

## **Music Room Accommodations for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

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- I. Types of Visual Impairments
  - a. Low Vision
  - b. Blindness
- II. What can I do to enable students with visual impairment or blindness to be successful in my music class?
  - a. TVI - Consult the teacher of the visually impaired in your school system for how the student's needs can be best met. This is your best friend.
  - b. Braille music - Do not expect that Braille music has to be taught to a student who is blind. Braille music is another language or code within itself, and at this point, the student is trying to figure out how to read Braille. It could be an option for students who you feel are serious about music in later years. It is not your responsibility to learn Braille music.
  - c. Low vision aids - Students may use low vision devices such as hand held magnifiers, telescopes, colored lenses, bioptics, and slant boards.
  - d. Safety first - Make sure your music room is a safe space. Moving the furniture is not fun for a blind person. Consult the TVI about best lighting conditions for a student who has low vision.
  - e. Allow independence - To lead a student who is blind, simply ask if he or she would like to take your elbow. This technique is called sighted guide. They also may be learning how to use their cane. Visually impaired students can follow you just fine. When in doubt, just ask the child what he or she needs.
- III. Modifications and Adaptations
  - a. Seating - It is best to have the student with low vision front and center, or in a place which is easy for him/her to see the screen. Make sure there is not a glare for students with low vision. It may be beneficial for students who are blind to be close to you for assistance as well.
  - b. Teaching movement - Partner with a peer, use hand over hand by the teacher, or give clear verbal and descriptive directions. This will help all of your students.
  - c. Use manipulatives - popsicle sticks, Wikki stix, pipe cleaners, other tactile representation of concepts, magnetic music notes or circles, etc.
  - d. Contrasting colors - Black on white contrast is best for most students with low vision, but once again consult the TVI.

- e. Choir - Provide lyrics or recorded parts for songs. Often, you can provide the TVI a digital file which can be put onto a Braille display or have enlarged font for students with low vision.
- f. Barred instruments - Label with Braille or other materials such as Velcro dots, sandpaper, etc. Use hand over hand to show how to hold mallets. Practice first with fingers and remember to take off bars.
- g. Recorder - Rote teaching, hand over hand, or hole punch reinforcers on the child's arm will help the student to feel where fingers would go on the recorder.
- h. Ukulele - In the beginning, it is helpful to put something tactile on the side of the ukulele where the fingers go between the frets. This helps with orientation.
- i. Follow your instinct and try not to overcompensate as there is a fine line between the two.

#### IV. Technology

- a. Screen Reader - This is software which speaks what is on the screen. The web site or program in question has to be designed to be "accessible." Just because it speaks does not mean it is accessible. Most music programs are not accessible due to their graphical nature.
- b. Types of Screen Readers and How to Enable
  - i. Windows Narrator: Windows+Control+Enter - This is built into Windows.
  - ii. Jaws for Windows - This is a robust piece of software which is often times purchased for students. Consult the TVI to see if your student uses this software.
  - iii. ChromeVox: Control+Alt+z - This is built in speech software for the Chromebook. It can be a little challenging to use.
  - iv. Voiceover for Mac: Command+F5 - This is speech software built into the Apple family. It can also be found on iPads and iPhones and can be started through accessibility settings.
- c. Screen Magnification Software – These are also built into Windows, Mac, and Google products as well as other specialized software.

## Resources for Manipulatives

Small Music Note Magnets by Magnet Letters

MagNotes Basic Set by NoteLogic

These are larger notes and could be possibly customized by the manufacturer. When I contacted them several years ago, I was able to ask for the symbols I needed. See contact information below.

Noteblocks Basic Set by NoteLogic

Contact: NoteLogic

Phone: 800-566-8012

Email: notellogic2003@yahoo.com

## Resources about Braille music

The Ackley Music Braille Wheel

[Braille Music Notator](#)

[BrailleMUSE](#)

Translates XML files to braille music.

[Feel the Beat: a Curriculum for Teaching Braille Music](#)

[Music Braille Flashcards from the American Printing House for the Blind](#)

[Dancing Dots](#)

This is a company which sells Braille music software for blind and low vision musicians.

## Other Resources

[Teaching Music to Blind and Visually Impaired Students: A workshop presented by NAFME](#)

[MuseScore](#)

Accessible software for creating music for all

[Accessible Ukulele Chords](#)

[Music Education Network for The Visually Impaired \(MENVI\)](#)