

Sensory Friendly Concerts for Your School

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I. About

- A. Why is this important?
 - i. Promote acceptance of diverse ways of experiencing a concert
 - ii. Enjoyment of live music and an emotional connection to live music
 - iii. Finding human connection through emotional learning
- B. What is a Sensory Friendly Concert?
 - i. A live concert specifically for people with diverse sensory needs
 - a. Sound – accommodations for loud noises
 - b. Visual – lighting
 - c. Touch – movement and expression needs
 - ii. Welcoming concert environment
 - iii. Understanding and inclusive of additional needs
 - a. Restroom needs
 - b. Accessibility needs
 - c. Virtual access

II. Setting up the event

- A. Take as many or as few of these ideas to adapt them for your school and students' needs!
- B. Establishing relationships
 - i. Get to know your special education department and teachers
 - a. They likely have knowledge about Sensory Friendly events
 - b. Gauge their interest
 - c. Get their input and ideas
- C. Programming
 - i. You don't need to alter planned programming for this concert!
 - ii. Loud piece?
 - a. Encourage audience members to hold their ears if needed
 - b. Students can bring ear protection
 - c. Provide ear protection if needed
 - iii. Program length
 - a. Shorter movements or pieces are optimal
 - b. Long piece? You'll be surprised the attention that live music elicits!
 - c. 30 minutes is a good maximum for entire concert

- iv. Filling gaps
 - a. Solo and ensemble pieces
 - b. Instrument demonstrations
- v. Pieces with a story will help coordinate with visual media

D. Scheduling

- i. Schedule the date
 - a. What works for all parties?
 - b. What is the best time of day?
- ii. Schedule the facility
 - a. Is it accessible?
 - b. Will you go to them, or will they come to you?

E. Invitations: Who will join you for the concert?

- i. Special education classes from your school
- ii. Special education classes from the entire district
- iii. Reverse Inclusion: invite other students and people from the community so that they can experience the inclusion of people with disabilities
- iv. Families of your students
- v. Families of students in special education
- vi. Other community groups that serve people with disabilities
- vii. Communicate any COVID protocols at your school

III. Preparing for the needs of the audience

A. Investigate the particular needs of those attending the concert

- i. Get help and input from the special education teachers
- ii. Will virtual learners need access to a live stream or video?

B. Arrange transportation

- i. Can students simply walk from their classrooms? Are routes accessible?
- ii. Schedule district bus transportation to the venue
 - a. Need accessible buses
 - b. When are buses available? This can influence event scheduling
- iii. Provide a parking map or guide for buses and other guests
- iv. Arranging transportation for your students if venue is off campus

C. Pre-visit stories

- i. Prepare the special education teacher with what to expect, and they can communicate directly with their students
- ii. Your students can visit special education classes to describe what the concert will be like
- iii. Prepare visual materials

- iv. Content to consider as part of a pre-visit story
 - a. Access
 - b. Who is around to help?
 - c. Feel and arrangement of seats
 - d. Lighting
 - e. What will students see?
 - f. What will students hear?
 - g. Behavior expectations
 - h. Instruct teachers for emergency exit
 - i. Expectations around COVID mitigation measures
- D. Print an accessible program for your concert
- E. Additional media to provide engagement with the music
- F. Educate performers on what to expect
 - i. Invite special education teachers to present this information to your students
 - ii. Extra noise from audience
 - iii. Volunteer or expected interactions with audience
 - a. Instrument petting zoo
 - b. Instrument demonstrations
 - a. From stage
 - b. In audience
 - c. Greeting; ushers
 - d. Speaking from the stage
 - iv. Attire
 - a. School clothes (casual, welcoming)
 - b. Regular concert attire (formal, “special”)

IV. Executing the Concert

- A. With proper planning above, executing the concert day of should run smoothly!
- B. Have students and other helpers in place to ensure all of your prep work is carried out!
 - i. Ensuring all media is set up
 - ii. Set out programs or station ushers/greeters
 - iii. Keep lights up
 - iv. Set up interactive areas
- C. Verbal preparation from the stage during the concert
 - i. Instrument demos
 - ii. What to expect from each piece?

V. Implications for Inclusion and Impact

- A. Reverse inclusion can ensure this is an inclusive event for all students
 - i. Our goal should be to create better inclusion (not segregation) in society for people with disabilities
 - ii. For some people with disabilities, it is not currently possible to participate in some aspects of society
 - iii. These concerts bring music to people with disabilities and respect their diverse needs so that they can experience live music
 - B. Point of entry
 - i. These concerts can provide an entry point for your students and their parents to interacting with people with disabilities
 - ii. These concerts can also provide an entry point to the arts for students in special education, their teachers, and their parents
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Contact Information

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