

Six Ways to Make Your Ensembles, Lessons, and Classes More Accessible for Every Student, No Matter How they Learn Best

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Founder and Managing Director, Institute for Accessible Arts Education

Assistant Chair, Music Education

Midwest Clinic: Thursday, December 18, 2025



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Agenda

- Introduction
- Brief Disability Foundations
- Accessible Music Education
- Six Ways to Make Your Ensembles, Lessons, and Classes More Accessible
- Questions/Answers and Discussion



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Introduction



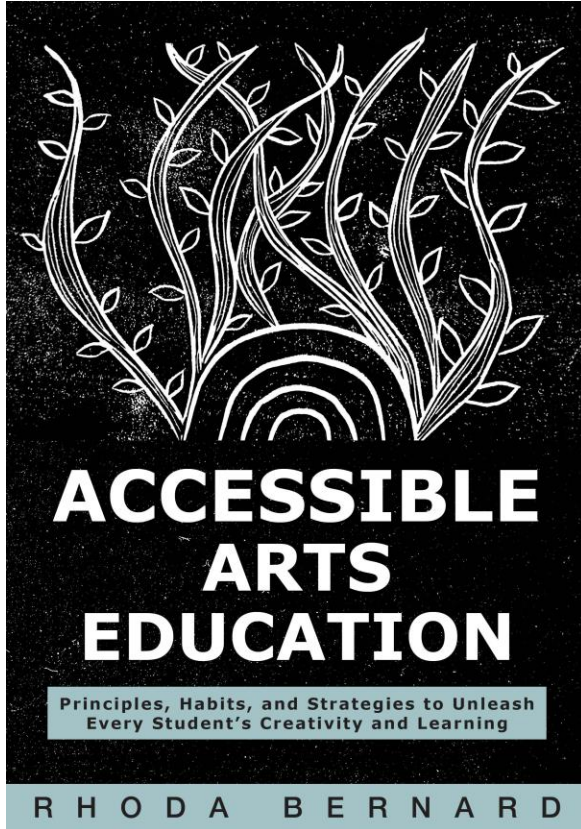
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Introduction: Dr. Rhoda Bernard

- Singer/Pianist - Klezmer Music
- Program Founder and Leader
- Teacher, Administrator, Researcher, Scholar
- Joined Boston Conservatory in 200
- Migrated to Berklee in 2016
- “Proposition 2 ½ Survivor”



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New Book: Published September 2025

**Accessible Arts Education:
Principles, Habits, and Strategies to
Unleash Every Student's Creativity
and Learning**

Available on Amazon

Available at Solution Tree Press



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PBSO
NEWS
HOUR



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A catalyst for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of performing and visual arts education

“Arts Better the Lives of Everyone”



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Arts Education Programs for People with Disabilities



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Private Music Lessons

Music Class for Young Children

Introduction to Musical Instruments

'Ukulele Ensemble

Rock Band Ensemble

iPad Ensemble

Inner Harmony Choral Ensemble

Bucket Drumming Class

Chamber Ensemble

Percussion Ensemble

Daytime Moon Creations Theater Program

Step by Step! Adaptive Dance Programs

ABLE Day Sessions Summer Music Day Camp

Satellite Programs

Workshops

Jazz Trio

Music Technology Class

Music History Class

Ear Training

Music Theory



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Graduate Programs



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Master of Music in Music Education (Autism Concentration)

33 credits

Summers and evenings

Graduate Certificate in Music Education and Autism

15 credits

Summers and evenings



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Special Education Foundations and Practices

Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders

Autism, Music, and Behavioral Teaching Methods

Research to Practice in Music Education and Autism I

Research to Practice in Music Education and Autism II



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Professional Development



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Annual ABLÉ Assembly: Arts Better the
Lives of Everyone Conference - April 10-12,
2026, hybrid

ABLE Conversation Symposium: November
22, 2025 online

Accessible Music Education Study Groups

Workshops and Mini Courses

Conference Presentations

Inclusive Teaching and Learning Capsule

ABLE Arts Resource Center

ABLE Snapshots Blog

Consultations

Leadership Network in Accessible Arts
Education

ABLE Voices Podcast

Keynotes

Residencies

Brief Disability Foundations



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The Limited Utility of Diagnoses

You've met one student with XX diagnosis,
you've met **one** student with XX diagnosis



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The Limited Utility of Diagnoses for Educators



“Good teaching on steroids”

Getting to know your students well and reaching them makes all of your teaching better for all of your students.



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Accessible Music Education



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Accessible Music Education

How is Learning Taking Place?

Poor Performance or Skill Development

Modes of Action and Expression

Barriers to Demonstrating Learning



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What Else Could be Going On?

Non-Compliance
Attendance Issues
Lack of Communication



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Accessible Music Education

- Start with Accessibility
 - Clear Goal
- Anticipate and Eliminate Barriers
 - Flexible Means



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High Percentage Teaching Strategies



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Six High Percentage Teaching Strategies

Structure and Schedule

Preparatory Materials and Narratives

Multiple Modalities

Multiple Means of Engagement

Multiple Means of Representation

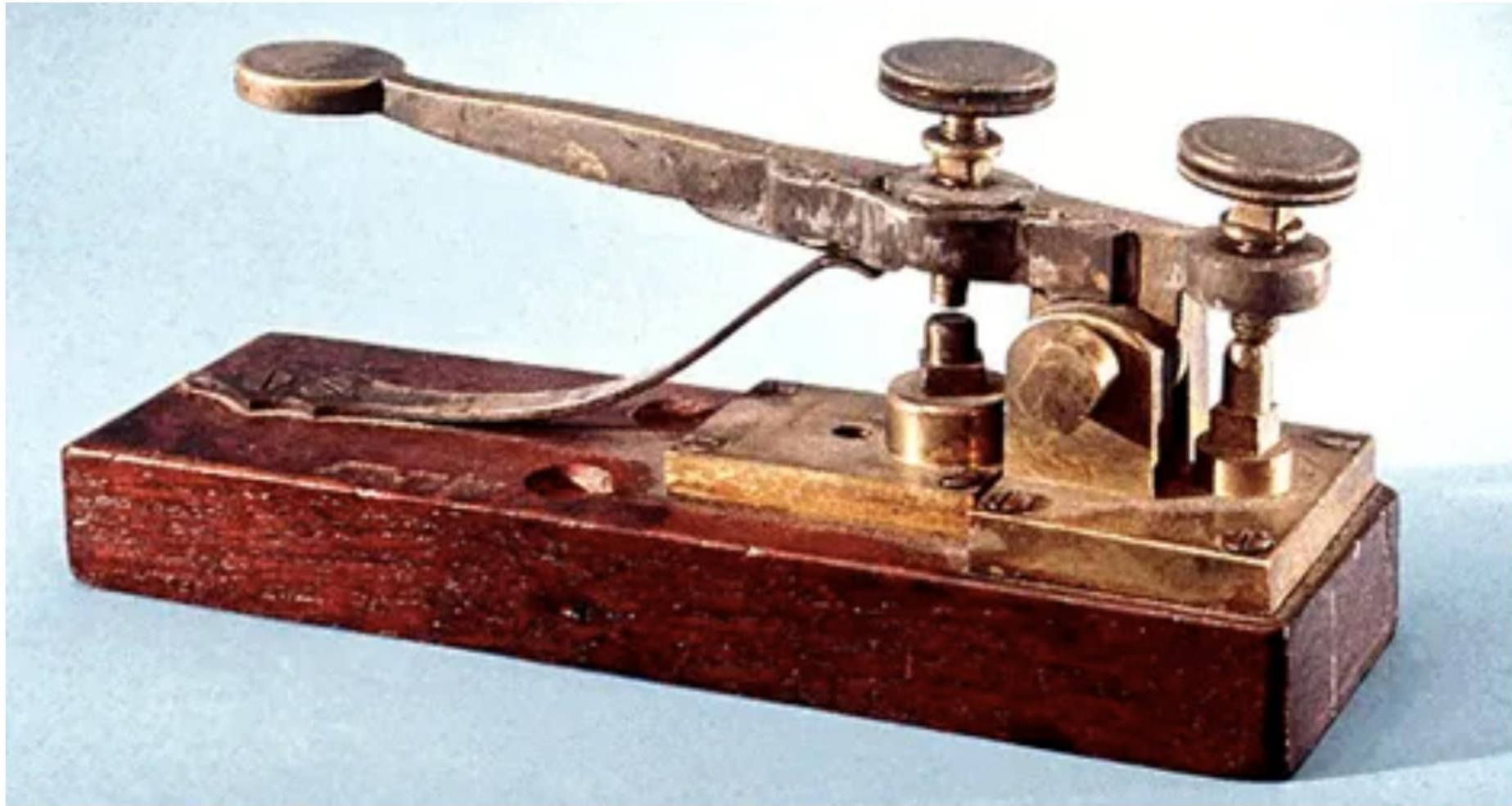
Multiple Means of Action and Expression

- ☐ Body's Stretch
- ☐ Warm Ups
- ☐ By the Sea
- ☐ Much More
- ☐ Think of Me
- ☐ Someone's Waiting
for You
- ☐ Freebee God



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The telegraph key used to send the famous message "What Hath God Wrought" over the prototype telegraph line between Baltimore and Washington D.C. in 1844 Smithsonian American Art Museum



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SNEAK PREVIEW ???



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Why You Should Use Social Story Telling



by Caroline Koehler

www.celavora.com



Social



stories



can



help



people



understand



how



they

sh~



should

behave,



what



is



going



to



happen,



and



how



to



handle



stressful



situations.



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“On Sunday, at 10:00am I am having my first recital at the Capitol Conservatory. I will listen politely when Anna and Bob perform and clap when they are finished. Then, it will be my turn to play my songs. I am nervous about my first recital. This is okay. All musicians are nervous at their first recital. I will be happy and proud of myself when I am finished.”

FEATURES

- First person perspective
- Step by step walkthrough
- Normalize emotions
- Happy and proud at the end – nothing about performance itself



Benefits of Social Stories

Provides clarity about expected behaviour. This makes it easier for children to follow directions. .

Example: Explaining why children need to stand in line at school

Provides structure by giving information about the things to do.

Example: Explaining how to brush teeth, get dressed, etc.

Reduces anxiety by giving information of what to expect in a particular situation.

Example: Explaining waiting for food at a restaurant.



Conveys information effectively. Since a lot of thought is put while creating social stories, children will comprehend it better.

Example: Explaining how children are supposed to play with other kids.

Helps reduce challenging behaviours. Social stories can do wonders in offering coping strategies to children when they become overwhelmed.

Example: Explaining what to do when there is a change in plan



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stitute for
Arts Education

Visual
Auditory
Kinesthetic

Experiential
Social
Tonal

Instructional
Explorational



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The Visual Modality

Other modalities are time-limited.

The visual modality is also a support.



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Color Coding

Organizes visual information.

Demonstrates patterns.

Makes visual materials less overwhelming.



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I recently read a dark novel called *The Invisible Man* by Herbert George Wells. I really enjoyed it because the first chapter hooked my mind into the story. The novel sustained my interest throughout the story. Some reasons why *The Invisible Man* is a good story are that it contains lots of mysteries, it shows gothic elements, and it shows dramatic fighting scenes.

First, *The Invisible Man* contains many mysteries, so it is a good story. For example, one of them is how the invisible man became invisible. Why did he decide to become a doctor? And why did he choose Mrs. Hall's hotel, not anyone else's hotel? All of these mysteries come together in the conclusion, but as readers, we don't understand the mysteries until the end. I like mysteries, so this story attracted me.

Second, another reason why it is a good story is because of its dark/gothic elements. One gothic characteristic is that this story does not have a happy ending. Most stories end happily, for example, the Junie B Jones stories. In this story, however, the invisible man died. Another example of darkness is that the invisible man wanted Mr. Marvel to be his assistant, but if Mr. Marvel did not do well at his job, he would be kicked and punched. Being kicked and punched made Mr. Marvel fearful of the invisible man. These examples show that this is a gothic story.

Finally, this good story shows numerous fighting scenes. For example, at the tavern, in the streets, and in Dr. Kemp's house, fighting breaks out between the invisible man and the policemen. The fighting shows much drama which is something that I rejoice about. It shows guns and intense battles. It gives me imagery and a sense of knowledge about what is going around in the story. The invisible man at the end dies from fighting against the people.

The Invisible Man pulled my heart into this story with its mysteries, darkness, and fighting. It showed everything in a story that I consider a good story. Since this middle grades version is so good, someday I would like to read the adult version.



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Six High Percentage Teaching Strategies

Structure and Schedule

Preparatory Materials and Narratives

Multiple Modalities

Multiple Means of Engagement

Multiple Means of Representation

Multiple Means of Action and Expression

Multiple Means of Engagement



Ensure that Students are Involved and Motivated

Always Recruit Student Interest in More than One Way

- Activate Prior Knowledge
- Demonstrate for Wow Factor
- Engage a Range of Student Configurations
- Provide Choice
- Create Community



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Multiple Means of Representation



Ensure that Information is Understood

Always Communicate in More than One Way

- Provide VISUALS in Multiple Forms (words, symbols, icons, notation)
- Define Terms
- Employ Technology
- Share Multiple Perspectives



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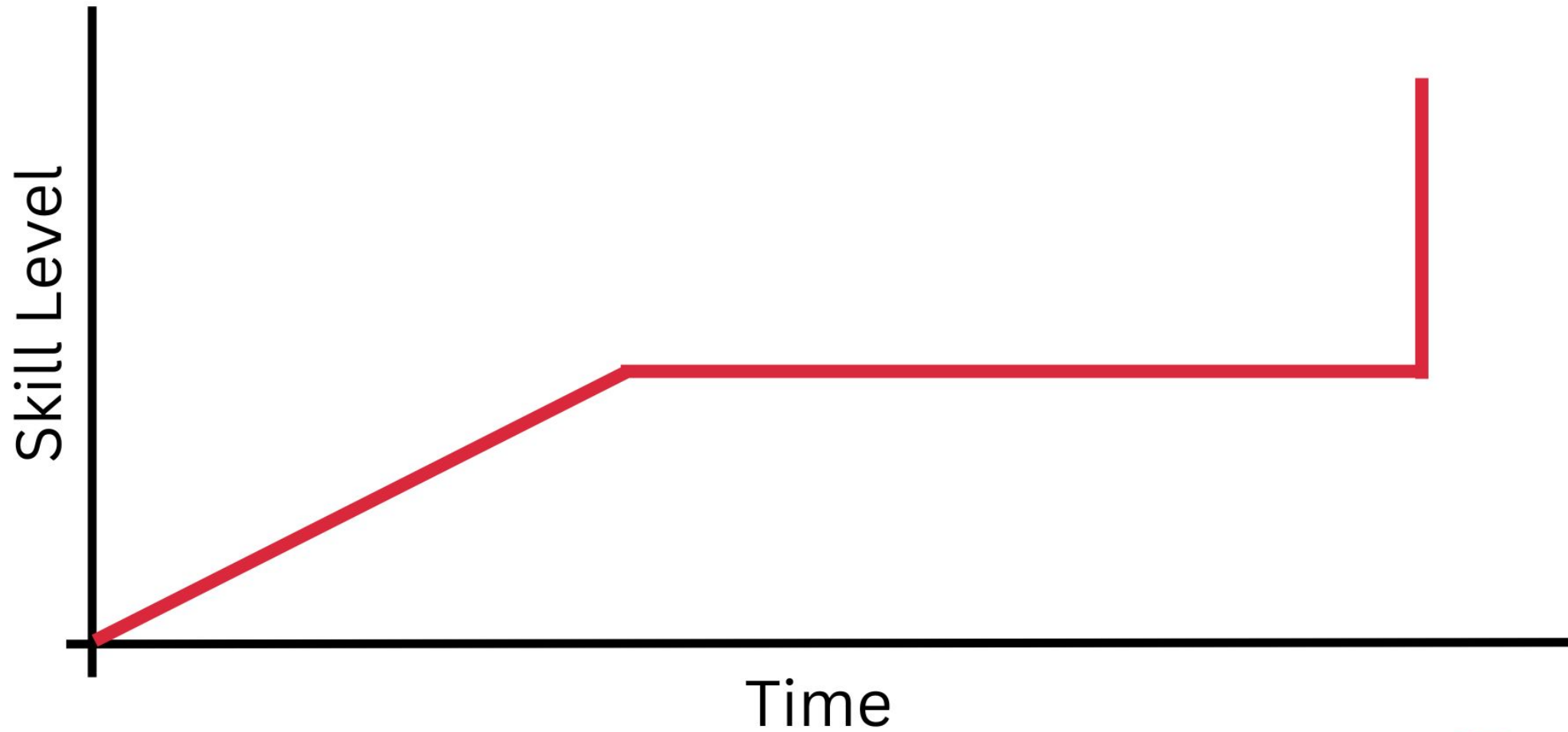


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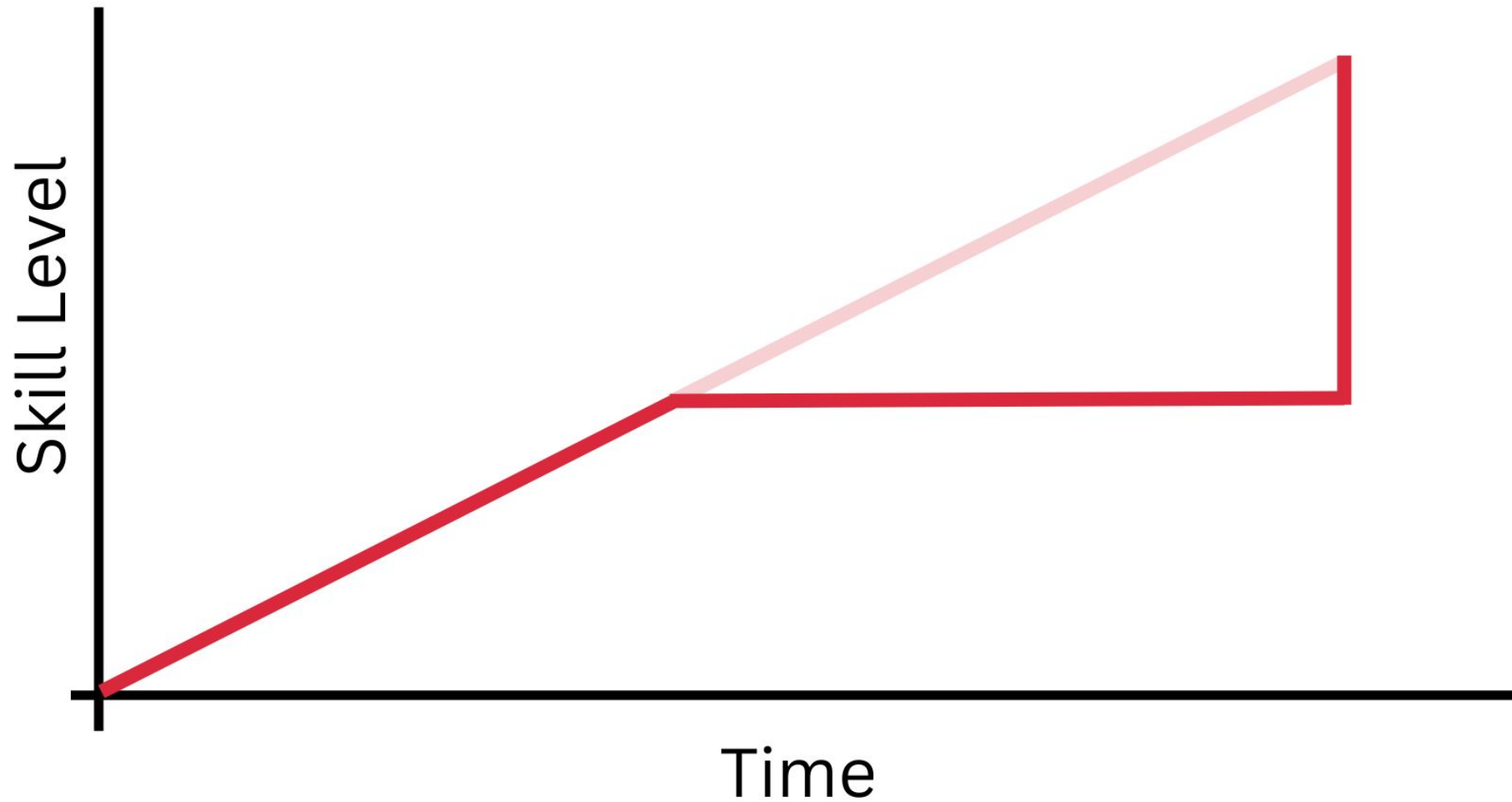
Multiple Means of Action and Expression



Learning



Learning



Ensure That Learning is Seen and Demonstrated

Always Assess in More than One Way

- Beyond Paper and Pencil
- Beyond Knowing=Playing
- Provide Student Choice for Means of Assessment

Questions/Answers and Discussion



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