

TEACHING MUSIC TO STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A Label-Free Approach

Second Edition



ALICE M. HAMMEL
RYAN M. HOURIGAN

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Alice M. Hammel and Ryan M. Hourigan

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Foreword

*Dr. Mitch Robinson,
Michigan State University*

The second edition of *Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach*, by Alice M. Hammel and Ryan M. Hourigan, is a significant contribution to the professional literature on this important topic for music teachers and music teacher educators. As they did so elegantly with the first edition of this landmark text, the authors have again provided a clear, concise guide for music teachers interested in making their classrooms function as safe, engaging, and invigorating learning spaces for all of their students. With a persistent emphasis on each student as an individual, Hammel and Hourigan paint a portrait of students with special needs as unique, capable, and valued members of their schools' music learning communities.

This new edition of the book features a number of new and updated sections and chapters that make the text even more useful and helpful. Chapter 1 introduces the definition of a new domain of disability study: Emotional disability is now included as a separate category, along with cognitive, communicative, behavioral, physical, and sensory. An emotional disturbance is "a condition that affects students in one or more of the following ways: a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; b) an inability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers; c) inappropriate types of behavior or fears in normal circumstances; d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms related to fears associated with personal or school problems" (Turnbull, Heurta, & Stowe, 2004). The inclusion of this discussion on emotional disabilities represents an important contribution to the literature in this area of inquiry and provides a critical resource for music teachers seeking assistance in helping their students who may be challenged with emotional issues.

Music teachers will also appreciate the "observation protocols" that are provided for each of the disability domains throughout Chapter 1. These

protocols may be used to generate more productive discussions and consultations with special education consultants and other school personnel, allow teachers to brainstorm various scenarios and situations, and develop strategies and techniques that may prove helpful in both general education classrooms and music instructional settings.

As a policy researcher, I was also heartened by the updated information in Chapter 2 on the Every Student Succeeds Act, which reauthorized the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replaced the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA. Navigating policy in this arena can be exceptionally difficult for all stakeholders, especially music educators. Unfortunately, music teachers are often left out of these discussions at the school level, and the authors provide comprehensive information to help our colleagues in the schools to advocate on behalf of their students with learning differences.

Although the “alphabet soup” (i.e., IEPs, ADA, IDEA, RTI, ESEA, FAPE, RTTT, ADAA, NCLB, AYP, ESSA, LRE) of programs, strategies, and requirements can present seemingly insurmountable challenges and obstacles for teachers, parents, and other stakeholders, resources like those offered here are an invaluable tool in helping music teachers become champions for their students and advocate for their success in and out of the classroom. The authors also point out the flawed logic behind a host of failed government policies, such as NCLB and adequate yearly progress (AYP)—policies that establish unrealistic and unattainable goals and then penalize all children for the inability of those who, through no fault of their own, are unable to meet these unreasonable expectations.

Another welcomed addition to the second edition is the new material in Chapter 8 on “Twice Exceptional” learners, excerpted from Alice M. Hammel’s chapter in Deb Blair and Kim McCord’s new book, *Exceptional Music Pedagogy for Children with Exceptionalities: International Perspectives* (2016, Oxford University Press). Twice exceptional learners are children who “are intellectually gifted and also possess a special need that requires an IEP or 504 Plan for appropriate inclusion in public school classrooms” (Hammel & Hourigan). Sometimes referred to as “unevenly gifted” (Winner, 1996), “it is also possible students can be identified as having a disability that is masking their giftedness” (Hammel & Hourigan), making identification of this population of learners especially challenging.

This beautifully written contribution is presented in a novel and engaging format, interweaving vignettes of Hollie, a twice exceptional student, as she makes her way through elementary school, middle school, high school, and finally college, with research-informed commentary on the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional challenges faced by this group of students. This commentary, presented through the author’s dual lenses of researcher and

parent, provides a unique and powerful perspective on what becomes an unexpectedly poignant narrative. Music teachers will discover a plethora of practical advice, teaching strategies, and pedagogical adaptations and accommodations, while music teacher educators will find a bevy of techniques anchored in a solid philosophical base to share with their preservice students.

By keeping our focus on the “whole child” and emphasizing the full continuum of strengths and abilities present in every learner, this chapter presents a clear description of the struggles *and* opportunities faced by twice exceptional learners, and offers practical advice for the music teachers fortunate to have these children in their classes. As Hammel shares at the conclusion of this section, “Knowing your students and their needs can be far more important than the specific labels included in their paperwork, if they are even listed” (Chapter 8, p. 203). In a similar vein, new vignettes throughout the entire second edition provide accessible, easily understood accounts of how policy impacts practice and connects research and theory to the lived experiences of students and teachers.

As a music teacher, music teacher educator, and policy scholar, I am extremely grateful to the authors for this thoroughly researched and thoughtfully presented collection of research-based resources and strategies for our colleagues looking to provide the support and encouragement needed by their students with learning differences. But it is as a parent of two children of my own and a person who is passionately dedicated to ensuring educational equity and inclusion for all children that I am most appreciative to Alice and Ryan for this important contribution to our professional literature. Many texts offer information and recommendations, but few do so with compassion, empathy, and love. The second edition of *Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach* manages this rare feat, and our profession is better because of their efforts.

Preface

The concept of *Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach* was developed from our travels teaching and presenting seminars, in-services, and clinics at the national, regional, and local levels and communications with local music educators about their challenges. Music teachers often find themselves teaching either included students with disabilities or in dedicated self-contained classrooms without the support they need. As music teacher educators, we have found that a large gap exists in our methods content in the area of research-grounded best-practice approaches to teaching students with special needs.

Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach is designed for faculty, in-service music administrators, in-service music teachers, and preservice music teachers. It is designed as a comprehensive manual and reference guide that introduces those in the field of music education to best practices when teaching music to students with special needs. It includes research-based strategies for methods courses and professional development. In addition, this text will address curricular strategies for methods teachers and in-service music educators. This information is grounded in research, special education law, and best practice.

A LABEL-FREE APPROACH

A focus of this book is that a student with special needs is an individual who deserves a music education that is free of labels. The philosophical premise of a label-free approach is centered in the preservation of the individual personhood of each student. Through this approach, music educators will be able to gain and advocate for support, understand their rights and responsibilities, and offer an affective and effective music education for students with and without special needs. This includes learning strategies for effective collaboration with special educators, teacher educators, and classroom teachers. We also include curriculum development ideas, lesson plan strategies, observation strategies (methods classroom), and fieldwork ideas (methods classroom).

In our experience we have found that “quick fix” strategies learned by applying a technique based on the specific disability label of a student often lasts for a short time until a music educator can find the next new trick to assist a student with disabilities. By applying a label-free approach, educators can create a theoretical and philosophical underpinning that will serve as an effective base of knowledge for use in each individual situation.

A further consideration when choosing this approach is that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not specify that each teacher is to be told of the specific disability of every student. It is possible that music educators may teach students with special needs and not have access to the label listed in the paperwork for that student. Teachers are given the list of strengths and areas of challenge for the student and are also notified of specific adaptations and accommodations that are to be used for the student. By approaching the education of students with special needs from a label-free perspective, teachers are not stymied by the possible lack of access to further information. While we recognize that educators may be able to glean valuable information through the disability categories, it is also “good teaching” to look at each student as an individual and to design instruction based on the areas of need as seen in the music classroom.

These resources are all offered within the context of learning to navigate the special education system within the framework of developing culturally responsive classrooms that are free of labels. The focus of this book is to effectively approach various learning domains when developing pedagogy for both the music classroom and the music methods classroom.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach will be of most interest to in-service music teachers and music teacher educators who are seeking research and practical information regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classrooms. In addition, undergraduate and graduate students in music education programs will find this book useful in their future careers as music educators. Our goal was to provide a book that meets the needs of music educators at all levels of instruction.

This book is organized into four parts. Part I is focused on the current landscape of teacher preparation within the context of the special education system. Chapter 1 is intended for all music educators and music teacher educators to increase the knowledge and understanding of music educators as they plan, implement, and advocate for the appropriate instruction of students with special needs. This advocacy is a natural outcome for music educators who are aware of special education policy within the special education

structure of our public schools. This chapter includes strategies used to engage and observe in special education settings to assist with a complete understanding of the ways students learn in other environments.

The label-free approach to music teaching and learning transfers focus from a student's disability to examination of how he or she receives music information, processes this information, and expresses himself or herself musically. We introduce six teaching and learning domains in this chapter: cognition, communication, behavioral, emotional, sensory, and physical. It is hoped that as a result of this shift in concentration, music educators will center their attention on music teaching and learning rather than merely labels that are attached to students with special needs.

Part II introduces effective methods utilized in preparation to teach students with special needs in both preservice and in-service music education settings. Chapter 3 is specifically designed for engagement and fieldwork within the structure of special education. This includes observation protocols for self-contained classrooms, resource rooms, summer enrichment programs, and therapy sessions (e.g., speech or arts therapy) and how observations in these settings may enhance the understanding music teachers have regarding the learning needs of students with special needs.

Chapter 4 uses the learning domains that are introduced in Chapter 1 and provides specific music education strategies for use in the music classroom. This chapter includes a complete introduction to Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans, as well as music-specific strategies and transfers of accommodations that will enhance the ability of music educators to deliver instruction to students with special needs.

Part III provides practical applications of theory and policy from the previous chapters for use in the music classroom (e.g., behavioral strategies, curricular strategies, etc.). Chapter 5 is intended for teacher educators, preservice music teachers (methods classes), and in-service music teachers and provides many practical and effective classroom management strategies for music teachers in a variety of settings.

Chapter 6 is designed to provide specific curriculum understanding and demonstrate how these approaches affect students with disabilities—specifically, how the fundamentals of curriculum design (e.g., materials centered, constructivism) can be used to enhance the music teaching and learning environment. Chapter 6 also provides assessment accommodations that have been seen as successful for students with special needs.

Chapter 7 offers specific ideas for conductors in instrumental and vocal music ensemble settings. Both coauthors have extensive training in these areas and not only provide rehearsal techniques but also challenge band, orchestra, and choir conductors to review and reflect on their current philosophy of teaching considering the vast changes put in place to assist the

inclusion of students with special needs in all aspects of school life. The use of technology to assist in practice techniques and classroom-tested adaptations and accommodations are presented to enhance the ensemble experience for students with special needs.

The decision to discuss students who are gifted as part of this text was intentional and purposeful. The challenges mentioned in this chapter are often not included in discussions of students with special needs. This is the topic of Chapter 8. While the premise and philosophy of the text is to encourage a label-free environment for students with special needs, the specific cognitive needs of students who are gifted necessitate a discussion that includes information about their unique differences.

This chapter includes the historical, philosophical, and practical issues involved in teaching students who are gifted. These include the history of intelligence testing, varied models for educational placement options, and common characteristics of students with this type of special need. Practical information for successful inclusion of students who are gifted in the music classroom is presented. Finally, research-derived characteristics of teachers who are successful when teaching students who are gifted are also included.

Part IV is intended to provide the most up-to-date resources and technology information for music educators at all levels. Current research articles, best-practice articles, and books and Internet websites are listed for music educators to use as they seek information regarding specific disabilities. This information reinforces the overall philosophy of the text as it challenges music educators to be resourceful in their approach to teaching students with special needs. In addition, this text includes many vignettes for thoughtful and reflective discussion among in-service teachers and by pre-service music educators in methods classes. These vignettes are actual stories that have occurred in public school situations within the last few years.

For music teacher educators, this book provides strategies that are research based and provide best practice for teaching all students regardless of the challenges they face. Chapters can be used to not only address this topic but also embed other subjects within the context of teaching students with disabilities (e.g., assessment, classroom management, etc.). Many methods instructors are inundated with the amount of materials necessary to adequately address each topic within a given methods class. It is our firm belief that good teaching is good teaching. Therefore, this text allows you the option of covering multiple topics simultaneously.

This text was designed purposefully to chart a new direction in the preparation of music educators, music teacher educators, and in-service music educators as they design, present, and assess their practices when teaching students with special needs. The focus on creating meaningful and supportive relationships with the faculty, staff, and administration partners in

the schools; the importance of a label-free environment to create truly inclusive and welcoming school experiences for students with special needs; and the extraordinary value in approaching the classroom with a “fair is not equal” philosophy are the rationales for this new direction. By preparing to create an inclusive, team-oriented environment that ensures every student receives what he or she needs, we will perhaps begin to create true equity and “fairness” for all students in our public school systems.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the wonderful students that we have taught over the years both in K-12 and in higher education who have given us the insight and motivation to write this book. We would also like to thank Christa Hensley, Michelle Byrn, James Byrn, Elise Hackl, Taylor Walkup, and Morgan Robinson for their vignette contributions. We would like to thank Susan Shirel for assisting us with gathering and updating all of the information in Chapter 9 and Alicia Faith Thomas for allowing us to use her examples of observation protocols. Thank you to Amy Hourigan, MT-BC, for her contribution to this text from the music therapy perspective and to Bruce Hammel, Virginia Commonwealth University, for his editorial support.

Thank you to Dr. Mitch Robinson, Michigan State University, for reviewing the text and for writing the foreword for us. We would also like to thank Norm Hirschy for his guidance and support during this process.

Finally, we would like to thank our children—Hannah, Hollie, Andrew, and Joshua—who remind us each day of the uniqueness of every child. They are the true inspiration for this book.

About the Companion Website

<http://www.oup.com/us/tmtswsn>

The resource materials included on this website have been developed during a decade of collection and creation by the authors. Materials include information regarding policy, teaching strategies, links, print resource lists, video case studies, and video lesson examples. Full-page Word documents of observation protocols and other materials will be available for you to download and adjust to fit your individual needs. This website will be updated regularly by the authors to remain a current reference and information source for music educators. Enjoy!

***Teaching Music to Students with
Special Needs: A Practical Resource***
(available separately)

Alice M. Hammel has created a practical resource guide to accompany the second edition of *Teaching Music to Students with Special Needs: A Label-Free Approach*. Music educators from around the United States partnered with her to contribute lesson ideas, full lesson plans, and unit plans that demonstrate the principles described in this book. Materials used to teach the lessons are also included in the resource. These practical ideas are meant to illustrate and enhance research and theory in the field in a way that is applicable to K-12 classrooms that include students with special needs.

PART I

THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES

