

SIXTH-GRADE SIGHT-SINGING FOR LOW VISION STUDENTS
A COURSE TO ENHANCE CONFIDENCE AND MUSIC READING ABILITY

By
Jamie Lane Carpenter
Liberty University

A MASTER'S CURRICULUM PROJECT PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Students enter the private or public-school system with a wide variety of emotional, mental, and physical impairments that impact their confidence, self-esteem, and overall path to their future. One misunderstood and under-represented population of students are those who are not fully blind but fall under the category of low vision. Since the low vision spectrum is wide, students must advocate for themselves according to their unique visual condition. While some students may be nearsighted, others may experience color blindness, tunnel vision, a wide variety of partial blindness in one or both eyes, and more. If educators are not aware of a student's slight visual impairment and students are not comfortable advocating for themselves, students could be missing out on fully exploring their passion and aptitude for music. This study will examine the existing research on the array of low vision impairments and how to help sixth-grade students understand and overcome their impairments using tailored techniques to successfully meet their goals of sight-singing music. A twelve-week curriculum is provided to guide music educators as they help low vision sixth-grade students meet musical goals despite their visual impairment.

Dedication Page

I dedicate this curriculum project in loving memory of my low vision grandmother, Judy Lane Alderson and to my parents, sister, and fiancé for being a constant light and support in my endeavors in face of my own low vision.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Dedication Page	iv
Contents	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Definition of Terms.....	6
Sight-Singing Defined	7
Other Definitions	8
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Cognitive Sight-Singing Strategies.....	11
The Visual Demands of Reading Music	12
Low Vision Management and Tools.....	13
Music Reading Resources for the Fully Blind.....	16
Educating Students with Low Vision	16
Key Components of a Low Vision Curriculum	18
The Social and Emotional Impact of Low Vision	19

CHAPTER III: METHODS	22
Design of Study.....	22
Questions and Hypotheses	24
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS	26
Section I: Key Components of Low Vision Curriculum	26
Section II: Types of Learning Styles	28
Section III: Unique Pedagogical Techniques.....	31
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	34
Summary of Study	34
Summary of Purpose.....	34
Summary of Curriculum Development.....	35
Summary of Findings and Prior Research	35
Limitations	36
Recommendations for Future Study	37
REFERENCES	39
APPENDICES	42
APPENDIX A-Detailed Curriculum.....	42
Syllabus.....	42
Analysis Chart.....	45
Design Chart	48

Learning Outcomes According to Bloom’s Taxonomy	54
Development Chart	55
Gagne’s Nine Events of Instruction	59
Implementation Chart	62
Necessary Tasks	64
Evaluation Chart	66
Evaluation and Reflection	69
Formative Assessment Description.....	70

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.....	72
Table 2.....	74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.....	56
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

VI- Visual Impairment

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A number of visually impaired musicians such as Italian opera star Andrea Bocelli or blues singer and pianist Ray Charles have made names for themselves, perfecting their musical crafts in the face of adversity. It is a common misconception that musicians like these must have a natural talent for music because the lack of vision lends to heightened hearing, however, this is far from true. The article *Music Education for the Visually Impaired* by Fred Kersten from the Australian Journal of Music Education states, “A very common myth is that the visually impaired have innate aptitude for music because of their affliction. This is false as the literature shows that there are visually impaired that have as many pitch problems and learning difficulties as the sighted.”¹ Music educators who fall into this pattern of thinking are doing their students a disservice. Low vision students are more aware of their non-visual senses because they have no choice, but it does not mean that their visual music reading ability cannot improve through a structured curriculum.

Students with a Visual Impairment (VI) go through grade school not only learning to cope with their VI, but trying to meet academic demands, as well as discover who they are and pursue their interests, one of which could be music. The more educators are aware of what low vision entails, the more comfortable these students can be in their school and general life environments. It is considered rare that a student falls under the category of low vision; because of this, there is little research specific to techniques for enhancing musical success with this population.

¹Fred Kersten, “Music Education for the Visually Impaired.” (Australian Journal of Music Education, no. 27 October 1980): 36–38.

Background

I have spent my entire life as a legally blind low vision individual witnessing how different I was from my peers and how I often had to consider things that these peers would not. As I continue my journey to be the best music educator possible, I wonder what support could have been in place to enhance the journey of students with low vision. The rarity of low vision issues like mine brought about confusion and embarrassment because adults in my childhood and even today simply do not understand my visual impairment. In my particular case, I wear contacts and appear to be a visual typical person, yet I cannot drive at night, I hold all devices extremely close to my face, I take pictures of fast food menus and zoom in on them to see better, I use a flashlight in any dark situation like walking from my vehicle to the front door, and much more. The progression of technology over the course of my lifetime has enabled me to develop techniques that I believe other low vision students can benefit from that will be implemented in this curriculum.

The research conducted identifies the various possible eyesight issues that would categorize a student as low vision. It can help formalize a music curriculum that is catered to help these students in a variety of ways. The curriculum in this project is focused on sight-singing because if one has attained the skills to read music to the best of their ability at sight, then they will surely be able to confidently read music outside of a sight-singing situation at a more confident and familiar manner. The concept of sight-singing is strategy based; low vision students can benefit tremendously from explicit instruction on the various music reading strategies. The goal of this curriculum is for students to understand their strengths and weaknesses as well as filter through the strategies that work best regarding their visual impairment and the ones that do not. One more benefit of focusing this curriculum on sight-

singing according to Dee Hansen, author of *The Music and Literacy Connection*, is that it can improve literacy outside of music because, “One of the best ways to facilitate reading and literacy is when students in a music setting sight-read without stopping.”²

In addition, another goal of this curriculum is to help students emotionally by giving them opportunities to reflect and problem solve for their specific visual needs with the guidance of an understanding music educator. Due to the unique nature of visual impairments, students may often feel isolated from others in their lives, even family members. If a student is passionate about reading music, their instructor will be someone they can trust to take them through the process and be sympathetic.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research and curriculum is to provide a detailed instruction that music-educators can follow if they find themselves with one or more sixth-grade students wanting to improve sight-singing and physical score reading and have a visual impairment other than full blindness. This program is also intended for the learning-typical visually impaired student. This curriculum is intended to help learning-typical visually impaired students meet musical goals and feel more confident under the guidance of a music educator who is sensitive to their musical needs.

Statement of Problem

There is a lack of awareness and support for visually impaired students to help them become confident and successful in sight-reading, specifically regarding reading physical copies of music. Due to the rarity of low vision conditions, there is little research or curriculum

²Dee Hansen, Elaine Bernstorf, and Gayle M. Stuber, *The Music and Literacy Connection*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014) 53.

available to assist students in sight-singing, let alone the subject of music. If a student wants to audition for a district chorus, state chorus, college ensemble, or community choir, there will likely be a sight-singing requirement. Depending on the person's visual impairment, these sight-singing tasks could possibly be waived, but what about those students that see well enough or want the satisfaction of completing the required sight-singing with the vision they have? Whatever the student's musical goals and desires may be, this curriculum would give them the ability to reflect on their specific visual impairment in the context of score reading through a step-by-step process. Another reason for the lack of research could be due to the common myth that those with low vision or no vision at all must have above average musical skills and memory. Mary A. Smaligo, author of the article *Resources for Helping Blind Music Students* from the Music Educators Journal states that while methods of music reading that involve both listening and rote can help blind students find success, "...a committed music educator would not permit him or her to learn music using only recorded materials and rote methods."³ However, the issue is that committed music educators lack the physical resources or training to help their Visually Impaired (VI) students learn to read written musical notation.

Significance of Study

This study is significant because visual impairments aside from blindness do not receive much attention in research due to their rarity. This research and curriculum could help support a music teacher and students that have a passion for engaging in musical activities but lack the confidence or support. The term *sight-singing* itself could be enough to make a visually impaired student feel discouraged about their ability to read music, let alone sight-sing it. Two reasons

³Mary A. Smaligo. "Resources for Helping Blind Music Students." (*Music Educators Journal* 85, 1998) 24.

why visual impairments may not receive attention is the fact that students do not feel comfortable advocating for themselves or because there can be little visual to no visual cue to show an educator that a student has a visual impairment aside from any medical documentation, 540's, IEP's, or tips from other educators at the school. Visually impaired students may not wear glasses due to financial/family constraints or they may have glasses that look the same as a student with mild eye-sight issues. Students may also choose not to advocate for themselves in music courses, or any courses, due to the social environment of school. Asking to sit closer to the board, holding music closer to the face, being seen with an enlarged copy, having the music stand closer to the face than others, highlighting or color coding, and more could all put visually impaired students in an awkward social situation. With a music educator there to work students through building confidence, students could greatly improve their ability to do what is necessary for their musical and overall school and life success.

Research Questions and Sub Questions

The primary research question that this curriculum project aims to answer is, *what are the key components of a curriculum that is suitable for low vision pupils?*

The following are sub-questions that will be explored:

1. What types of learning styles other than visual can be used to help formalize the curriculum?
2. What unique pedagogical techniques are used to make a curriculum like this successful?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Low Vision Defined

Low vision is a term used to categorize a wide variety of visual conditions that could be either hereditary or caused due to onset or accident. People with low vision have difficulty carrying out everyday tasks and activities such as driving, reading, differentiating colors, viewing screen technology, and more. These tasks could be difficult at any time of the day for those with severe low vision, or perhaps only made more difficult in low light or complete darkness for those with less severe low vision. According to the National Eye Institute the types of low vision include central vision loss, peripheral vision loss, night blindness, and blurry or hazy vision.⁴ Central and peripheral vision loss are similar in that there is an obstruction of some of the vision. When one is looking straight ahead (central) or far left or right (peripheral), there is an obstruction in vision and in order to see they need to shift the eyes or move the head and neck in different ways than a person with normal vision. The National Eye Institute (NEI) states that there are many causes of low vision but lists Macular Degeneration, Cataracts, Diabetic retinopathy, and Glaucoma as the most common causes while also stating that these conditions are likely found in people of old age.⁵ The article *Effectiveness of the “living successfully with low vision” self-management program: Results from a randomized controlled trial in Singaporeans with low vision* from the journal of Patient Education and Counseling defines low vision as, “vision impairment that is not correctable with spectacles, contact lenses, or surgical

⁴NEI. Online Access.

⁵Ibid., Online Access.

intervention.”⁶ This means that with corrective measurements, vision may become improved to some degree, but not to the point of perfect twenty-twenty eyesight. Macular Degeneration is the low vision condition I relate to, as my retina was detached. I wear custom contact lenses that improve my vision enough to function independently in society with mild inconveniences such as difficulty reading small or distanced writing and a daylight only drivers’ license.

Sight-Singing Defined

Sight-Singing is the act of reading a piece of music one has never seen before at first sight. This means reading the pitches and rhythms on a five-line staff at the tempo indicated on the score or the singer’s reasonable tempo choice. Along with communicating the basic notation, singers are also aiming to think about appropriate phrasing, dynamics, and if possible, emotion. Singers are given a set amount, often one minute or less, or no time at all to analyze the piece before beginning to sight-read. They are also encouraged to do their best without stopping to redo or correct mistakes.⁷ Sight-singing is used to enhance music reading competence, audition for a role in musical theater, chorus, or opera, learn a new piece of music being introduced into solo or ensemble repertoire, and as a component to school choral festivals. There are instances when sight-singing can set musicians apart from their peers when auditioning for roles. Sight-singing is an important skill to learn beyond the purpose of auditions because it is a time saving

⁶Ching Siong Tey, Ryan Eyn Kidd Man, Eva K. Fenwick, Ai Tee Aw, Vicki Drury, Peggy Pei-Chia Chiang, Ecosse L. Lamoureux. *Effectiveness of the “living successfully with low vision” self-management program: Results from a randomized controlled trial in Singaporeans with low vision*, (Patient Education and Counseling, 2019) 1500.

⁷Guillaume, Fournier, Maria Teresa Moreno Sala, Francis Dube, and Susan O’Neill. “Cognitive Strategies in Sight-Singing: The Development of an Inventory for Aural Skills Pedagogy.” (Psychology of Music 47, no. 2, March 2019) 270-283.

tool. The better a person can sight-sing, the quicker they able to understand and internalize music, which means they will have more time to focus on both musicality and larger amounts of repertoire. Pamela D. Pike and Rebecca Carter, authors of the article “Employing Cognitive Chunking Techniques to Enhance Sight-Reading Performance of Undergraduate Group-Piano Students” from the *International Journal of Music Education* say, “Sight-reading is a cognitively complex activity, but components include musical awareness, visual perceptual awareness, reading comprehension, audiation, musical experiences, motor coordination and problem-solving skills”⁸ Having the skills to sight-sing can help a musician become well-rounded.

Other Definitions

Cataracts: “A cataract is the loss of lens transparency due to opacification of the lens”⁹

Chunking: when a sight-reader can quickly identify rhythmic or melodic patterns in a piece of music while sight-reading. This technique allows the musician to read more notes at once, making the process of sight-reading easier and leaving time to focus on what is to come.¹⁰

Diabetic Retinopathy: “Diabetic retinopathy (DR) is a microvascular (small vessel) disease affecting the retinal vasculature, leading to progressive retinal damage, which may lead to sight loss or even blindness.”¹¹

⁸Pamela D. Pike and Rebecca Carter, “Employing Cognitive Chunking Techniques to Enhance Sight-Reading Performance of Undergraduate Group-Piano Students.” (*International Journal of Music Education* 28, no. 3, 2010). 232.

⁹Yu-Chi Liu, Mark Wilkins, Terry Kim, Boris Malyugin, Jodhbir S Mehta, “Cataracts” (*The Lancet*, 2017) 600.

¹⁰Pike and Carter, 232.

¹¹Ramesh R. Sivaraj and Paul M. Dodson, *Diabetic Retinopathy: Screening to Treatment 2E (ODL)*, (Oxford University Press, 2020) *ProQuest Ebook Central*. 7.

Glaucoma: “A disease of the eye, characterized by increased tension of the globe and gradual impairment or loss of vision. The word was formerly used to denote cataract (*New Sydenham Soc. Lexicon* 1885).”¹²

Inclusion: this is the notion that any student that may have been excluded from participating in classes with their typical peers should now be included in those courses for the good of bringing awareness about disabilities to typical students as well as benefiting the excluded students as they grow towards adulthood and become a member of functioning society.¹³ These students that should now be included are any student with a disability such as Autistic and ELL students.

Macular Degeneration: “degenerative change involving the macula of the retina; any of various ophthalmological conditions characterized by this, *esp.* a form seen with ageing.”¹⁴

Residential School: European styles schools that were responsible for educating specific populations of students, often with mental or physical disabilities.¹⁵

Retina: “A layer at the back of the eyeball of vertebrates, containing light-sensitive cells (rods and cones) which trigger nerve impulses that pass via the optic nerve to the brain, where a visual image is formed; (also) a layer of similar function in the eye of certain invertebrates.”¹⁶

The low vision community spans a wide spectrum of eye conditions and each person with a VI will have slightly different needs, but all VI students may have something in common

¹²"glaucoma, n." OED Online. Oxford University Press.

¹³Yanoff, 222.

¹⁴"macular degeneration, adj." OED Online. Oxford University Press.

¹⁵Paul M. Ajuwon, and A. O. Oyinlade. "Educational Placement of Children Who are Blind Or have Low Vision in Residential and Public Schools: A National Study of Parents' Perspectives." (*Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 2008) 325.

¹⁶"retina, n.1" OED Online. Oxford University Press.

which is to live a happy life free to explore and succeed to the best of their ability at their passions, one of which could be music. If music educators could become more informed on how to assist low vision students, they could be helping students reach new levels of musical success.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Students with a VI are just as entitled to the experience of learning to read musical notation as students with no vision problems. Education is moving in a positive direction in terms of understanding visual conditions and fostering curriculum and school environments to include this population, however, there is much to be done. This literature review will look at the history of education for VI students, the current supports that exist and their practicality, the demands of sight-reading and strategies, as well as the emotional effects of low vision.

Cognitive Sight-Singing Strategies

Sight-Singing music is a process that takes even the visual-typical person time to master. Much like when learning to read fluently, there are techniques that singers can practice and implement to help improve their ability to sight-sing. An article titled *Cognitive strategies in sight-singing: The development of an inventory for aural skills pedagogy* in the journal called *Psychology of Music* states, “While we recognize sight-singing training as an essential part of students’ musical development, it remains the nightmare of many college-level music students and poses one of the greatest pedagogical challenges for their teachers.”¹⁷ These authors were able to compile a list of seventy-two sight-singing strategies and these strategies were placed into fourteen categories. Some notable techniques they mentioned that could be particularly helpful to the low vision community include: compare a pitch with a previously sung pitch, skim music to identify particularly challenging melodic or rhythm sections, read ahead, use solfege and hand signs as an anchor, audiate, identify and be aware of one’s own weaknesses and strengths when sight-singing, do not focus on the fear aspect of sight-singing, work with a partner, and lastly,

¹⁷Fournier, 271.

look for common rhythmic and melodic patterns.¹⁸ Whether one has no visual impairment or low vision, sight-singing is a skill that can be learned with deliberate practice, focus, and time.

Author of the article “The Science of Sight Reading”, Kenneth Saxon states that, “By focusing on individual techniques, students have the opportunity to make regular, significant process [sic]”¹⁹ The provided curriculum will guide students into understanding what techniques are most suitable for them and help them understand a personal process they can repeat each time they sight-sing.

The Visual Demands of Reading Music

The demands of reading music for people with normal vision can help music educators understand just how much more difficult it is for the visually impaired. The article “The challenge of reading music notation for pianists with low vision: An exploratory qualitative study using a head-mounted display” from the Official Journal of RESNA states that there are two main ways that vision is used when reading music and describes these as detail vision and global vision.²⁰ Detail vision encompasses recognizing if a rhythm is dotted or filled which therefore changes the length of the rhythm along with determining if a pitch is on a line or space. Global vision pertains to seeing the bigger picture like reading two staves at once in the case of pianists, reading ahead, and recognizing overarching patterns and themes. Therefore, the article

¹⁸Ibid., 274-277.

¹⁹Kenneth Saxon. "The Science of Sight Reading." (*American Music Teacher* 58, no. 6, 2009) 23.

²⁰Walter Wittich, Bianka Lussier-Dalpe, Catherine Houtekier, Josee Duquette, and Marie-Chantal Wanet-Defalque. “*The Challenge of Reading Music Notation for Pianists with Low Vision: An Exploratory Qualitative Study Using a Head-Mounted Display.*” (Assistive technology: the official journal of RESNA.) 2019. 1

suggests that while reading literature and reading music have similarities, reading music is more demanding on the eyes and involves more eye movement.²¹ Allowing low vision students to improve their sight-singing through this curriculum may make the overall act of it less strenuous because they will be more comfortable with the process.

The article continues by saying, “A visual impairment (VI) limits one’s ability to read musical notation and compromises many aspects of playing a musical instrument; yet, for many people, music is an essential part of cognitive development.”²² Due to this, it is essential that students not be deprived of the ability to learn music to the fullest extent despite having a VI. The article goes on to explain the gap in research for low vision people, “the challenges inherent in reading music are not well known, and few means have been identified to help a musician with a VI read music.”²³ If there are benefits to be gained from VI student’s improving music reading abilities outside of the improved music skills themselves, then this curriculum is something that should be considered.

Low Vision Management and Tools

As awareness of low vision conditions has grown throughout the years, some technological resources have been made available to assist in music reading. One such resource, Lime Lighter, is a software that imports scanned music then offers the option to magnify the original size up to 1.5-10x. The Lime Lighter is controlled by a foot pedal that when pressed will scroll to the next measure.²⁴ While this technology sounds cutting edge and extremely useful in

²¹Ibid., 1.

²²Wittich, 1.

²³Wittich, 1.

²⁴News. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, (2010) 191.

helping the VI learn to sight-read and practice music, there are a few faults that need to be pointed out. Firstly, it is not conducive to everyday musical situations unless every music educator is so meticulous in planning that copies of any and all music that will be presented can be provided to a student, parent, or adult at school to be scanned into the Lime Lighter software ahead of time. Secondly, this product is not financially affordable for all families. The product which includes a 17 inch monitor, the pedal, the up-to-date software is high, “The cost for Lime Lighter is \$3,995.”²⁵ Thirdly, while not as much of an issue today due to the rise in technology use in public schools, the tablet like device will need to be charged and safely transported and unlike other mainstream tablets/school technology, if something goes wrong there may not be an adult that understands how to fix the device promptly. Lastly, depending on the warranty, replacing this device if it should break is extremely expensive.

According to acquired research, some VI people can benefit from modified written materials. These modifications can include enlarged photocopying, enlarged paper size, texture difference, color coding, highlighting, and embossing. It is important to note that not all low vision conditions are equal and, “For some children with low vision, enlarging print may actually work to their disadvantage.”²⁶ A study conducted by George L. Rogers titled *Effect of Color-Coded Notation on Music Achievement of Elementary Instrumental Students* from the Journal of Research in Music Education found that after splitting fifth and sixth-grade beginning musicians into two groups for twelve weeks in which one read regular notation and the other read color-coded notation, there were no significant improvements in sight-reading or note naming

²⁵Ibid., 192.

²⁶Christine Arter, and al, et. *Children with Visual Impairment in Mainstream Settings*, (David Fulton Publishers, 1999), 30.

activities.²⁷ Overall, Roger's does find that, "...color-coded notation would activate more cell assemblies and phase sequences than uncolored notation", and this would aid in retention of knowledge.²⁸ He shares, "Some students trained with color-coded materials seemed to depend on the colors and were not able to read uncolored notation well."²⁹ However, for a student to consistently have access to color-coded music in all sight-reading situations during their primary and secondary education as well as beyond grade school is impractical and challenging. Roger's mentions another form of modified music called *shape-notes*. This is where each note head receives a distinct shape rather than each note head being round as with standard notation. The note shapes are relevant to the tonic, or first scale degree, depending on a songs key signature. He states that an experiment was conducted in the 1960's where, "fifth-grade students who were taught to read music using shape-notes scored significantly higher on sight-reading posttests than students using standard notation."³⁰ Again, while both color-coding and shape-note reading may have been viable modifications for the typically sighted during these studies where materials were deliberating prepared, to provide this modification for every musical excerpt and sight-reading example a VI may encounter throughout their musical endeavors becomes a challenge due to time, resources, communication, and cost.

²⁷George L. Rogers. "Effect of Color-Coded Notation on Music Achievement of Elementary Instrumental Students." (*Journal of Research in Music Education*,1991): 64.

²⁸Ibid., 6.

²⁹Rogers, 72.

³⁰Rogers, 65.

Music Reading Resources for the Fully Blind

Braille, as described by the article *Teaching Identity Matching of Braille Characters to Beginning Braille Readers* in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, is a written language comprised of dots that allows for blind people to navigate the world around them when they pass their fingers over the risen dots. There are six dots on a diagram and blind readers can understand the diagram through the amount and order of risen and absent dots.³¹ Louis Braille, the languages inventor, also provided a little-known musical version which similarly uses dots.³² Braille music is extremely complex to learn and the process can take many years. It is not a language many take the time to learn unless their visual impairment is extremely severe. It may be less challenging and more rewarding for anyone under the low vision category to learn standard musical notation. A strong curriculum or resources designed to assist low vision students with this musical task could make music reading even more accessible.

Educating Students with Low Vision

In the 21st century there resides a culture of inclusion and this is far from the way education used to be practiced throughout American History and elsewhere in the world. Of course, there are still special schools and programs for designated groups of people, but the public school system in the United States seeks to use inclusion in two ways: to bring awareness and humility to all typical students and to provide a more social and normal experience to those who have differences. These differences include students who are English Language Learners (ELL), Autistic, Physically Disabled, Non-verbal, Emotionally Disabled, Visually Impaired, and

³¹J. Saunders Kathryn. "Teaching Identity Matching of Braille Characters to Beginning Braille Readers." (*Journal of applied behavior analysis*. 2017) 279.

³²Smaligo, 23.

more. An article in the Journal of Visual Impairment titled Educational Placement of Children Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision in Residential and Public Schools: A National Study of Parents' Perspectives by Paul M Ajuwon and A Olu Oyinlade states, "For more than 175 years, separate facilities, in either residential schools or day schools, were the main setting for educating children who are visually impaired...in the United States."³³ Due to the growing ideology of inclusion in the mid to late 90's a huge shift occurred where roughly 83% of students with a VI were in public schools.³⁴ While this shift took place in order to improve the quality of education for students with a VI, Ajuwon and Oyinlade state, "students who are educated solely within the milieu of public schools can lead sheltered lives."³⁵ This is due to the fact that they are not consistently surrounded by students with similar disabilities that can empathize with their condition, whereas at a residential school, there are many children with similar disabilities. Now that schools are becoming more inclusive and instructors are gaining more training on students with disabilities, this curriculum could begin the next step which is two-fold, making sure students are receiving inclusive instruction not only in their core curriculum classes like math, science, and language arts, but also in Physical Education, Art, and Music. Secondly, the instructors of these courses are given professional development not only for ELL and Autistic students, but an array of other disabilities no matter how rare such as low vision. Ajuwon and Oyinlade make some interesting points about residential schools offering more specialized training and instruction to aid visually impaired students as they grow nearer to adulthood where they will need to function in society alone, yet they will also gain necessary life skills being

³³Ajuwon and Oyinlade, 325.

³⁴Ibid., 325.

³⁵Ajuwon and Oyinlade, 326.

around typical peers. If the public schools placed a larger emphasis on educating all staff, as well as further developing visual impairment departments, the public-school system could be the best of both worlds. Again, this curriculum could guide a music educator through strengthening VI student's music reading skills if they have little knowledge on how to assist this population.

The book, *Classroom Teacher's Inclusion Handbook : Practical Methods for Integrating Students with Special Needs*, written by Jerome C. Yanoff states the unfortunate fact that, "Schools may be reluctant to purchase many of the devices to aid vision because of the high cost."³⁶ Due to situations like this, many low vision students are already learning to do the best they can, therefore a curriculum designed in this way but with the added reflective elements along with an understanding instructor could help low vision musicians succeed beyond the sixth-grade.

Key Components of a Low Vision Curriculum

According to the American Printing House for the Blind's annual report in 2019, there were roughly 55,249 children ages 0-21 considered legally blind.³⁷ This large amount of visually impaired students only represents those that are registered with APH for the census and may be excluding many VI students. Of these students, 18,172 are considered "visual readers" meaning that they do not rely on hearing, braille, or are considered non-readers, but have the ability to read regular print with a certain degree of difficulty.³⁸ This is the specific population, however

³⁶Jerome C. Yanoff. *Classroom Teacher's Inclusion Handbook: Practical Methods for Integrating Students with Special Needs*. (Chicago: Arthur Coyle Press, 2006) ProQuest Ebook Central. 127.

³⁷Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019." *American Printing House*, nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/aph/app/uploads/2020/04/28130037/Annual-Report-FY2019-accessible.pdf. 19.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 19.

small, that could benefit from a sight-singing curriculum to boost their music reading confidence. The research shows that low vision students can have optimal learning success in the classroom through small practical strategies on behalf of both the teacher and the student. Some things the music teacher can implement include the way in which they present information to the entire class. The book *Classroom Teacher's Inclusion Handbook : Practical Methods for Integrating Students with Special Needs* suggests, "For greater contrast and readability use an overhead projector rather than writing on the chalkboard."³⁹ Although teachers want to help students sight-read with little to no modifications, it would be acceptable and beneficial to make materials intended for the whole class as large as possible up front. To take it one step further, teachers can ensure that the font on the board or in handouts is, "Roman type standard, serif, or sans serif types, which are easiest to read."⁴⁰

The Social and Emotional Impact of Low Vision

The article "Vision Impairment and Major Eye Diseases Reduce Vision-Specific Emotional Well-being in a Chinese Population" from the *British Journal of Ophthalmology* shares, "People with vision impairment (VI) may experience emotional reactions like anxieties, frustration and embarrassment about poor eyesight."⁴¹ This could not stand more true within school systems because students are not only trying to meet academic standards with their low vision, but trying to find a sense of belonging and acceptance among their peers. Engaging in

³⁹Yanoff, 129.

⁴⁰Ibid., 129.

⁴¹Eva K. Fenwick, Peng Guan Ong, Ryan E. K. Man, Charumathi Sabanayagam, Ching-Yu Cheng, Tien Y. Wong, and Ecosse L. Lamoureux. "Vision Impairment and Major Eye Diseases Reduce Vision-Specific Emotional Well-being in a Chinese Population." (*British Journal of Ophthalmology*, 2017) 686.

acts like moving closer to the board (i.e. sitting on the floor or pulling up a chair), asking for a new seat, putting one's face closer to papers and electronic devices, or asking questions related to the inability to see something clearly can cause anxiety and frustration depending on the low vision student's personality. Peers may not understand the low vision student's condition and in their curiosity and quest for answers may exhibit behaviors such as staring, asking questions, or asking to try the student's glasses on if they have them. Encounters like this can be uncomfortable and to avoid them, the student may make a choice to not help themselves in situations where they are not able to fully engage. This low vision sight-singing curriculum can give students confidence to do what is best for their education and aspirations. While there was little research on the emotional impact of low vision on students, one study found that the impact on of gradual vision loss on older adults was significant. The 1994 article titled *Low Vision: How to Assess and Treat Its Emotional Impact* in the *Geriatrics* journal states, "Patients may feel a loss of independence and control, poor self-esteem, and strained social relationships."⁴² When children are born with low vision such as these older people have acquired, they have a better chance at a higher quality of life when teachers, friends, and family are aware of the students low vision condition and can help them find strategies to make daily tasks and passions less tedious early on. The hope would be that if students are finding successful modifications early in life, they would be more successful navigating any situation later in life. If a child is interested in learning to read music, the music could even end up becoming a tool to facilitate the emotional impact of visual impairment.

⁴²Leinhaas MAM, and Hedstrom NJ. "Low Vision: How to Assess and Treat Its Emotional Impact." *Geriatrics* 49, no. 5 (May 1994): 53–56. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rzh&AN=107301685&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

When students can learn to read musical notation, it presents cognitive development benefits and emotional benefits alongside the gained musical skills. Low vision students may need extra supports such as this curriculum to guide them, but this would be giving children a chance to discover a passion and perform alongside their visual typical peers, giving them the skills to continue to pursue music long after they have graduated from high school. This course is designed in a way to make inclusion easier, to make social situations caused by VI less challenging, to provide strategies and techniques that can be applied to all music reading situations, and to reduce the need to purchase expensive assistive technology or consistently take time to produce modified materials for music courses. In all, this course promotes musical independence for VI students.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

In order to create a unique curriculum centered around supporting the low vision student, the goal became to not just assist students in becoming independent to find ways to improve their sight-reading abilities in general, but to also guide them through the emotional and psychological barriers that present themselves through the process. The curriculum may be a tool for instructors to track the success of their students through a variety of assignments and sight-singing experiences. Nilza Nascimento Guimarães states that, “In particular, greater focus should be placed on examining the need for a core curriculum for students with visual impairments and establishing practices that can be implemented to promote valuable outcomes in terms of inclusivity.”⁴³ This statement showcases the fact that not only is there a gap in music education curriculum for VI students, but for core academics as well.

Design of Study

Qualitative research was conducted by examining scholarly articles, journals, and books that pertain to the topics of low vision, music education, curriculum structuring, and more. Since there was a lack of resources involving a sight-singing curriculum for low vision students at any age, it was necessary to find research that conducted on the quality and history of education of low vision students and sight-reading. Research was also conducted regarding the process of sight-reading for typical students and the impact it has on one’s overall literacy and musical success.

Considering all of the possible curriculum ideas that could enhance the musicianship of students that have a VI, sight-singing was decided upon due to the wide variety of musical

⁴³Nilza Nascimento Guimarães, “Human Anatomy: Teaching–Learning Experience of a Support Teacher and a Student with Low Vision and Blindness.” (*Anatomical sciences education*, 2021), 2.

components that are addressed when sight-singing such as rhythm, pattern recognition, reading ahead, pitch, key signature, time signature, tempo, dynamics, articulation, and expression. Reading music can already be a challenge so to make sense of one of the most challenging aspects of music, reading at sight with impaired sight, could instill confidence in students. If they are able achieve sight-reading improvement through the course, they will be able to read music more confidently at their own pace too.

This curriculum was designed for sixth-grade students because this is when musical experiences become more performance and audition based. Joining a chorus or other musical experience that involves singing such as musical theatre become more common possibilities for students but also may require a sight-singing component. At the very least students will need basic music notation reading skills for these opportunities and a sight-singing course can help them grow their musicianship so they are pro-active and prepared participants. Low vision students that wish to learn their own music may find they need additional practice time and the sight-singing curriculum provided will help students understand music reading strategies that work for them. This course will enhance students' confidence to pursue any musical goal they want to achieve.

The course is designed to help students be as successful as possible with the vision they have so that they can feel and be as independent as possible. Of course, if a student chooses to use additional supports in their future music endeavors, that is their choice. This curriculum's aim is to help students explore and understand what they may be capable of without spending money on expensive technology and software, spending time color-coding or modifying scores, or possibly feeling like an outcast due to their noticeable modifications.

Questions and Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that this curriculum contains the necessary tools to help low vision sixth-grade students make great strides in both sight-singing skills as well as having a deeper understanding of their specific VI. Based on the primary and secondary research questions, the hypotheses are as follows:

What are the key components of a curriculum that is suitable for low vision pupils?

Students are likely to benefit from components such as presenting content in a way that students of various learning styles respond well to, the use of a semi-circle seating arrangement, and lastly, giving students access to the same information in two forms at once such as a handout or PDF of information displayed on the Smart Board. It is believed that these components will be low vision students find success because it ensures they have equal and easier access to all information due to proximity and multiple sources. This may free the students' minds from worrying about access to the content and allow them to focus on the content itself.

What types of learning styles other than visual can be used to help formalize the curriculum?

Students are likely to benefit from the combination of group, partner, and one on one activities as well as reflective assignments throughout the curriculum, helping them gain a well-balanced experience. It is reasonable to believe this because the wide variety of activities and ways of presenting content is likely to connect with students of many different learning styles.

What unique pedagogical techniques are used to make a curriculum like this successful?

Students are likely to benefit from electronically projected materials as opposed to handwritten materials as well as clear and concise speaking from the instructor. It is reasonable to believe this because students may benefit from specific font styles, sizes, and background to text contrast as opposed to chalk or whiteboard writing. They may benefit from a uniform style of writing as opposed to personalized handwriting. When teachers are careful about their wording, tone, and speed, students have a better chance of receiving and retaining information without having to ask for clarification.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Both the research found, and lack of research available prove that there is an existing gap in the field of music education for the VI community. The following sections will describe the research findings and how they pertain to the primary and secondary research questions as well as how these findings supported the decisions made in the creation of the sixth-grade low vision sight singing curriculum.

Section I: Key Components of Low Vision Curriculum

For this curriculum to be successful with a VI population, certain criteria must be met. *What are the key components of a curriculum that is suitable for low vision pupils?* Firstly, to make up for what students lack visually, it would be extremely beneficial to present instruction in various learning styles so that students are able to absorb and process the course content to the best of their ability. The study, "Assessing Learning Styles Among Students With and Without Disabilities at a Distance-Learning University" states, "...learning style is considered an inborn characteristic; that is, although this personal trait is affected by experience and the environment, it is fairly stable over time."⁴⁴ Secondly, classroom arrangement must be considered. It is hard for students to learn if basic needs are not met first, and an important basic need of a low vision student is proximity to information. Students need to be equally arranged in a way that is conducive to both seeing and hearing the instructor and all presented materials. The format selected for this course is a seated semi-circle facing the board with the instructor seated in the center between the board and the students. This allows students to be equally distant from the

⁴⁴Tali Heiman. "Assessing Learning Styles among Students with and without Learning Disabilities at a Distance-Learning University." (*Learning Disability Quarterly*, 2006), 55.

teacher. An article by Rachel Wannarka and Kathy Ruhl found that students, "...asked more questions in a semi-circle than they did in rows in a pattern that was stable over time."⁴⁵ Since these students are low vision and may need additional support from the instructor despite all of the supports in place, proximity will allow students to feel more secure in asking questions and may become more engaged. Students feeling more open to ask questions and engage will inadvertently help their peers and possibly make them feel more comfortable to do the same. The size of a course such as this is suspected to be no more than a handful of students so this arrangement should be manageable for all teachers implementing this curriculum. One note of caution provided by the book *Children with Visual Impairment in Mainstream Settings*, is that, "It may be that for the child with low vision, their sight is better in one eye than the other."⁴⁶ Due to this, the instructor may want to ask students which specific seat in the semi-circle arrangement would suite them best. This text goes on to say that while some low vision learners may be bothered by sunlight glare, some students with cataracts may actually benefit from sitting near the sunniest or brightest part of the room.⁴⁷ A third key component of low vision curriculum is the presentation of materials in various mediums at once. The technical paper "Guidelines for designing text in printed media for people with low vision" published by the University of Zagreb in Croatia showed success with an 80 year old low vision woman sharing that, "The

⁴⁵Rachel Wannarka and Kathy Ruhl. *Seating arrangements that promote positive academic and behavioural outcomes: a review of empirical research*. (Support for Learning, 2008), 92.

⁴⁶Arter, 20.

⁴⁷Ibid., 20.

white text (larger than 20 pt) on black background was most suited for her.”⁴⁸ If the instructor is showing rhythm cards or melodic patterns on the board, students should also have a physical handout or access to a pdf version that students can quickly pull up on their preferred device, which is a course requirement. Students can acquire an enlarged photocopy from their music teacher or zoom in on their electronic device until the font is the appropriate size for their specific visual need. The idea behind presenting the same information in multiple ways is to lessen the amount of confusion and strengthen student independence.

Section II: Types of Learning Styles

What types of learning styles other than visual can be used to help formalize the curriculum? Throughout the history of education, one of the most common styles of teaching has been teachers lecturing while students listen and write notes but not every child learns the same way whether they are typical or not. Students have different learning styles and instructors should do their best to vary their teaching to accommodate these. This curriculum will aid teachers in effectively accomplishing this. The article “Effects of teaching and learning styles on students’ reflection levels for ubiquitous learning” in the Elsevier journal of Computers and Education reads, “Learning styles refer to one’s preferences in processing external information or internal knowledge and experience.”⁴⁹ Since students with a VI have trouble seeing, they may prefer certain learning styles to others due to the fact they do not have to rely solely on vision

⁴⁸Maja Brozović, et al. “Guidelines for Designing Text in Printed Media for People with Low Vision.” (*ACTA GRAPHICA Journal for Printing Science and Graphic Communications*, 2018), 28

⁴⁹Hsieh Sheng-Wen, Jang Yu-Ruei, Hwang Gwo-Jen, Chen Nian-Shing. “Effects of teaching and learning styles on students” *reflection levels for ubiquitous learning*, (*Computers & Education*, 2011), 1195.

when they are implemented. The provided curriculum utilizes a variety of learning styles according to David Kolb's theory of Experiential Learning and these include reflective observation, active experimentation, concrete experience, and abstract conceptualization.⁵⁰ Since people tend to lean towards one specific learning style, it is important that all are reflected in the curriculum so that students have the opportunity to use their strengths since vision is already a weakness. Here it will be shown how this low vision curriculum addresses all four of these learning styles to some degree.

The article "Effects of teaching and learning styles on students' reflection levels for ubiquitous learning" shares that reflection, "...plays an important role in the learning process because it increases learning outcomes."⁵¹ This is why this low vision sight-singing curriculum includes opportunities for students to look within and examine what the strengths and challenges of sight-singing are for the individual. Assignments one, three, four, and ten of this curricula are reflection focused. Sight-Singing Praxis 1 contains a self-reflection, and assignment six is a partner observation activity which also includes reflective elements.

Experience plays a large role in the music classroom and this sight-singing course is no different. The notion that experiential learning is effective was made popular by David Kolb. He describes, "A common usage of the term "experiential learning" defines it as a particular form of learning from life experience; often contrasted it with lecture and classroom learning."⁵² The

⁵⁰David Kolb. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development, Second Edition*. (PH Professional Business, 2014), Digital Copy.

⁵¹Sheng-Wen, 1195.

⁵²David Kolb. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development, Second Edition*. (PH Professional Business, 2014), Digital Copy.

goal of this course is to prepare students for real life sight-singing experiences therefore students' sight-sing in the fashion of a real audition more than they sit and listen to lectures. Kolb also shares, "Knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner."⁵³ This is particularly relevant to the low vision community and those who identify as concrete experience or active experimentation learners because this population of people are constantly finding out the best way to accomplish a goal or task to the best of their ability in a way slightly altered from the techniques of the visual typical.

This curriculum serves as a sort of laboratory where students can become exposed to various supports and strategies while testing them out through sight-singing experiences to then make decisions about what works well for their specific visual condition and what does not. This suits active experimentation learners well because these types of learners are practical, goal driven, and willing to take calculated risks to achieve their goals.⁵⁴ It serves concrete experience learners well because, "They are often good intuitive decision makers and function well in unstructured situations."⁵⁵ Students that are considered to be concrete experience or active experimentation learners may thrive in many tasks throughout the course. In the span of the twelve-week curriculum students will engage in fifteen sight-singing experiences including one partner performance, full class performances, solo performances in front of the class, and solo performances in front of the instructor.

⁵³Ibid., Digital Copy.

⁵⁴Kolb, Digital Copy.

⁵⁵Ibid., Digital Copy.

Students that identify as abstract conceptualization learners may thrive in this course because they are, “good at systematic planning, manipulation of abstract symbols, and quantitative analysis.”⁵⁶ Their thinking is more scientific rather than emotional. In many ways this learning style works well in the context of music reading and sight-reading. It was examined earlier that sight-reading, while a spontaneous activity, can be accomplished by following a process and group of strategies tweaked by the specific musician to get the best results for themselves, thus encompassing systematic planning. It was also noted that one successful strategy could be the recognition of rhythmic or melodic patterns which falls in line with manipulation of abstract symbols. These learners will find success with assignments such as assignment three, sight-singing preparation list activity, where students are to list the order of steps they take during the one to two-minute period leading up to a sight-singing performance. Students can think through their progress more carefully and make necessary adjustments if needed.

Section III: Unique Pedagogical Techniques

What unique pedagogical techniques are used to make a curriculum like this successful? Teaching a sight-singing course to a presumably small group of low vision students leaves a lot of room for the instructor to meet specific requests and accommodations depending on the unique layout and resources at hand for the betterment of everyone’s education. Many public schools have white erase boards and smart boards, while others may still have chalk boards or even overhead projector technology. It was mentioned previously that some low vision students can benefit from enlarged writing, specific font styles, and a stronger color contrast between the background and writing. It would also offer more consistency to low vision students

⁵⁶Kolb., Digital Copy.

to see typed language because typing offers each letter to consistently look the same each time it is typed whereas every person's hand-writing style can differ even within the same sentence if not deliberate. For ease of instruction and to ensure the students are focusing more on their musical skills than second guessing any presented materials, it would be best for instructors to use a smart board to project typed and enlarged words. This simple instructional delivery change can help maintain a better class flow and minimize any student feeling uncomfortable about asking for clarification. To take this a step further, any materials that are to be presented on the board could also be printed, enlarged, and given to students as handouts. This way students may hold the images as close to their eyes or at any angle necessary while also referring to the information covered in class more comfortably outside of class.

The technical paper "Guidelines for designing text in printed media for people with low vision" states that, "Most of the information published through graphic media is designed for people with normal eyesight" and continues to share, "There are 285 million people with visual impairment."⁵⁷ This simple adjustment can help offset the normal printed media standards in music classrooms. Lastly, students are asked to bring a laptop or tablet device for similar reasons. Any materials pulled up on a device may be zoomed in on for ease. This gives VI students three visual ways to access written information, assignments, and even sight-reading excerpts during the course.

While this next technique should be implemented with any course, music teachers should speak with a clear, concise, and audible tone while maintaining a reasonable speed as well. Teacher's personalities and natural ways of speaking can make their way into the classroom, but

⁵⁷Maja Brozović, et al, 25.

at times it is important to think more deliberately about how we speak to students so that every child can understand and there is less time spent on clarifying. For example, if a teacher is naturally soft spoken or tends to speak quickly, they may consider consciously adjusting when teaching. The article “Speaking Clearly for the Blind: Acoustic and Articulatory Correlates of Speaking Conditions in Sighted and Congenitally Blind Speakers” from the journal Plos One states, “...clear speech provides the listener with audible and visual cues that are used to increase the overall intelligibility of speech produced by the speaker.”⁵⁸ It would also be acceptable for teachers to err on the side of repetition for students to better absorb information. Alongside speaking clearly to students, music teachers could also read any information presented in writing out loud verbatim. Again, this course is intended to show students what they are capable of in terms of sight-singing music with as little supports as possible aside from enlarged copies and using a highlighter or writing utensil to make markings, but this does not mean the course and all materials aside from the sight-singing excerpts is taught without supports. That approach would take time away from sight-singing goals.

⁵⁸Lucie Ménard, Pamela Trudeau-Fisette, Dominique Côté, Christine. “Speaking Clearly for the Blind: Acoustic and Articulatory Correlates of Speaking Conditions in Sighted and Congenitally Blind Speakers”, (PLoS ONE (2016), 1.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Summary of Study

This study was created to explore the gap in low vision music curriculum, specifically in sight-singing for sixth-grade students. Sixth-grade students were chosen as the focus for this study because this is the point in which sight-reading music for auditions or as part of curriculum becomes an expected part of ensemble admission and curriculum. Students have the ability to understand music literacy at a higher level than in previous years combined with the maturing vocal tone and the notion that just about seven years from this point, these students could possibly be utilizing these skills for real-world music experiences. Beginning the familiarity of sight-singing as a low vision student at this age will give students that much more time to make improvements and add in other important elements that this particular course does not focus on such as articulation and expressivity. Sight-singing was chosen because all important aspects of music literacy are encompassed in the act of sight-singing. Students are learning how to bring together rhythm, melody, tempo, dynamics, and more simultaneously to create music. If students can gain some confidence in this course, then reading music in a less strict fashion should become easier and even further build their literacy confidence. Lastly, this course is designed for only low vision students so that they feel comfortable exploring, reflecting, and experimenting with the music teacher focusing solely on meeting their needs.

Summary of Purpose

This curriculum is intended to fill a gap in music literacy for low vision sixth-grade students in public or private schools. Students that have low vision may not excel as much as they could if their music teacher was aware of their visual impairment and had strategies or curriculum in place to help them improve. Students with low vision deserve the chance to

become proficient music readers like their visual typical peers so that they can engage in the same musical activities as them. Certain musical activities may require auditions and sight-reading, with a curriculum to help students identify strategies and understand their own visual impairment better, they have a higher chance of musical independence helping them follow their musical passions rather than ruling music reading out altogether.

Summary of Curriculum Development

The curriculum provided is a scaffolded approach to sight-singing so that music teachers with little to no knowledge of VI students can build up their music literacy and guide their emotional understanding of their disability. Students will be reviewing and strengthening basic music literacy skills such as understanding rhythm and pitch names as well as solfeggio. Students will sight-sing pieces that range from four to eight measures with decreasing amounts of preparation time as the course goes on and they become more familiar with the sight-singing process and techniques.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

This research investigated the physical supports and curriculum that already exist to help both music educators and students reach the common goal of improved sight-reading and music literacy skills for low vision students. It was found that no curriculum exists to help music educators improve sight-reading skills in low vision sixth graders. The research conducted found that there is a lack of curriculum and supports for both low vision students and music teachers to make improvements in physical score reading and sight-singing. This study explored the demands of sight-singing and music literacy for visual typical students as well as the music reading process for the fully blind, but little information was available for the process of low vision music literacy. It was found that the supports in place for the fully blind would not be

conducive to low vision music reading but that sight-singing strategies could be implemented to help low vision students form a process and comfortability when sight-singing. The research revealed that the growing popularity of inclusion in public schools is changing the way the visually impaired learn and function in schools every day.

This study was able to provide research to support the decisions made in the curriculum and answer the primary and secondary research questions. This study may be one step to help educate music educators in the instance they find visually impaired, but not fully blind, students in their music classrooms.

Limitations

The limitations of this curriculum include limited options for students that are low vision, but more musically advanced. It could be the case that some students find themselves quickly adapting to the sight-singing process and are ready for more challenging sight-singing pieces than the course offers. In this case, it can be up to the music instructor's discretion to find and implement excerpts appropriate for their specific student population. Seeing as class sizes will likely be small, it should be doable for teachers to make the necessary adjustments. The same goes for students who may need easier sight-singing examples than are provided in this curriculum. Another limitation is that this curriculum is intended as a course for multiple low vision students in one setting to enhance sight-singing. Perhaps this curriculum could be expanded with tips for aiding both teachers and students in music literacy during a regularly scheduled general music, chorus, band, strings, or other school-based music program where the child functions alongside visual typical peers. This study is also limited by the lack of existing research on the low vision community as a whole and how the low vision community learns to read written musical notation. The curriculum is designed as a product of what research could be

found in conjunction with the authors existing teaching experience with sight-singing and sixth-graders as well as the authors personal low vision disability. The author having a bias due to their own low vision disability, offers this curriculum a unique perspective.

Recommendations for Future Study

It is recommended that future studies observe this curriculum carried out with a group of low vision sixth-grade students to analyze its effectiveness and make necessary changes to provide an even stronger curriculum that suites the needs of this specific age group. It is also recommended that similar curriculum be adjusted to fit students in other grades, perhaps middle and high school. Creating a level two of this course might also be useful to students that want to continue to refine their sight-singing skills with their music teacher. A future study may also go into more detail about the specific eye conditions that cause low vision and how they impact music literacy. This course has a strong focus on using less visual supports to help students understand what they're capable of with little modifications, perhaps a level two course could help students decide what supports would work best for them during music literacy activities if they so choose to use them. It has been discovered through this research that there are many distinctions within the low vision community, so no one support, or modification is a fix all. This curriculum could also be improved with a list or section detailing the specific definitions of all types of low vision as well as what sorts of supports benefit each type. For instance, it has already explored how font size, font type, paper material, background contrast, handwriting, and a student's position in the room in combination with the amount of lighting can all factor in to a low vision student's ability to see the presented materials and engage in sight-singing. A section such as this would be a quick guide for instructors and may even help build student to teacher trust due to the teacher's genuine knowledge and willingness to improve the child's education.

Lastly, this curriculum is designed for the cognitively typical low vision student, but there are many low vision people that also have another physical or cognitive disability and many need additional support or a completely different curriculum to find music literacy and sight-singing success.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A-Detailed Curriculum

Syllabus

COURSE SYLLABUS

NAME OF COURSE: Sixth-Grade Sight-Singing for Low Vision Students

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed specifically to improve the sight-reading abilities of learning-typical sixth-grade students with low vision and will work with them to identify their specific low vision needs to ensure they gain comfortability reading written notation so they are able to apply this knowledge to auditions or other music experiences throughout middle school, high school, college, and beyond.

RATIONALE

Students that have the ability can see but experience a wide variety of low vision issues may find that activities easy for a vision-typical student are daunting for them and thus get discouraged from their passions Students that wish to join a band/orchestra/chorus throughout their education and beyond will more than likely need to sight-read a piece of music. This course enables students to read age and level appropriate sight-reading through scaffolding.

I. PREREQUISITES

Students must have a basic understanding of rhythmic values and the pitches of the five-line staff.

II. TEACHER PROVIDE TEXTBOOKS

Since this course is designed for low vision students and the required texts do not come in large print editions, the teacher will be providing an enlarged photocopy of all textbook materials needed as well as a pdf version. If you should still want to purchase our materials, they are listed below:

- A. Telfer, Nancy (1992). Successful Sight-Singing Book 1: A Creative, Step by Step Approach. San Diego, CA: Neil A. Kjoa Music Company.
- B. Kersey, Robert E. (1972). JUST FIVE: A Collection of Pentatonic Songs. Belwin-mills publishing corp.

III. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR LEARNING STUDENTS WILL NEED:

1. A black one inch 3 ring binder
2. A set of colored pencils
3. Wooden or mechanical pencils
4. Electronic device (laptop or tablet)
 - a. Please let the instructor know if providing a device for your student is not possible, the school can help.
5. A set of colored highlighters
6. A bottle of water

IV. MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- A. Name the specific issues students have with sight-reading (i.e. small font, blurred lines, color).
- B. Identify the pitches of a sight-reading excerpt using solfege at a comfortable tempo.
- C. Analyze a sight-singing excerpt in two minutes before beginning.
- D. Examine which strategies help students have the best chance at sight-reading success according to their specific visual needs.
- E. Prepare a sight-reading excerpt in a similar amount of time as vision-typical peer aged students.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

A. Participation in Mini Lessons

Students will participate and engage in mini lessons. Students may show their engagement through eye contact, note taking, asking/answering questions, engaging in comments to affirm understanding.

B. Assignments (10)

Students will complete ten total assignments related to sight-reading score analysis, understanding of rhythm and pitch, and understanding of one's own visual needs.

C. Group Sight-Singing Praxis (6)

Students will perform six sight-singing examples as a class. The scores will be provided. Each student will have the same amount of time to review the score and then perform simultaneously.

D. Solo Sight-Singing Praxis (4)

Students will perform four sight-singing examples solo (by oneself) in front of the class. Each student will be assigned a different, but similar level, sight-singing example than the previous.

E. Sight-Singing Quizzes (3)

Each student will perform three sight-singing quizzes in front of the instructor only. Each student will be given a full one or two minutes to review the sight-singing example before being asked to perform depending on the week of the quiz.

F. Final Eight Measure Sight-Singing Exam (1)

Each student will perform an eight-measure sight-singing example in a simulation that resembles a real audition with one minute of preparation before being asked to sing.

VI. COURSE GRADING AND POLICIES

A. Points

Assignments (10 pts each)	100
Group Sight-Singing Praxis (60pts each)	360
Solo Sight-Singing Praxis (40pts each)	160
Sight-Singing Quizzes (100pts each)	300
Final Exam	200

Total: 1120

B. Scale

A = 940–1010 A- = 920–939 B+ = 900–919 B = 860–899 B- = 840–859
C+ = 820–839 C = 780–819 C- = 760–779 D+ = 740–759 D = 700–739
D- = 680–699 F = 0–679

C. Late Assignment Policy

Students must be present during all classes where solo sight-singing, sight-singing quizzes, and the final exam will be taking place. Students that are not present for one of these assignments will be given the opportunity to schedule a one-on-one makeup time no later than five days after the missed class for a 10-point reduction. Students that do not make up the missed assignment will receive 0pts. Late written assignments will receive a 10% reduction off their earned score.

Analysis Chart

Student Required or Teacher Provided Textbooks

The information is provided below for any student wanting to purchase a regular size print copy. These texts do not come in large print and therefore enlarged photocopies should be given to students by the instructor as needed.

- A. Telfer, Nancy (1992). Successful Sight-Singing Book 1: A Creative, Step by Step Approach. San Diego, CA: Neil A. Kjoa Music Company.
- B. Kersey, Robert E. (1972). JUST FIVE: A Collection of Pentatonic Songs. Belwin-mills publishing corp.
- C. Snyder, Audrey (1993P. The Sight-Singer: A Practical Sight-Singing Course for Two-Part Mixed or Three-Part Mixed Voices. V. 1. Florida, CPP/Belwin Inc.

Problem

The students in this course struggle with the ability to read regular size scores and musical notation due to low vision. These students are taking this course to gain a firmer grasp on sight-reading skills and confidence for Middle and High School chorus auditions, musical theater auditions, or out of school auditions that would require a sight-singing portion, or perhaps just for the sake of improving these skills out of interest. Students with low vision rely on their hearing more than the average person which can make them musically successful in a lot of ways, but this curriculum aims to help low vision students gain more confidence with reading abilities so they can become more well-rounded musicians.

Learner's and Their Characteristics

These students are between the ages of 10 and 12. The pre-requisite is that all students must know the note names for the five-line staff {EGBDF and FACE}. The pre-requisite is that all students must have been exposed to the five-line treble staff. Students must have a basic understanding of rhythm and solfege. These students will be taking this course residentially.

New Desired Behavior
Using enlarged photocopied music and visual aids via the smart board, and enlargements on personal electronic devices, low vision students will be able to successfully sight-read musical excerpts that are at an appropriate level for their age and ability.
Instructional Delivery Options
Sight-reading examples will be given either in normal size or enlarged depending on student needs. Students will be able to view lessons on a Smart Board or overhead projector as well as obtain a personal copy (paper or electronic access) for closer viewing.
Pedagogical Considerations
Students will begin the course sight-reading four beat rhythms using the same size paper and material that will be used on melodic sight-reading excerpts. The idea is to start students out familiarizing themselves with the easier to use materials through easily digestible music content. Then the rhythmic sight-reading can grow in length. This can eventually translate to pitches on the staff and evolve closer to what students would be asked to sight-read for auditions.
Learning Theories That Apply to the Curriculum
Experiential learning theory applies to this curriculum because as I come up with solutions for low vision students, I will be nurturing a positive environment by being open to their suggestions and modifying as necessary. Each student with low vision could have drastically different needs. While one student could benefit from color coded notes or staff lines, another student may benefit from textural differences on the lines or rhythms. The way this course will allow students to sight-read is through a much more physical experience with the music making them even more active as participants.

Learning Outcomes

1. Name the specific issues students have with sight-reading (i.e. small font, blurred lines, color)
2. Identify the pitches of a sight-reading excerpt using solfege at a comfortable tempo.
3. Analyze a sight-singing excerpt in two minutes before beginning.
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4. Examine which strategies help students have the best chance at sight-reading success according to their specific visual needs.
5. Prepare a sight-reading excerpt in a similar amount of time as vision-typical peer aged students.

Design Chart

<p>Concept Statement: The purpose of this curriculum is to help Sixth-Grade low vision students pinpoint their personal struggles in sight-reading and develop strategies that help them improve their skills. This course will also improve each student’s confidence with reading rhythm and pitch in treble clef. This will help students gain confidence in future auditions and chorus activities throughout grade school and beyond. <i>Each class is 45 minutes in length and begins with roughly 10 minutes of pitch, rhythm, solfege, and vocal warm up activities.</i></p>			
Learning Outcomes	Content	Learning/Training Activity	Assessment
<p>1. <u>Name</u> the specific issues students have with sight-reading (i.e. small font, blurred lines, color)</p>	<p>Week 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Rhythm and Pitch Review • Students must identify the <i>key obstacles</i> specific to them when sight-reading a grade level appropriate normal font sight-reading piece that may appear in any sight-reading book or audition 	<p>Week 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will view single rhythm cards and single pitch cards on the smart board • Students will then see 2/4, 3/4, or 4/4 rhythm cards on the smart board • Students will sight-read an 8-measure excerpt that appears exactly how a visual-typical student would see it 	<p>Week 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will use teacher borrowed white erase boards to show their answers to names and duration • Students will speak the rhythm cards as a class • Assignment #1-Students will reflect on their sight-singing excerpt experience by making a list of difficulties and possible solutions. The teacher will provide this large print blank list document • After their reflection, the teacher will assign a similar large print excerpt. Students will reflect verbally as a class on how their experience has changed

<p>2. <u>Identify</u> the pitches and rhythm of a sight-reading excerpt using solfege at a comfortable tempo</p>	<p>Week 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of solfege syllables and hand signs <p>Week 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will learn how to pick a tempo that they can maintain during a sight-singing example <p>Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will continue to learn how to pick an appropriate tempo 	<p>Week 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will mirror and echo the teachers voice and hand shapes <p>Week 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will learn this skill using examples and non-examples of various tempos the instructor starts for a group sight-singing excerpt <p>Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class discussion and list creation. Driving Question: <i>What musical elements will help me determine an appropriate tempo? (key, time sig, accidentals, range, rhythms, etc.)</i> 	<p>Week 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student will read one measure and two measure sight-singing examples from the board as a class to practice. Students will use their voice and hands simultaneously Assignment #2- Identifying the lines and spaces of the treble clef worksheet at the end of class then turn in <p>Week 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solo Sight-Singing Praxis 1. Students will sight-sing a short 4 measure example on solfege for the class at a comfortable tempo for them. Students will then reflect on their tempo choice based on the outcome Group Sight-Singing 1. Students will sing <u>Exercise 5 of the Telfer</u> as a class at the teacher's tempo on solfege. This excerpt will be an enlarged copy given to students by the teacher
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			<p>Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #3-Sight-Singing Preparation List Activity • Students will list the order in which they examine a sight-singing piece given to them by the teacher (<u>Exercise 10 of the Telfer</u>) • Students will share their findings with the class and compare/contrast class decisions
<p>3. <u>Analyze</u> a sight-singing excerpt in two minutes before beginning</p>	<p>Week 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will review the chart they prepared during week 4 <p>Week 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will need to identify the parts that take them the most time to analyze. (accidentals, key signature, etc.) <p>Week 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must know how to keep time for a partner and how to give constructive criticism 	<p>Week 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher will explain the activity <p>Week 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher will explain the activity <p>Week 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher will generate a discussion by asking “what is constructive criticism?” • The teacher will distribute an enlarged 8-measure excerpt to the group for Group Sight-Singing #3 • The teacher will explain the partner activity 	<p>Week 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Sight-Singing #2-the teacher will distribute a large print 4 measure excerpt and set a timer for 2 minutes, the class will proceed in unison • Assignment #4-Students will write a self-reflection with one grow and one glow on a notecard and hand it in as an exit ticket <p>Week 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solo Sight-Singing #2-each student will have a full two minutes during

			<p>the class to analyze a 4-measure sight-singing excerpt and then perform it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #5 students will take observation notes of each students process and performance to engage in a brief discussion after all performances • Sight-Singing Quiz #1- students will be called into the room one at a time for quiz 1. This quiz will be four measures long and will be sight-read using solfege and hand signs <p>Week 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Sight-Singing #3-Students will have two minutes to prepare an 8-measure excerpt given to them by the instructor • Assignment #6-students will be assigned a partner • Partner A and B will have different sight-singing pieces both 8 measures
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners will take turns being the observer and timer while the other performs Students have 2 minutes each to prepare (<i>Students will fill out a partner sight-singing observation sheet and turn it in at the end of class</i>)
4. <u>Examine</u> which strategies help students have the best chance at sight-reading success according to their specific visual needs	<p>Week 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will need to know or have a best guess of what self-advocacy is Students will learn how to prepare for a sight-reading in only one minute instead of two minutes <p>Week 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will need to learn the various physical and mental options for self-modifying beyond enlarged music. (Raising stand, tilting stand, hold music closer to face, tracking with finger, bringing a magnifying glass, bringing a highlighter or pencil) 	<p>Week 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mini Lesson/Discussion on Self-Advocacy The teacher will talk to students about the importance of self-advocacy for visual supports as well as the importance of being proactive The teacher will generate a discussion where students come up with strategies for examining a piece of music in half of the time <p>Week 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher will begin a discussion about modification options both mental and physical and compile a class list on the board 	<p>Week 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment #7-students will fill out a 5-question sheet on what they've learned about self-advocacy Group Sight-Singing #4 Sight-Singing Quiz #2 <p>Week 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment #8-students will identify a modification technique that they have not tried but would like to and identify one technique that they feel does not suite their visual needs Group Sight-Singing Solo Sight-Singing

<p>5. <u>Prepare</u> a sight-reading excerpt in a similar amount of time as vision-typical peer aged students</p>	<p>Week 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will learn about the concept of reading ahead and not stopping to fix mistakes <p>Week 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will learn what types of audition scenarios they may encounter <p>Week 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will need to understand their strengths and weaknesses or grows and glows after completing this course 	<p>Week 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mini lesson <p>Week 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mini lesson-student discussion, “where do you see yourself needing these sight-singing skills?” • Students will brainstorm a list of types of audition scenarios <p>Week 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher will explain the layout of class 	<p>Week 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Sight-Singing • Sight-Singing Quiz #3- students will perform alone for the teacher and they will have 1 minute to look over the 8-measure excerpt <p>Week 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #9 • Solo Sight-Singing <p>Week 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #10-1-page paper explaining what students have learned about themselves and sight-reading, what they want to continue to improve on, and how they plan to use this course knowledge in their future • Final Sight-Singing Exam-Students will be called in to the room one at a time for their final 8 measure exam with an enlarged copy and 1 minute of preparation • Students will be in the hallway working on their Assignment #10 until it is their turn
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Learning Outcomes According to Bloom's Taxonomy

Learning Outcomes	Rational for Sequence
1. <u>Name</u> the specific issues students have with sight-reading (i.e. small font, blurred lines, color)	Since this course is geared towards students with low vision it is extremely important to talk about the different ways in which our visual disabilities affect us not only in the musical setting, but in general. This discussion will help the students and I think through the best tailored solutions for them before <u>digging</u> into the sight-reading content.
2. <u>Identify</u> the pitches and rhythm of a sight-reading excerpt using solfege at a comfortable tempo.	Reviewing basic rhythm and pitch reading skills is important because if students are to feel secure in what they are seeing when sight-reading a piece, it is paramount that they can identify necessary music symbols individually and confidently first.
3. <u>Analyze</u> a sight-singing excerpt in two minutes before beginning.	Now that students have reviewed and learned rhythms, solfege, and pitches, students are ready to perform 4 measure and then 8 measure sight-singing excerpts with two minutes to prepare. The time will shrink to one minute eventually.
4. <u>Examine</u> which strategies help students have the best chance at sight-reading success according to their specific visual needs.	Now that the students have had a variety of experiences, it is time to re-examine what strategies have been working for them and to ensure they are confident in the supports they have chosen and try out new ones if wanted.
5. <u>Prepare</u> a sight-reading excerpt in a similar amount of time as vision-typical peer aged students.	This step is a culmination of what the students have learned about how to fulfil their own visual needs in preparation for a sight-singing example while also demonstrating growth in music literacy. This step shows how well these students were able to “close the gap” between where they were with their music literacy skills in relation to a visual-typical student.

Development Chart

Expository

WEEK #1: Teacher Intro and Syllabus (roughly 20 minutes total)-The Teacher stands just outside their door to greet the students as they walk in, The teacher directs them to choose a seat in the semi-circle. {students enter their first class with the teacher and take seats in chairs set up in an arc format facing the board where the teacher has a music stand set up in front of the smart board where they will stand] Good Afternoon Everyone! Welcome to Sixth-Grade Sight-Singing for Low Vision Students. My name is Ms./Mr. _____ and I am here to take us on a 12-week journey to better understand your visual needs and become more confident sight-singers. I'm hoping that I can help you reach your musical goals as well as build confidence through our curriculum.”

{hands stack of large printed syllabi to end student} “Let’s go over our syllabus together, please take one and pass them down. You are in this course because you have a desire to strengthen your sight-singing skills either for the purpose of auditioning for choruses as you continue through middle school, high school, and beyond, or perhaps you genuinely just want to challenge yourselves through your passion of music. Whatever the reason is, I’m here to help. Look a page 1. We have already touched on the rationale for this course so please direct your attention to the pre-requisites, *Students must have a basic understanding of rhythmic values and the pitches of the five-line staff.* As sixth-grade, we should be familiar with these concepts and we will review them today. Below you can see the two texts we will be using in class, do not worry about purchasing these because I will be providing both a digital PDF copy of all materials to you as well as enlarged print photocopies. These texts cannot be ordered in large print. There are five required items for this course listed here. If you have an issue coming to class with a personal device, please talk to me at the end of class. When reading music on a device it is easy to zoom in and/or pinch and pull the screen to enlarge sections. This will be a useful and necessary tool to reaching our goals. Next, we have our five outcomes, please take a moment to read these to yourself. [Brief Pause] This course is worth 1000 points total. There will be ten written assignments to be completed during class time, six group sight-singing examples where we all begin and end together, four solo sight-singings in front of the class, three total sight-singing quizzes in front of me only, and lastly, the final sight-singing exam which will also be done alone with me. As stated earlier, all assignments are done during class time so please take a moment to read the late assignment policy if you should miss a class and need to turn in work. Now that we have reviewed the syllabus in full, are there any questions I can answer?”

Rhythm Review (10 minutes)- “You may put your syllabus under your chair and direct your attention to the board. We will now review some basic rhythms. Let’s see if we remember their names, duration, and how to clap and speak their syllables. {shows rhythms and asks for participation} Now that we have done about five minutes of rhythm review, let’s look at some rhythm cards in

different time signatures. I will perform the rhythm first each time a new card is presented, and you will echo me with your hands and voice.”

Pitch Review (5 minutes)- “Great job everyone! It’s time for use to see what we can recall about the 5 lines and 4 spaces of the treble staff. Everyone hold up one hand of your choice with your fingers spread. Each finger represents a line and each space is equal to a space on the staff. Point to your pinky, this is line 1. Now point to your thumb, this is line 5, the top line. From the bottom to the top let’s point to each finger while listening to my phrase *Every Good Boy Does Fine, on the line*. Can we try it all together now? Okay great, now let’s try the spaces, point from the bottom to the top while spelling the word *FACE* with me.”

Sight-Singing Visual Impairment Key Obstacles Assignment #1 (10 minutes)- “Alright everyone we’ve been doing some great work so far. Our last task today is to complete our first sight-singing example together to get a sense of where we each stand and then reflect on it. I will hand you each a copy of this example with Assignment #1 on the back and give us two full minutes to look at the example. When I count off, we will all singing it together, myself included. Afterword’s we will complete Assignment #1 which is to make a list of the obstacles you encountered during this example either vision related, or musical skill related. You will then pose some possible solutions and turn it in. Please make sure your name is at the top. [hands out copies] Alright everyone our two minutes starts now. Alright time is up, {tonicizes on piano and plays starting pitch} Here is your starting pitch. 1, 2, ready, go. Okay, you have the rest of class to fill out Assignment #1 on the back, let me know if you have any questions. When you are done sit quietly and I will collect them at the end.”

Conclusion- “Well done today everyone! I’m so excited to be on this journey with you for the next 11 weeks and I can’t wait to see your progress. Don’t forget your syllabus and to bring the required materials next week. Remember if you have an issue bringing a device you can stay back and speak with me. Have a great day everyone!”

Narrative

This is a 45-minute class

First 20 minutes-It is the first lesson of this 12-week course. I will stand at the entrance to my classroom greeting every student as they walk in. Since this class is extremely specialized, I would expect no more than 10 students each semester. I will have set the chairs up in an arc/half-moon shape facing the smart board. These chairs are closer to the board than they would be in an average class due to our visual impairments. Once students are seated, I will welcome them and tell them a little bit about myself letting them know that my own personal experience with low vision may make me a great person to help them through their musical sight-singing journey. I will then hand out the syllabus and discuss it with them from top to bottom. There will be opportunities for students to ask questions.

Rhythm Review-10 minutes-I will review single rhythms on the smart board with students asking them if they remember how to clap and speak them as well as what each rhythm's formal name is. We will then progress to rhythm cards in various time signatures (2/4, 3/4, 4/4) and clap/speak them as a class.

Pitch Review/Hand Staff -5 minutes-I will teach students the hand staff and we will look at single pitches on the smart board taking turns answering what the letter name is.

Sight-Singing and Assignment #1-10 minutes-Students will have two minutes to prepare a sight-singing example as a class. I will hand out a double-sided copy where side one is the eight-measure example and side two is the obstacles list (Assignment #1). After students perform their first sight-singing they will fill out the back listing all the issues they had as well as possible solutions. I will then ensure that students have put their name on this worksheet. They will turn it in and exit class unless they have questions for me. They will be reminded to bring all required materials to class from now on as I tell them how great it was to meet them.

Graphical Organizer

The visual below is a sequence of how to prepare a sight-singing example in the amount of time given before starting.

Figure 1



Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction

Instruction Event	Approach
1. Gain attention	<p>Students can become easily distracted by objects in the classroom. To help students focus on our syllabus reading and other material I will give them a hard copy but also post it on the smart board, that way the information being discussed is in their line of sight two ways all while helping them visually. "...we have a responsibility to direct and focus our students' attention so they can process, encode, and store our material..."⁵⁹</p> <p>Another way in which I will gain the students attention is through rhythmic teaching and singing directions. When students hear directions in a rhythmic and musical way, it can be entertaining while keeping them focused.</p>
2. Inform learners of objectives	<p>Students will each receive their own copy of the syllabus and I will verbally go over each section allowing students to ask clarifying questions. Students will understand the "ultimate outcomes" from the syllabus.⁶⁰</p> <p>Since these students are visually impaired, it would do them a disservice to write daily agendas on the board in normal font. I will verbally lay out an agenda at the beginning of class as well as display the agenda in large print on the smart board.</p>
3. Stimulate recall of prior learning	<p>Students will begin the first lesson with review of basic rhythms and pitches using teamwork to help the entire class recall past information. Nilson says, "Your students will master the most basic skills or the first in a sequence of procedures. At the cognitive level, this means being able to recall and paraphrase elemental facts, principles, processes, and definitions of essential terms and concepts."⁶¹</p>

⁵⁹Linda B. Nilson. *Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Source for College Instructors*. (San Francisco, California, Jossey-Bass, 2016) 54

⁶⁰Ibid., 27

⁶¹Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best 2*.

4. Present the content	During this first lesson students will be working together to review rhythms and pitches. No student will be singled out during this activity. Students will also sight-sing an example together using critical thinking skills to decide what is most important to assess before singing the example. Nilson shares, “Whole-class and group discussions in which the instructor poses questions and presents tasks that require critical thinking. Such discussions may follow readings, videos, simulations, games, role plays, cases, and the like.” ⁶²
5. Guide learning	To guide learning I will ensure sure each student has access to the information visually, meaning copies will be enlarged so that they can read them independently while following my instruction. I will also be guiding their critical thinking skills when completing Assignment #1 where they need to identify issues and solutions with their first sight-singing. Where did you have the most trouble? In the preparation or in the process of singing? Etc. Nilson says, “Use questions to guide student thinking about problem components, goals, and issues” ⁶³
6. Elicit performance (practice)	Students have a variety of performance opportunities, some solo and some group oriented. These will build in difficulty and drive students to be prepared. The first class will be a group performance giving students an idea of how to prepare for the next class. ⁶⁴
7. Provide feedback	Verbal feedback will be provided to the class after their first sight-singing as they begin to fill out assignment #1. Nilson explains some ways to frame feedback that is positive and points out errors without being too harsh. ⁶⁵

⁶²Ibid., 42.

⁶³Ibid., 136.

⁶⁴Ibid., 101.

⁶⁵Ibid., 161.

8. Assess performance	Students will have private performances with the instructor, three of which will be quizzes. Students will be graded with a rubric and verbal feedback. Nilson says, “A well-written rubric makes your expectations clearer.” ⁶⁶
9. Enhance retention and transfer	Each class there will be a sight-singing component where students will use the same process to prepare sight-singing examples. The only thing that changes is whether it’s group work, solo work, partner work, or in front of the class/teacher only. Students will engrain the process in their minds and improve it along the way. Nilson shares that students can get bored of repetition. I am slightly modifying “how” we engrain the same skills to keep from boredom. ⁶⁷

⁶⁶Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 102.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 256.

Implementation Chart

Physical Item	Rationale for Use
Google Slide Presentations	Since I am teaching a course of visually impaired students, I will use slide presentations even when they have the content in their hands. Slides will also be used for rhythm, pitch, and sight-singing activities. Slides shows are more versatile because they can be enlarged quickly as opposed to writing content largely on a poster or the white board. If I write it too small, there is not changing it without it becoming time consuming. Another key benefit to slide presentations is that I can play around with the classroom lighting to discover what is best for the students, full light, dim light, or lights completely off may help. Nilson shares, “At the very least, provide a general outline of the main points of your lecture on the board or a slide to help students follow your logical flow.” ⁶⁸
Individual White Erase Boards and Markers	Students performing rhythmic or melodic dictations on white boards lets them easily process information and get instant feedback during class. Nilson says, “Writing and speaking exercises: Any of many informal assignments and activities, usually in-class and ungraded, to help students learn material, clarify their thinking, or make progress on a formal assignment” ⁶⁹
Teacher Laptop and HDMI cable/smart board cable	If I am prepared as the instructor, time will not be lost because I’m pulling up tabs or looking for my charger. Nilson says, “And the right to a well-organized course with well-prepared classes obligates students to come to class prepared to make the most of the course.” ⁷⁰
Teacher Binder of Lesson Plans and Attendance Sheet	I feel that taking attendance is important, so the students get a sense of the importance of showing up for class. We can only improve our skills in any category when we practice consistently. If students miss a class, that is two weeks without sight-singing reinforcement.

⁶⁸Ibid., 144.

⁶⁹Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 132.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 111.

	Nilson shares, “These are the top three reasons students give for cutting class: (1) attendance is not taken or does not affect the grade, (2) the instructor does not see or care if a student is missing, or (3) the class content is available elsewhere.” ⁷¹
Sight-Singing or Assignment Handouts or emailed PDF for students to pull up on their devices	Part of building a rapport with students is showing that you have their best interest at heart, which means being prepared and organized. If students come to class and hand-outs are not ready, it shows laziness. Nilson explains, “What millennials consider unprofessional is an instructor's (apparent) disorganization, ill preparation, or inability to stick to her own syllabus.” ⁷²
Correct Number of Chairs	Using chairs in my classroom will help with personal space, singing posture, tone quality, and the overall tone of the class. Having sixth-graders sit on the floor is not the way I feel this course should be run. It will also help me learn names and handle distracting student relationships. Nilson explains, “Seat students in specific places and make a seating chart.” ⁷³
Correct Number of Music Stands	Music stands offer the appropriate tool for students to sing music, complete necessary assignments, and are easily moveable in the case of needed separation for assignments. They can be easily adjusted to student height to fit visual need and students can move as close as they need to see the material on the stand. Music stands are more efficient for low vision students than desks. Similar concept to the Slant Board used as a visual aid for some visually impaired students. Nilson offers, “During tests, if the room permits, seat students with space between them and place their personal belongings, especially cell phones, far away from them (e.g., at the front of the room).” ⁷⁴

⁷¹Ibid., 116.

⁷²Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 14.

⁷³Ibid., 88.

⁷⁴Ibid., 122.

Necessary Tasks

Task	Rationale for Task Cite a reference from your text for each task indicating its effectiveness
Turn on Smart Board	It is important to make sure all technology is in working order and ready to go for various reasons such as not having lost class time where students get bored, off task, and cause behavior issues. For this course specifically, the Smart Board is an amazing tool for being able to present extremely large and clear images and information for my low vision students. Unlike writing on the white board, I can continue to zoom in on an image if needed. Nilson says, “technology is like any other element of course design. We should choose technologies because they most effectively help our students achieve our learning outcomes, not because students already use them for personal purposes, and we want to look cool.” ⁷⁵
Set Up Chairs and Stands in an Arc Formation	To make students feel seen, heard, and equal, I will be seating them in a half moon face the board where I will stand in the front center to speak and easily see every student. Nilson explains, “This primary responsibility for creating this environment lies with you. You have to convey to your students that you designed the course to foster their learning and care very much not only about their learning the material but also about their developing as human beings.” ⁷⁶
Photocopy/Enlarge Appropriate Assignments and Sight-Singing Examples for All Students	The text did not speak much about photocopying but being prepared with photocopies is extremely paramount in this course. If a teacher forgot copies in another course, perhaps students could just look at the Smart Board, but with low vision students, and sight-singing none the less, students will need to have their own copy and in large print. This takes extra preparation. Nilson offers, “Appropriate testing may require you to make a large-print copy of the exam or allow the students use of a reader, scribe, or computer during the test.” ⁷⁷

⁷⁵Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 45.

⁷⁶Ibid., 81.

⁷⁷Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 336.

Place White Boards and Markers on Chairs	White boards being available to students each day will ensure that if the instructor should want students to perform a planned task or squeeze in a written knowledge check, they are able to easily do so. Nilson tells readers, “The recap activity may take the form of an oral summary presented by one or more students, a free-recall writing exercise (see chapter 20), or a quiz.” ⁷⁸
Plug in Teacher Laptop and Bring to Center Front of Room	Without the teacher laptop set up, plugged in, materials ready to go, a structure cannot be adhered to each class. Nilson reveals, “Structure is so key to how people learn and remember material that it deserves an entire section of its own. In addition, structure distinguishes knowledge from mere information.” ⁷⁹
Locate Any Physical Visual Aids and Bring to Center Front of Room	While the Smart Board is a fantastic resource for the low vision students, other physical materials to display rhythms, pitches, and sight-singing concepts can be prepared to keep learning new and exciting. These visual would most likely be useful for warm up type activities. Nilson shares, “As you plan the material, think about how you can convey or repackage it visually—in pictures, photographs, slides, graphic metaphors, diagrams, graphs, or concept or mind maps (spatial arrangements of concepts or stages linked by lines or arrows). Prepare these graphics for presentation to the class. Such visual aids facilitate almost everyone's learning (see chapter 23).” ⁸⁰

⁷⁸Ibid., 145.

⁷⁹Ibid., 7.

⁸⁰Ibid., 145.

Evaluation Chart

Learning Outcomes	Formative Assessment Plan	Rationale for Formative Assessment Type
<p>1. <u>Name</u> the specific issues students have with sight-reading (i.e. small font, blurred lines, color)</p>	<p>Assignment #1 is an activity in which students will reflect on their first informal group sight-singing by creating a list of visual difficulties they encountered and any solutions they can come up with for their personal needs.</p>	<p>I believe this is an effective assessment because every low vision student is different. They will not have the same strengths and weaknesses so it is important for them to critically think about their own experience and a guided worksheet may help. When students are done with grade school, it will be important for them to be their own problem solvers in terms of their unique visual issues, so why not start now.</p> <p>“Let students reflect, debate, consider multiple viewpoints, record their reactions to the material, and work in groups.”⁸¹</p>
<p>2. <u>Identify</u> the pitches and rhythm of a sight-reading excerpt using solfege at a comfortable tempo.</p>	<p>Students will use mini white erase boards to answer questions regarding rhythm and pitch displayed on the smart board.</p>	<p>This is an easy way for students to answer and correct their answers without having to turn in work but just show the teacher by holding up the white board.</p> <p>Nilson shares, “By contrast, <i>formative feedback</i> comprises all the recommendations we or their peers give them for improving their work at an early stage, before it receives a grade, with the expectation that they will revise it</p>

⁸¹Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 7.

		accordingly.” When using whiteboards, students can instantly signal to try again and questions, pitches, or rhythm may repeat within the same exercise for them to try again. ⁸²
3. <u>Analyze</u> a sight-singing excerpt in two minutes before beginning.	The students will have an opportunity to analyze a four-measure sight-singing excerpt during the Group Sight-Singing activities. These activities build up to the more serious Solo Sight-Singing assignments	Students can practice in real time but in a less exposed way. The teacher can observe the class as a whole and provide general feedback, and private feedback verbally or written if needed. “Group work generally increases engagement (Persellin & Daniels, 2014).” ⁸³
4. <u>Examine</u> which strategies help students have the best chance at sight-reading success according to their specific visual needs.	Students will be able to show what they understand about what self-advocacy is as well as other strategies that may be used to assist their specific visual needs through a teacher guided class discussion.	Class discussion are a great way to gauge student’s comfortability, level of participation, and understanding of a subject without being singled out or handed a grade. Nilson says that directed discussion are a successful technique as well, “Directed discussion: Class discussion that follows a more or less orderly set of questions that the instructor has crafted to lead students to certain realizations or conclusions or to help them meet a specific learning outcome (chapters 13)” ⁸⁴

⁸²Ibid., 275.

⁸³Linda Nilson, *Teaching at Its Best*, 4.

⁸⁴Ibid., 131.

<p>5. <u>Prepare</u> a sight-reading excerpt in a similar amount of time as vision-typical peer aged students.</p>	<p>Assignment #10 is a paper where students will be explaining what it is that they have learned in this course that will help them be successful in sight-singing situations. The formative assessment before this paper will be a <i>Think Pair Share</i> with a partner where each partner lists three things that they have discovered throughout the course that will help them be the best sight-singer possible as they prepare to leave this course.</p>	<p>Talking through ideas with partners can be a great way to bounce ideas off of one another, affirm our understand, and acquire any other tidbits from our peers since sometimes the ways in which a teacher presents something can come off differently and more helpful from a peer. Nilson calls techniques such as interactive lectures “major teaching methods.”</p> <p>“<i>Interactive lecture:</i> Lecture with 2- to 15-minute breaks for student activities (such as answering a multiple-choice objective item, solving a problem, comparing and filling in lecture notes, debriefing a minicase, doing a think-pair-share exercise, or a small-group discussion) every 12 to 20 minutes (<u>chapter 12</u>)”⁸⁵</p>
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⁸⁵Ibid., 131.

Evaluation and Reflection

Issue/Strategy	Rationale for Changing
<p>1. To make sure that each class has a structure and flow, I will be sure the first part of every class has a routine that is roughly 10 minutes of either rhythm reading, single pitch reading, one to two measure sight-reading on solfege.</p>	<p>Consistent practice is key. The more students recognize rhythmic patterns and pitches, the more accessible sight-singing becomes.</p>
<p>2. To ensure that student's voices are prepared for singing, I will ensure that vocal warmups are a part of the beginning of each class.</p>	<p>Students can be timid when it comes to sight-singing. It is different to sight-sing than to have to perform a prepared piece. If students' voices are warmed up, then this is one added layer of stress removed. They will also be comfortable singing wider intervals. Students may have had little singing or even speaking activities the day they attend this course, so this is important.</p>
<p>3. In the syllabus under "additional materials needed" I will add that students are strongly recommended to bring a bottle of water.</p>	<p>Students need quick access to water during class to clear away phlegm and prepare for group or solo sight-singing assignments. This is a specialized course with beneficial lectures and praxis for students. If they are traveling to the water fountain, then they are missing valuable experience, or a student performing is missing valuable feedback from said classmate that left to get water.</p>
<p>4. Seeing as all sight-singing books in the syllabus are not available in large print, I will now add a statement to the required texts that says "these are the text that will be used throughout the course but you need not purchase them"</p>	<p>Since the students in the course will be visually impaired, I will need to make photocopies of each activity and have it prepared for students. It is not moral for me to require students to purchase books that they cannot read where I will be providing copies anyway.</p>

<p>5. A possible issue is that I'm requiring all students to have a laptop or tablet like device with them every class. There is always the possibility that a student's family does not have access to this technology, though I would say each year this becomes less likely. My solution is to work with my school technology specialists to have one or two devices available to me just in case.</p>	<p>I will not be changing my technology requirement but making a note that I have some pre-emptive communication to do with my school technology faculty to meet my students needs if a situation should arise. Having a device is extremely important because music can be zoomed in on and modified quickly and with ease through technology. This is a tool that will help my students in the future as well.</p>
<p>6. Something that could be addressed is what lectures or mini lessons are being given in this course.</p>	<p>My course is focused on note reading so I feel that I have not planned a lot of lecturing, yet teacher facilitated discussions and plenty of time for music analysis and practice. I do not want this course to be teacher centered by talking too much, but I should re-evaluate if there is a gap that I could address more or have left out.</p>

Formative Assessment Description

Formative Assessment Type	Assessment Details
<p>Solo Sight-Singing</p>	<p>Students will have four solo sight-singing experiences during the course in front of peers. The instructor will provide immediate constructive criticism as well as the class. This is an effective assessment because students are receiving multiple points of feedback. Each student could have noticed a different strength or weakness in the students singing. This activity also helps the students giving feedback know learn what to look for and perhaps recognize some areas they could strengthen themselves.</p>

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT-FINAL SIGHT-SINGING TEST

Assignment: Students will have one minute to prepare the provided sight-singing example. Students will be scored based on the attached rubric.

Sight-Singing Example Number 2 on page 29 of Audrey Snyder's *the Sight-Singer*, top line only. Complete all eight measures of the top part.⁸⁶

2. Key of F Major

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system contains two staves: a vocal staff (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment staff (bass clef). The key signature is one flat (F major), and the time signature is 4/4. The first system includes a 'DO' label under the first note of the vocal line. The music consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line.

⁸⁶Audrey P. Snyder. *The Sight-Singer: A Practical Sight-Singing Course for Two-Part Mixed or Three-Part Mixed Voices*. V. 1. (Florida, CPP/Belwin Inc. 1993) 29.

Table 1

SIGHT-SINGING FINAL EXAM RUBRIC

CATEGORIES	EXCELLENT (50pts)	GOOD (40pts)	FAIR (30pts)	POOR (20pts)
Solfege Syllables & Hand Signs	Student makes no errors in the vocal or visual production of solfege syllables and hand signs during the sight-singing example	Student makes one or two errors total in the execution of solfege syllables <i>or</i> hand signs	Student makes one or two errors in the execution of both solfege syllables <i>and</i> hand signs	Student makes more than two errors in the execution of solfege syllables and more than two errors in the execution of hand signs
Rhythm	Student makes one or less rhythmic error	Student makes two rhythmic errors	Student makes three rhythmic errors	Student makes four or more rhythmic errors
Intonation	Student consistently sings in tune	Student makes one intonation error	Student makes two or three intonation errors	Student has difficulty singing in tune
Vocal Quality (Diction, Air Support, Phrasing)	Student <i>always</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)	Student <i>mostly</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)	Student <i>rarely</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)	Student <i>never</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)
SCORE	____/200			

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT-SIGHT-SINGING QUIZ

Assignment: Students will have two minutes to prepare the provided sight-singing example. Students will be scored based on the attached rubric.

Sight-Singing Example Number Four on page 19 of Audrey Snyder's *the Sight-Singer*, top line four measures only.⁸⁷

19

4. *In Parts* *Think and sing*

DO

Think, Sing

DO Re Mi

⁸⁷Audrey P. Snyder. *The Sight-Singer: A Practical Sight-Singing Course for Two-Part Mixed or Three-Part Mixed Voices*. V. 1. (Florida, CPP/Belwin Inc. 1993), 19.

Table 2

SIGHT-SINGING QUIZZES 1-3 RUBRIC

CATEGORIES	EXCELLENT (25pts)	GOOD (20pts)	FAIR (15pts)	POOR (10pts)
Solfege Syllables & Hand Signs	Student makes no errors in the vocal or visual production of solfege syllables and hand signs during the sight-singing example	Student makes one or two errors total in the execution of solfege syllables <i>or</i> hand signs	Student makes one or two errors in the execution of both solfege syllables <i>and</i> hand signs	Student makes more than two errors in the execution of solfege syllables and more than two errors in the execution of hand signs
Rhythm	Student makes one or less rhythmic error	Student makes two rhythmic errors	Student makes three rhythmic errors	Student makes four or more rhythmic errors
Intonation	Student consistently sings in tune	Student makes one intonation error	Student makes two or three intonation errors	Student has difficulty singing in tune
Vocal Quality (Diction, Air Support, Phrasing)	Student <i>always</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)	Student <i>mostly</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)	Student <i>rarely</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)	Student <i>never</i> demonstrates complete understanding of breath support, clear diction, and phrasing)
SCORE	_____/100			