Music and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Introduction

After four years of teaching elementary music, I still felt unsatisfied by my lack of knowledge in music and special education, my two areas of interest and passion. During the Sistema fellowship, I spent the vast majority of my time exploring and questioning "inclusion." What does inclusion mean? What does it look like? How feasible is inclusion here in the United States especially in regards to policy and practice? With unanswered questions continually emerging, I decided to attend the Harvard Graduate School of Education for my Masters in Arts in Education to strengthen my knowledge around the intersectionality of these two fields.

My continual exposure to new materials prompted me to consider how to disseminate a portion of my findings to the Sistema field. I decided to create a document that addressed the topic of neurodiversity in the music classroom. I asked Andrea Landin [Sistema Fellow ’13] to provide a typical music lesson on the basis that I would redesign this lesson to meet the needs of learners. The purpose of this document is to introduce Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and how this framework can be applied to music settings. I chose to present this information through drafts, so that you can experience the transformation from a typical lesson to a UDL lesson. This is simply supposed to act as a guide to begin the conversation around how to meet the needs of learners.

Goals

1. **Best Practices:** I will use the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Framework to create a well-rounded set of practices that provide multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement for all learners.
2. **Classroom Environment:** A large part of reaching every learning is creating an environment that is conducive to multiple learning styles. This portion will give you tips around classroom setup and management and ways to make the music room suitable for every musician.

3. **Resources:** Because there can never be enough!

**Format**

Andrea Landin, New West Symphony, sent a typical lesson from her program. This document entails the 1) original lessons  2) suggestions to consider before implementing UDL  3) a UDL lesson  4) classroom environment and  5) extra resources.

**Andrea's Original Lesson**

1. **Warm-up:** students choose scales (1 flat scale, 1 sharp scale)
   - Two different student leaders choose rhythm, bowing, dynamic

2. **Start new scale:** F# Major (we are working towards learning all 12 major scales):
   - Determine key signature, give students 1 min on their own to find accidentals on their instrument
     - Play through scale on whole notes, letting students adjust pitches as necessary (I will play with them)
     - Play with quarter notes; new rhythms if they feel comfortable with it

3. **Structured Improvisation with new scale**
   - "Rhythm Machine": each student chooses 1-2 notes of the F# major scale, creates a simple rhythm (one 4/4 measure); students come in one by one, dynamic build up, then drop out one by one (variation: "soccer", where students "pass the ball" by looking at each other and coming in/dropping out randomly)
   - If time/comfort level: Improvised melodies over F# pedal (they are still doing very simple, few note melodies)

4. **El Condor Pasa - with everyone learning melody for now**
● Measures 1-6: work on 8th rests by substituting them with notes, then taking them out (we used visuals/the whiteboard for this)
● Individual practice in 1-2 minute chunks
● Goal for today: up to measure 12

**Suggestions:**

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## Andrea’s UDL Lesson

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<th>Play El Cando Pasa up to measure 12</th>
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<td><strong>Key Questions:</strong></td>
<td>What is the difference in the F# scale and a B scale?</td>
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<td><strong>Lesson Pre Assessment:</strong></td>
<td>Students will be able to play an F# scale</td>
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<td><strong>Barrier to Learning:</strong></td>
<td>Short time frame to master a new scale, Prior knowledge is a necessity</td>
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## Planning with UDL in mind

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### 1. Class Schedules and Expectations

- Students come in and take their seats
The teacher goes over the agenda for the day and lets students know if there’s any change to the schedule or if there’s any event coming up.

Then the teacher goes over his/her expectations for the class.

Goal is presented.

UDL Ideas: visual cue cards, visual and written schedule, rubric for goal, learning log.

2. Scale Warm Up

The scale is put up on the board for visualization assistance. It may be helpful to have notes in colors (all C’s yellow, etc...). If a student has difficulty looking at the board give that student his/her own copy.

All students play the scale together.

Repeat for any other scale.

Two different student leaders choose rhythm, bowing, dynamic:
  - If a student struggles to play the scale differently just break the class into two groups.
  - One group begins with the original scale and then group 2 plays the altered scale.
  - Have the groups switch and make that student leads.

UDL Ideas: Visual choices (colors vs. black and white), Choral Playing (when the teacher plays and student follows along with finger), Chunking, Group collaboration (have one group play four notes and the next play 3).

3. Start new scale: F3 Major

Ask students to quietly look over the scale and count how many accidentals they’ll see.

Then ask them to compare answers with their stand partner.

Play through scale on whole notes, letting students adjust pitches as necessary (I will play with them).

Play with quarter notes; new rhythms if they feel comfortable with it.

UDL Ideas: Exemplars, sentence starters, problem-solving checklists.

3. Structured Improvisation with new scale

"Rhythm Machine": each student chooses 1-2 notes of the F# major scale, creates a simple rhythm (one 4/4 measure); students come in one by one, dynamic build up, then drop out one by one (variation: "soccer", where students "pass the ball" by looking at each other and coming in/dropping out randomly).

If time/comfort level: Improvised melodies over F# pedal (they are still doing very simple, few note melodies).
UDL Ideas: Music thesaurus (make sure words used in the warm up are displayed in the room with a definition and picture), Another option for eye contact- verbal cue to pass rhythm, choice board

4. El Condor Pasa - with everyone learning melody for now

- Measures 1-6: work on 8th rests by substituting them with notes, then taking them out (we used visuals/the whiteboard for this)
- Individual practice in 1-2 minute chunks
- Goal for today: up to measure 12
- UDL Ideas: Peer performance, peer buddies, model behaviors (student model how to play), learning log at end, problem-solving checklist

Classroom Environment

Classroom environment is critical to the learning process. Although, there are many factors that weigh into classroom environment I’m going to focus on 5. I recognize that each Sistema program is different, so take what you can!

1. Expectations and Schedules

As everyone already knows, schedules and expectations are extremely important. For students with disabilities schedules are key. There needs to be clear communication if a schedule is going to change and with as as much ahead time as possible. Below are examples from an elementary classroom.
2. Labels and Pictures

This is extremely important for students who are nonverbal but useful for every student. By simply labeling materials that are used on a daily basis, you’re helping students build a working memory of where items and go and also how to take care of the materials they use.
3. Different representations of material

Display information that students need to know to be successful. Do not rely on the sheet music itself. Present the information in multiple formats.
4. Directions

Slow down on directions and break them down succinctly. For example, instead of open your books to page 43 and got to measure 8. Instead try:

1. Take our your music book
2. Put it on the music stand
3. Open to page 43
4. Find measure 8
5. Put your finger on measure 8
6. Check with your stand partner to make sure you’re both in the same place.

5. Word Walls

A classroom word wall or word poster will help students categorize learning throughout the weeks. It’s often helpful to carry around a word poster, so that students don’t lose the knowledge from last week or the day before. Just use velcro and posterboard to make transferable boards.
Resources

1. **Visual cue cards:**
   

2. **Sensory Bottles:** When a student gets upset allow them to use the sensory bottle. Simply have them turn it over and once the beads/sparkles/etc...settles to the bottom they need to come back to class. Step by step instructions on how to make one:
   
   [http://nurturestore.co.uk/make-sensory-discovery-bottles](http://nurturestore.co.uk/make-sensory-discovery-bottles)

3. **Calm Down Kit:**
   
   [http://mrsjacksonskinders.blogspot.ca/2014/07/calm-down-kit.html?spref=pi&m=1](http://mrsjacksonskinders.blogspot.ca/2014/07/calm-down-kit.html?spref=pi&m=1)
4. **Fidget Gloves**: Helps students with fine motor skills.
   [https://theanonymousot.com/2013/02/08/pinned-on-pinterest-tested-in-therapy-test-pin-5/](https://theanonymousot.com/2013/02/08/pinned-on-pinterest-tested-in-therapy-test-pin-5/)

5. **Finger Warm Up**: Play arpeggios to any scale and have students warm up by having them touch their fingers to their thumb. It was originally used as an occupational therapist warm up but works well in the music classroom. [Video of a writing warm up (can be used in music)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=examplevideo)

6. **ADHD Chair Options**: Here's a list of resources you can use to modify chairs for students with hyperactivity or any fidgety student!

7. **Zones of Regulation**: Here’s a guide to help students learn to self-regulate. It includes how to deal with certain feelings and strategies to work past them.

8. **Social Stories and Language Boards**: Helpful for students who struggle to communicate.
   [http://considerateclassroom.blogspot.com/2013/10/aidedlanguageboards.html](http://considerateclassroom.blogspot.com/2013/10/aidedlanguageboards.html)

10. UDL Strategies: https://goalbookapp.com/toolkit/strategies

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

I. Provide Multiple Means of Representation
1: Provide options for perception
   1.1 Offer ways of customizing the display of information
   1.2 Offer alternatives for auditory information
   1.3 Offer alternatives for visual information

2: Provide options for language, mathematical expressions, and symbols
   2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols
   2.2 Clarify syntax and structure
   2.3 Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols
   2.4 Promote understanding across languages
   2.5 Illustrate through multiple media

3: Provide options for comprehension
   3.1 Activate or supply background knowledge
   3.2 Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships
   3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation
   3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization

II. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression
4: Provide options for physical action
   4.1 Vary the methods for response and navigation
   4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

5: Provide options for expression and communication
   5.1 Use multiple media for communication
   5.2 Use multiple tools for construction and composition
   5.3 Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

III. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement
7: Provide options for recruiting interest
   7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy
   7.2 Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
   7.3 Minimize threats and distractions

8: Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence
   8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
   8.2 Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge
   8.3 Foster collaboration and community
   8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback

9: Provide options for self-regulation
   9.1 Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation
   9.2 Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
   9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection

http://www.udlcenter.org/