Adaptive Methods for The Beginning Strings Classroom

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1. Introduction
    a. Vocabulary
        i. MMSN: Mild to Moderate Support Needs
            1. Lower supports but need more time in a specialized self-contained classroom
            2. Focused more on academics and behavioral learning
        ii. ESN: Extensive Support Needs
            1. Higher supports, more paraprofessionals
            2. Can be more focused on daily living skills and social emotional learning
        iii. IEP: Individualized Education Program
            1. A plan for modifying the curriculum so students can successfully learn
        iv. 504
            1. A plan for teaching or providing skills for students to access the curriculum successfully, does NOT modify the material
    b. Approach
        i. Use what resources we already have- method books and creating adaptations and modifications based on the route.
        ii. Be intentional and proactive about these students' participation
            1. Purposeful lesson plans that are paced for accessibility, not for performance.
    c. Environmental Adaptations
        i. Visual Schedule
            1. Shows the sequence of the lesson to ease transitions and reduce anxiety
            2. Turns time into a concrete plan and provides opportunity for organization
            3. Differentiated placement- consider putting the schedule outside of the classroom door so students will know what to expect before they even walk into class
        ii. Floor tape
            1. Visual pathway to designated area in the classroom
                a. Can be a tool to help deter students from wandering to other instruments or items in the classroom
            2. Can use painters tape, masking tape or sit spots

3. Color code to give non-verbal instruction (green = walk, red = stop here)
    a. Can also provide proprioceptive exercise before class by making certain spots a command like “jump” “crawl” or “push” - great for students who typically come in with high energy

iii. Instrument Storage
1. Accessible space for students to retrieve their instrument
2. Can also be a modified case to help unpack with ease (latch vs zipper)

iv. Flexible seating
1. Think outside of the traditional orchestra set up
2. Consider any sensory needs- if a student has sound sensitivity, move furthest from the ensemble, etc.

v. Soundproof padding
1. Reducing the volume of the room with extra carpets, sound absorbing panels

vi. Low-lights
1. Light covers
2. Lamps
3. Half lights

d. Physical Adaptations
i. Violin/viola harness
1. Students with low muscle tone in the neck or arms, assists with keeping instrument in play position without stressing the neck

ii. Guitar position
1. Natural and accessible option for all students

iii. Scrunchy bow hold
1. Can be used for students with grasp issues, low muscle tone or diagnoses like cerebral palsy

iv. Bass stands
1. Bass stands that bear weight from the bottom (no neck support) can help students hold the instrument upright
    a. Krutz stand doubles as a stool and can also be used for cellos

e. Cognitive Adaptations and Accommodations
i. Cue cards
1. Particularly helpful in the beginning when introducing instrument parts and classroom routines
2. Use frequently in proximity to students or with the entire class.

        a. For cues used frequently like “ready position” and “rest position”, colors like red (stop playing) yellow (get ready) and green (play) can be a great and universal substitute.
    3. Color coding
        a. Finger tapes- each tape is a different color, when introducing finger notes color code (or even paint nails if a student is okay with it and permission first) their fingers to coordinate which goes on which tape (first finger red, second yellow, etc).
        b. Low vision adaption: hi-res colors (neon washi tapes) or textures tape (sensory tapes)
    4. Social Stories
        a. Great tool to introduce students to new events like rehearsals and concerts.
        b. Gives context to students on what to expect, what they’ll see and experience, etc.
        c. Should be objective, concise and short sentences. Avoid making sweeping statements about how they should feel.

f. Note-reading
    i. Icon notation
        1. Begin as symbols or words
        2. Pair symbols/icons with partial standard notation (stems)
        3. Include noteheads over symbols
        4. Eliminate the symbols
    ii. Pair notes with notation
        1. Color code open strings
            a. Align with color of wrapping at the tailpiece
            b. Can also write and highlight open string names on the bridge
        2. Left hand
            a. Start with trampoline fingers to prepare the left hand
                i. Hop on the string
                ii. Pressure vs release
                iii. Indent test
            b. Finger tapes are different colors
                i. Can also paint the nails or fingertips of students to match colors- frequent problem is students using their 2nd finger in lieu of 1st finger
                ii. Can also incorporate Suzuki method traits like “D1, A3” etc

    c. Arm shape
        i. Make a V with the arm
        ii. No pizza servers
        iii. OR give option to pizzicato in guitar position
3. Bow hold modification
    a. Open bow hold
        i. I make a C with my right hand
        ii. Chomp at the teacher!
        iii. Thumb UNDER the frog
        iv. Relax fingers on the stick
        v. Proper pinky tip
    b. Use the Bunny song (to the tune of my little teapot)
    c. Practice with a pencil or pen first
    d. NOTE* When modeling the process, I find success when I use my left hand to mirror the class to reduce the amount of students who struggle to differentiate left and right.
4. Method book integration
    a. Chunked into themes
        i. Loosely follows the general method book sequence of learning
        ii. Modified learning goals, simplified or expression of learning is assessed in multiple ways
        iii. Also aligned with state standards
    b. Lesson plans with considerations built in
5. Repertoire
    a. Most music notation software can color code notes
        i. Examples use MuseScore
    b. Highlighted music
    c. Modified repertoire into two parts, “melody” and “harmony”. Keep rhythm identical but simplify pitch.
6. Thank you!!!!