Preparation for Diverse Learners

Music classrooms across the country are becoming inclusion classes for students with special needs or diverse learners and the music educators need to be prepared. Students who are serviced through special education are required to have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in place listing the educational goals, accommodations, and modifications that will be implemented to ensure each student receives a free and appropriate education. The music teacher could be asked to be an active participant in creating an effective IEP and should have a general knowledge of differentiated instruction and tiered instructional methods.

Differentiated Instruction (DI) is a method where the teacher customizes instruction based on each student’s ability, interest, and readiness level. This method of instruction originated in the gifted and talented classroom and has been expanded into special education and the general classroom setting. In the music classroom, DI could include small group instruction, the use of technology, board games, and intentional grouping.

Tiered Instruction includes three different stages, or tiers, of instruction relating to student need. This method is used as a Response to Intervention (RtI) and begins with all students receiving high quality, scientifically based instruction. Tier two involves targeted instruction in a small group setting. Tier three is the most individualized instruction to target specific areas of concern. Tiered instruction can be implemented in a music classroom; however, help from a paraprofessional may be needed for tier three instruction.

Both of the methods briefly mentioned could be effective while teaching students with diverse learning styles. Some examples of students who could benefit from these methods of instruction are: students with learning disabilities, hearing loss, visual impairments, English as a second language students, or those students who are gifted.

References

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