow for adaptations in his lessons.

A music educator should have consistent classroom management skills with clear expectations for the student. A clear and consistent environment can lead to a success if seating is planned strategically. Students with special needs especially benefit if placed in the same seat either close to the instructor or in an area leading to minimal transitions. In addition, the music educator should include praise for the individual when he or she behaves well. It is important to praise students who struggle with this regularly when the teacher sees them make

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154 Darrow, 29.
156 Hammel and Hourigan, 97.
good decisions. These suggestions can apply to any student, even if they do not have special needs. This supports the idea that an inclusive classroom is about every student. Mr. Brown’s classroom was managed well. I did not observe behavior problems that were out of control. However, it was not apparent that he gave any positive attention to students who lacked focus. He did not attempt to redirect these students to musical aspects of the lesson but instead either ignored them or reminded them to do their work.

Whether a music educator chooses to create a new curriculum or follow one that is established, instructional methods must reflect his or her philosophy of teaching. Hammel and Hourigan also write, “The stronger the underlying curricular focus is, the easier it will be to adapt and modify your existing curriculum to individualize instruction for [those] with learning differences.”\textsuperscript{158} The music educator needs to ask what types of objectives for students are built into the curriculum, especially if they have special needs. The goals do not all have to be musical, but some may be social or extramusical.\textsuperscript{159} However, music goals must stand out above non-music goals. In Mr. Brown’s classroom, his assessments were all non-music goals. While participation and effort are important in any subject, these things should not be the only areas of assessment. Instead, music educators should also be emphasizing musical standards that students should achieve by the end of each unit by creating manageable goals according to each student’s level.

Finally, the music educator should consider how assessment fits into curriculum goals, especially when considering students with learning needs. It is important to let the assessments guide the curriculum along with the instruction and content goals.\textsuperscript{160} As was discussed earlier,

\textsuperscript{158} Hammel and Hourigan, 121.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid, 97.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid, 132.
there are different types of assessments which can be used for many purposes. Music educators can use formative assessment in day to day teaching practices to evaluate simple skills of their students. They can also use formative assessment to help students gauge their own learning goals. When the educator considers that students have different styles such as visual, audial, and kinesthetic, and builds this into the curriculum, an inclusive classroom is the result.\textsuperscript{161}

Summative assessments can also be equally important in the music classroom. Although they may not be used as often as a formative assessment in general music, depending on the nature of the curriculum, a summative assessment may help show students, parents and the school administration that students can reach a specific level of musical achievement. According to his weekly rubrics, Mr. Brown’s assessment practices were formative. It is evident in his rubrics because they describe individual skills that students should achieve. Also, the assessments are done in an informal way, through listening and observing each student. Mr. Brown did not give any summative assessments on either music theory or piano skills. Although he did not evaluate music-related skills, he did have students practice skills through theory worksheets.

Assessment should inform music educators how to improve their goals as teachers as well as student learning goals. Both summative and formative assessments should inform decisions about how to plan or alter curriculum at the beginning, middle and end of a unit. The teacher must also be aware of the needs of his or her students through the evaluations of adaptations from the IEP as well as observations from other classes. The music educator may also need to be aware of social and communication goals and work that into the assessments. It is important to

\textsuperscript{161} Hammel and Hourigan, 126.
consider in assessment that each student is a person, not a label. Music teachers must personally engage with each child to encourage meaningful participation that will last for a lifetime.

**Recommendations**

Assessment is a topic that is widely studied; however, it was a challenge to determine if it was used mindfully at Bakersfield Middle School for teaching students with special needs. Although general music is an accepted part of the middle school curriculum in Bakersfield, the curriculum does not contain music-focused assessments. The reasons for this are not clear without further study. Although Mr. Brown disagreed with the importance of summative assessments, they could be used with careful consideration to students who have anxiety by offering those students an alternative to a written test while retaining objective rating measures. More professional development for music teachers in the area of assessment would improve the Bakersfield music curriculum. It appeared that the main purpose of general music at this school is to expose non-musical students to music while the more musically talented students participated in an ensemble.

General music class can provide foundational music knowledge to students during the elementary and middle school years. Although students may have different musical aptitudes, all students can grow in music, regardless of ability, by consistent and varied assessment of music skills. Gordon emphasizes this by saying, “When teaching to students’ individual musical differences in learning sequence activities, all students are taught in the same group regardless of levels of music aptitude. No separate groups are established according to so-called talent. Students of lower music aptitude are taught by using simpler, more readily accessible patterns than those used with students of higher music aptitude.”

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162 Gordon, 48.
different levels can be assessed on the same music skills, even if the manner in which they are assessed differs.

A suggested area for further study would be to compare findings in this district to a similar school district. Further study can be taken with a wider pool of observations, surveys, and quantitative data to make further recommendations on differentiation and assessment practices. The Bakersfield School District findings specifically reveal the flaws that may exist in American public school music programs. Other researchers should be encouraged to investigate these flaws so that improvements in assessment can be made for all students, not just those with special needs.

With professional development training, music educators can learn how to amalgamate assessment practices and inclusive teaching methods. I believe that collaboration between music educators and other education professionals can strengthen school music programs and create a more positive musical experience for all students. In the current society, equality and understanding for all people is emphasized and this should be especially true in music education. The National Association for Music Education holds this slogan; “Music for every child--- every child for music.” By continually looking for ways to improve an inclusive classroom for students of all cultures, socio-economic background and learning levels, music educators can demonstrate that they hold true to this philosophy.

Bibliography


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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey Questions

Survey on The Value of Assessment for the Inclusive General Music Classroom

2 responses

Publish analytics

Do you consent to participate in this survey?

2 responses

100%
1. About how many students do you teach in total?
2 responses
600
450

2. About what percentage of the students in your class have special needs (either physical or learning disabled)?
2 responses
- There are no students with special needs in my class
- 25% or less
- 25-50%
- More than 50%

3. About what percentage of the students would you consider to have extraordinary ability?
2 responses
- There are no students with extraordinary ability in my class
- 25% or less
- 25-50%
- More than 50%

4. What types of assessment methods do you use in your class, if any?
2 responses
- Performance assessment in a group; sing...
- Performance assessment individually; s...
- Written assessment: 2 (100%)
- Musical aptitude test: 0 (0%)
- None: 0 (0%)
- Project Based Assessment: 1 (50%)
5. If you answered "none" to the previous question, check all of the reasons that apply to your situation.

No responses yet for this question.

6. How often do you use each of these assessment methods per class?

7. On a scale of 1-5, 5 being very comfortable and 1 being uncomfortable, how comfortable do you feel about using assessment tools in general music?

8. If you do not feel comfortable using assessment in your class, what are your main reasons for not using them?
9. If you do use assessment tools in your classroom, what are the main reasons for using them?

2 responses

To actively track progress of students, see when we are able to move on to other units, and adjust teaching practices.

We need to gauge what the students know.

10. Agree or disagree? "Assessing a student's musical skills can help determine new learning goals."

2 responses

[Pie chart showing 100% agree]
11. If you agree, what is the main reason you agree?
2 responses

Assessment and data drives all decisions in how we teach and what we teach, which will drive new learning goals and how we plan for future units.

Because Assessment (not graded) is still a valuable tool with what the students know

11. If you do not agree, what is the main reason you do not agree?
2 responses

n/a

Music should be about exploration. Students are assessed enough in other classes

12. Do you feel comfortable teaching an inclusive classroom?
2 responses

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

13. Which of these situations applies to you?
2 responses

- I feel uncomfortable with inclusive teaching but I would like professional development...
- I feel uncomfortable with inclusive teaching and I have no desire for professional develop...
- I feel comfortable with inclusive teaching and would like to he...
- I feel comfortable with inclusive teaching and I have adequate...
14. Do you believe that it is valuable to assess students in music who have special needs? Why or why not?
2 responses

I do feel that it is valuable for the same reasons. Given that some assessment may be modified depending on the needs of the student, we can still assess to determine where to bring them next in the education.

Yes, because often the student knows more than people expected.

15. Have you attended any professional development or received college credit in the area of assessment techniques in music education?
2 responses

100%

Yes
No
16. If not, would you want to take part in professional development in the areas of inclusive education or assessment techniques?
2 responses

18. Would you be willing to be contacted for more surveys like this one in the future?
2 responses

17. If yes, what types of professional development experiences did you attend?
2 responses
n/a
Drumming

18. On a scale of 1 to 5, how helpful did you find these professional development experiences?
2 responses
19. Would you be willing to have your general music class observed for the purpose of this research?
2 responses

20. Would you be willing to be contacted for other surveys like this one in the future?
2 responses
Appendix B

Piano Chart Assignment

For your next music task, you will all be asked to make a piano chart that is at least two octaves (c-c) like the one shown above.

To continue with piano playing, all students need to complete this assignment. Putting this project together in homeroom using notebook paper, will not be accepted.

Your Assignment is due on: _____________
Appendix C

Note Reading Worksheets

Note Reading Worksheet
Treble Clef Exercise #2

LINES: Write each note on the correct line using quarter notes. Notes below B should have a stem on the right side facing up. Notes above B have stems facing down from the left side. The stem on the note B can face either direction.

SPACES: Write each note in the space. Use quarter notes again. Make sure the stems are correct.

ALL NOTES: Write each note on the line or space. This time write half notes.
Spell Words with Treble Pitches

Write the words that the pitches spell.

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# Appendix D

## Piano Rubric

### Weekly Piano Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>0 Does Not Meet Standard</th>
<th>25 Basic</th>
<th>25 Effective</th>
<th>25 Highly Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Participation</strong></td>
<td>Student did not positively participate. Often wanted to play/talk when others were performing</td>
<td>Student did well in class but needed a lot of redirection, often was unprepared for class.</td>
<td>All of the worksheets were completed but the may have been some mistakes that were not corrected.</td>
<td>Student was always prepared for class and served as an example with positive contribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music Theory</strong></td>
<td>Student did not complete any of the worksheets.</td>
<td>Some of the work may have been completed the sheets but did not correct mistakes.</td>
<td>Student demonstrated good practice routine. May have had some problems with fingerings but understands material.</td>
<td>All worksheets were completed and corrected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Piano Practice</strong></td>
<td>No evidence of practicing. Sound effects are volume control was a major issue</td>
<td>Student practiced but there were still issues with volume control and sound effects.</td>
<td>Student practices very well and serves as a good model of proper practicing and playing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td>Student would not perform any of the material. Alternatives will be offered to students to avoid this level.</td>
<td>Student only performed some of the material but it was less than 1/2 required. May have tried to get the students to laugh at mistakes.</td>
<td>Student successfully performed for the class. A mistake may have happened, but with proper correction.</td>
<td>Student performed in a professional manner and also listened will to other classmates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>