

Special Music Education

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Special music educators are typically trained to teach music knowledge and skills to students with disabilities in the general school population. The primary purpose of music education programs for students with disabilities is to actively involve them in meaningful music experiences that develop music concepts and skills appropriate to the students' individual functioning level. Music education may be provided through general music classes for elementary grades, music appreciation and music theory for upper grades and music performance classes such as band, orchestra and chorus. Special music educators typically have a background in special education or music therapy, and have expertise in instructional strategies for teaching students with a wide variety of disabilities. Students with disabilities are taught in their self-contained classrooms or in inclusive music classes offered in the school music curriculum.

Special music education goals follow the music standards set for all students. The standards emphasize conceptual understanding in areas that reflect the actual processes in which musicians engage. The standards cultivate a student's ability to carry out the three artistic processes:

Creating – Students need to have experience in creating, to be successful musicians and to be successful 21st century citizens.

Performing – Students need to perform – as singers, as instrumentalists, and in their lives and careers.

Responding – Students need to respond to music, as well as to their culture, their community, and their colleagues.

Research in inclusive school settings supports music's effectiveness with students who have a wide variety of disabilities (See <http://jrm.sagepub.com/content/62/4/325.abstract>).

As do all music educators, special music educators may also address social and behavioral goals with their students, as well as use music to support the general education curriculum.

To find out more information about special music education, please visit the following National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and International Society for Music Education (ISME) websites:

<<https://sites.google.com/site/exceptionalitiessrig/>>

<<http://www.nafme.org/strategies-for-students-with-special-needs/>>

<<http://www.isme.org/our-work/commissions-forum/special-music-education-and-music-therapy-commission>>

Although there are no degree programs in special music education, a number of universities, such as Florida State University, Wichita State University, and James Madison University offer certificate programs or specialized study programs in special

music education. In addition, NAFME regularly offers pre-conferences on teaching music to students with disabilities that precede their annual National Inservice Conference.