

John F. Kennedy Center

"Music & Math in Motion: A New Learning Approach to Counting
in 4/4 Time and Tempo Concepts for Students on the Autism
Spectrum"

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>> SARAH MITCHELL: Hello, everyone! Welcome to the April installment of our VSA webinar series, which comes to you from the John F. Kennedy Center For the Performing Arts and addresses topics related to the arts, disability and education. My name is Sarah Mitchell and I am your webinar moderator. Today's webinar is called "Music & Math in Motion: A New Learning Approach to Counting in 4/4 Time and Tempo Concepts for Students on the Autism Spectrum."

If you would like to view live stream captioning of this webinar, you can follow the link you see on this slide and in the chat box of the control panel located on the right side of your screen. Before we get started, let's touch base on the go to webinar control panel. This control panel can be hidden by clicking on the orange arrow in the top left corner of it. If you need to leave the webinar early, you can leave it by clicking on the "X" in the upper right corner. A recording of the webinar will be available afterwards so you can catch up on any parts you miss. You can connect to the audio portion of the webinar through your telephone or through your computer's microphone and speakers. Select the option that works best for you. If you're calling in from your telephone, make sure you mute your computer speakers for optimal hearing.

You can submit or answer questions using the chat pane located near the bottom of the control panel. I will monitor it throughout the webinar. If you prefer to ask your question instead of typing it, please click on the "Raise your hand" icon on the control panel and I will touch base with you and unmute your microphone during the questions portion towards the end of the webinar. Otherwise, your questions will come directly to me. During the designated question and answer time at the end of the presentation, I will relay the questions that are asked to the presenters. Within the week, we will send out a follow-up E-mail with a link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, and a copy of the webinar transcript. This means you can go back to watch the recording and review any supplemental materials, in addition to any notes you may take during the webinar itself. I would like to invite you to join us next month for "Successfully teaching students with disabilities: Supports that make a difference" on Tuesday, June 28th at 3 p.m. eastern time. If you haven't already, you can register for it right now by clicking on the link in the chat pane.

If you are active on social media, I invite you to connect with us using #VSA webinar.

On twitter, we are@VSAinternational.

And on Facebook, we are VSAinternational. We would love to engage with you.

And with that, I will turn it over to today's presenters. Cecilia and Maya, take it away.

>> MAYA SINGH: Hi. Welcome, everyone.

>> CECILIA SMITH: Hello.

>> MAYA SINGH: First we want to go ahead and thank VSA international 1 and the Kennedy Center for providing us the opportunity to share what we believe are some really exciting techniques that hopefully you can use in your own classroom and your own teaching. My name is Maya Singh. I'm the education manager at Marquis Studios and VSA New York City.

>> CECILIA SMITH: And I'm Cecilia Smith, jazz musician and teaching artist.

>> MAYA SINGH: So today what we're going to do is talk to you a little bit about some new techniques that Cecilia created while working with Marquis Studios. So first what we're going to do is we'll share a little bit of background with you on Marquis Studios and VSA New York City. I'll be introducing Cecilia and her background and how she came to work with us and develop these techniques. We'll talk a little bit about the students at the two schools that these techniques were mostly developed at, and the search for a new method to teach counting and tempo. We'll talk about some challenges, some successes and also the conclusions. That he came to throughout this process. So Marquis Studios was founded in 1977, and we are first and foremost a arts education organization, and we strive to provide quality arts education for New York City Public Schools.

And of the 100 or so schools that we work with and programs that we manage each year, about 33% of those programs serve students with disabilities. In 2012, Marquis Studios was invited to become the VSA New York City affiliate, which we were very, very pleased to do, and wear that hat very proudly. Some of the key things that we do as VSA is host our teaching artist training institute program, better known as TATI, of which Cecilia is a master teaching artist, and through that program, each year we train about 20 arts educators in best practices for teaching through the arts for students on the autism spectrum. We also host an annual calendar competition for students in district 75 schools across New York City. I'll talk a little bit more about district 75, for those of you who may not be familiar with the New York City Public School System. And in addition to that, we also host an annual gallery called a Year in Pictures, which is held at the plat Institute in Manhattan, which celebrates artwork created by students with disabilities in New York City.

So I'm really pleased to introduce Cecilia Smith. She's an internationally known jazz artist, a composer, arranger and multimedia artist who is currently developing a multimedia piece entitled "Decisive Moments." Cecilia is also one of the leading vibraphonists in four-mallet technique. Cecilia is also a graduate and former faculty member of the Berklee College of Music, and has 25 years experience in as a teaching artist and 20 of those years have been spent serving special populations, including both children and adults, in therapeutic school settings.

So Cecilia, I thought we might start by just talking a little bit about your journey to working with special populations. How did this work first arrive to you?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Well, once I graduated from college back a few years ago, I needed to not only perform for a living, but also find ways to make, you know, a living as a musician and teacher. And so while living in Boston, I discovered many non-profit arts organizations that I've worked for, developed programs specifically for students, while I was able to tour. And one of the first jobs -- well, one of the jobs that I got, you know, maybe five or six years after I graduated from school was teaching music in a state mental hospital in Boston, and it was an experience that I would never thought that I would find myself in. And these were some really mentally ill adults, and I worked with another musician, and we were able to come up with exciting music, music that they heard on the radio on a fairly decent piano player, and I found that it was quite a rewarding experience, unlike my experience that I had chosen my life to be as a jazz musician. So I did that for a couple of years, but my goal was to get out of Boston and move to New York City, and so I did, was able to do that, and I taught -- I was gigging around New York, actually commuting between Boston and New York for a few years, and one of the organizations that I came to teach with was -- their main mission was to take professional artists and put them in alternative teaching situations with people who had a variety of disabilities, everything from, you know, the Bentley Disabled Adults, mentally ill, and they just kind of threw us in there and said come up with programs. And so I was kind of used to dealing with individuals who had particular challenges. I worked with mentally ill, chemically addicted adults. I also worked in a variety of day habilitation programs, children, social service programs, and I designed programs for each one, all while performing and doing composition projects. I found it extremely rewarding to work in these populations that may not ever come to know a jazz musician, and while I wasn't really playing jazz, and they really didn't care much that I could cycle through giant steps

or play a great move, I needed to relate to them where they were musically, and it was a great balance to an intense life as a jazz musician, and I still choose to have it as part of my life, and it's worked very well.

>> MAYA SINGH: Great! And so Cecilia, being a teaching artist that does not necessarily have formal training in education or in specifically working with special needs students, what is your approach to developing programming for that community?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Well, one of the things I never do is just assume that all classes with alternative populations are the same. Each class that I come in to offers a new set of challenges. I study the class. I see where they are in terms of their ability to keep time, to sing or not sing, and one of the great things about working with, you know, non-profit arts organizations like Marquis Studios is that they give us a chance to see who our audience is and to be able to develop programs around what they can do.

I say that no one class is ever the same. And so I seek out what is going to work for these programs that I work for. You know, as a jazz musician, I'm always looking and searching for the next idea, and keeping my ideas fresh. And so I apply the same concept to when I deal with these populations as a teaching artist.

>> MAYA SINGH: So next I'm just going to tell you a little bit about the two schools that Cecilia highlighted these techniques that she'll be talking about. The first school is PS 37R, which is in Staten Island. It is a school within the district 75 system in New York City. District 75 is not a geographical district, but it is a more of a classification for schools that serve exclusively students that have disabilities. At Marquis Studios, we have about nine partnership schools, and of the 100 schools or so that we work with, these nine schools we've developed a very specific relationship with and provide a majority of their arts programming, in many cases where they're only out by arts partner. And both of the schools that Cecilia works in are part of that program and are also district 75 schools. So 37R, the first school is, as I said, located in Staten Island, serves students chronologically aged 7 to 14, and it's also the host to our teaching artist training program. The second school you'll hear Cecilia speak about today is PS 94M, located in Manhattan, also a spectrum school, serving students on the autism age spectrum ages 4 to about 16, through middle and upper high school. P 94M is also the host to another program we do called the inclusion program, which involves getting the other schools that are co-located with P 94 to come together for an inclusive residency. Often schools are

co-located in the same building as the general education school, but are for the most part pretty segregated populations. They may have a floor or a wing or a couple of classrooms somewhere that they exist in, but there's no real connection or community between the district 75 school and the general and co-located school. So P 94 has been our partner in trying to kind of pioneer a way to bring those two communities together through arts experiences.

And now, Cecilia is going to tell you a little bit about her first reactions and surprises to working with the students at these two schools, and I'm going to roll away and let her tell you all about those techniques.

>> CECILIA SMITH: My first teaching experience with Marquis Studios was in PS -- at PS 37R on Staten Island. One of my surprises that I encountered was the fact that a number of my classes had non-verbal students. And their level of engagement in terms of what they were understanding was initially unclear to me. And it was a big challenge. I went home thinking, after the initial visit, you know, what am I going to do with these people? Although I had dealt with a lot of different kinds of students, never students who were not verbal and never the whole class. And so that presented a big challenge for me. And PS 94 was one of my second assignments for Marquis Studios. They had a different set of circumstances. Not only were students non-verbal, but also had a tendency towards obsessive behaviors and hyperactivity. And one of the things that I found surprising is the classes were relatively small, maybe seven, nine students, and a host of adults, mostly adults who would sit behind students while they were sitting at tables to make sure they didn't get up. So these -- I have to say that my first couple of times with Marquis Studios were extremely challenging, but I was determined to make them work. And after a few weeks, I came up with some really good ideas, and surprisingly they worked, and everybody's very happy, or else I wouldn't be sitting here today.

[Laughter]

Now, I want to introduce you to some concepts that didn't work that I thought would work, and why.

The first concept is the concept of keeping time did not connect. I taught a lot of populations that had disabilities, and the idea of teaching time with an instrument, say play along with me, you know, most people can do that, but students on the autistic -- on the autism spectrum often could not. They had no idea what I was talking about. Sometimes the physical manipulation of the instruments were hard, or -- to actually hold them in their hands and to figure out what to do with them,

which I found, you know, kind of amazing. Wow, they don't know how to hold them.

Students often used instruments combatively, as they hadn't experienced how to use them, as you'll see in this picture. I have a couple of students who I actually am teaching at another residency, and they can do a lot of things now, but those first initial days, you can see where it's kind of interesting in terms of how these instruments didn't work for me.

Some hand instruments, hand percussion instruments, were often too loud, or often overbearing or overstimulating for students. You would think that if you brought in a set of maracas or a tambourine, or the sticks that you see at the bottom, kids would have a great time with the instruments. But often, if they had some difficulties with their physical hands and being able to handle these instruments, often the results were relatively disastrous, and so what I had to do was to come up with something that would work, so I'll share with you some of the things that did work with them.

Now, what I want to do now is share with you what I did initially with higher functioning students who had maybe some behavior or emotionally or socially challenged, but were very smart and could bring a lot to the table, and were very verbal. So I'm going to start first with my time machine. You can see this is a very old, abused case. It still works very well. It's just old. And I would say to them, what do you think is in this case? And of course, you know, a lot of students would guess a lot of things. Then I would say, well, this is my time machine. And a lot of things that are in this case, what do you think is in this case that would apply to music. And so they would, you know, try to guess a few things, and I say -- I would say to them, tell me something about time. Is it a tangible item? Can you taste it? Can you smell it? Can you handle it in your hands? And they would say no.

So I would open it up, and I would show them first the kitchen measuring spoons. Can we measure music with spoons or a measuring cup? And some of them would say, I don't think so. So then, when I would pull out a clock, they would wonder, what would that have to do with time.

So I would show them the clock, and this particular clock has a secondhand, and I'm going to show you my clock. And as you'll see, that my clock also, I have the live clock here with the one that's shown in the picture, and if my secondhand was ticking, I would ask how many beats in a minute, of course. These students who were, you know, fairly had it together in terms of understanding how to tell time, most of these students were 13 and 14 years old, understood that that concept of how to tell time.

Then I would pull out a metronome, and my metronome, many had not seen before. And they didn't really get the connection. I've explained that metronomes help musicians, you know, keep time. And so what I would do is that I would match the metronome click with the secondhand. So I'll do that now.

[Metronome clicking].

So as you can see and hear, my metronome and my clock are in sync with each other.

Now, what does that have to do with music?

Well, they would learn quickly that if they were going to try to keep time with a metronome at 60 beats per minute, that was kind of slow. So what I would do is say, well, I'm going to turn on my really cool keyboard and we're going to double up 60. What is 60 times 2, and they would say 120. So what I would do is I would turn on my metronome to coordinate with 60 beats per minute.

[Drums playing].

So as you can hear, that my keyboard is going twice as fast as actually 60 beats per minute.

I have to say that no matter who you are, that this concept of keeping time, and with the clock, a metronome in a keyboard is very -- [indiscernible].

So you can see here that students understand that music has time. We translate tempo as a vocabulary for musical time. Tempo and musical time. First lesson, 60 beats per minute, very slow.

Second lesson, by doubling the time to 120 beats per minute, students are better able to hang on to the following -- to follow the beat with percussion instruments or egg-shaped shakers.

So I would have them shake with the egg shakers. All right?

And then I would have comparison analysis, maybe play recorded music that were faster or slower than 120 beats per minute, and then they would begin to understand how these numbers correlate with time. Okay.

Now, we have to mix a little technology into this. On my cell phone is an application called BPM. It stands for beats per minute. And what I would do is find a song that they would know and have them begin to tap on the screen. In this way, you know, there's an organic connection with the ability to keep time and see the numbers pop up. So by tapping on the screen in time, it would tell you how many BPMs your rhythm is. This is especially helpful for many students who need more visual entry point of view for the concept of tempo.

So the next thing that I would like to do is we're going to add some other instruments. Now, you can imagine that this concept for kids who are very young also maybe have some verbal

challenges, that the idea of the time machine might be a little bit too deep for them. But what I would do, without much explanation, is to have the time going with the metronome, and have them tap along with me. All right?

So we're going to get some examples here of tapping and you'll see that I would use rhythm sticks with this example. And with the rhythm sticks --

>> Sorry. We're just having a moment of technical difficulty. There we go.

>> CECILIA SMITH: As you can see, these kids are playing rhythm sticks, and we'll have our sample with the rhythm sticks playing with it. 3, 4, click, click, click, click. With the ability to keep time with the percussion or the groove on the keyboard and a metronome, this worked great in just about every classroom that I had.

All right. Now, you can see these instruments, rhythm sticks especially, are really great for this example as well. We are often -- the sticks and the egg are sometimes hard for kids who may not be able to understand the timing and conceptual of a machine working on this -- at this level.

So, if the time machine was too sophisticated, I had to come up with something else. So what I came up with were games. It's a different point of entry, and this is, as you see, a Nerf ball and a hoop. And you might say well, why would you use a Nerf ball and a hoop? Well, for one thing, almost everybody knows what a basketball hoop is. And so what we would do is that I would bring out the Nerf ball hoop and a basketball and I would have all of the kids using rhythm sticks in time with the metronome and the groove from the keyboard. And so they would keep time with the keyboard. And then I would give them a beat to throw the Nerf ball in. So if we had the time going, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, their job was to throw the ball in on beat 4. All right?

So it helps the students have a tactile experience of understanding where the beats are lying. Keep it going. So we would all, as a class, start to count, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4.

And so their job was to throw only on beat 4. 1-2-3-4. 1-2-3-4. Oh, you're late. So that would happen. If they were late, I would say, oh, you're a little late or you're a little too soon. This helps with self regulation in order to execute the task of falling in on certain beats.

Now, we didn't always use Nerf balls. Often we would use different kinds of balls. These are really unusual, kind of funny balls, but the thing is that they're very soft, and as you can see with this student, he doesn't have a good grip. His physical disabilities would not allow him to hold a Nerf ball,

so I would have him throw the ball -- the ball in at a certain time using these balls. Here we go.

1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4. And that would be their job, to find the beat that we asked for. Maybe we would change the beat. Maybe they would have to change -- throw the ball in on beat 3. All right? So you want to get another ball. And then the class's job was to accent on beat 3. 1-2-3-4. 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4.

[Putting emphasis on the number 3].

These were extremely exciting exercises to do with students, and everybody understood what it was in terms of the teachers. Now, I never in my life thought I would be applying a Nerf ballgame or using funny-shaped balls to explain music to children who had disabilities, but this is one of my most exciting games, and it works great.

Now, you'll see here that this student, he's an older student. He's maybe about 14 or 15 years old, but in terms of his emotional and his intellect and where he is, he's more about four or five. And he loved this game. He's a tall kid and you could see that he took his time and the teachers were amazed that he was able to stop and see what it was that I was trying to show him. I have to say this again, that this probably is one of my most exciting games that I had to explain concepts of 4-4 time beats per minute and tempo.

Another variation with added challenge for more advanced students was a koosh ball, time to play koosh. And the coordinating -- there's a coordinating partner strategy with this game. Students propelled the koosh ball between the paddles on specific beats, and I used recorded music to play this game. And similar to the basketball hoop strategy, but there are additional layers of challenge, higher focus activities for one thing. I don't introduce this game until we've got a really great concept of a basketball game. It also requires partners to work with. Depending on how old the children are, or the students are, we either have them work with each other, I ask teachers who partners well together. If they don't partner well together using the class where there's a lot of parents or adults, I ask them to partner with students.

We continue counting through the games where they would have to count and propel the ball in certain beats, the ability to manipulate the paddles and the balls were the concepts that they had to get used to.

So as you can see in this class, I have my keyboard in the front of the class, and you can see both students and teachers working with students to propel these balls back and forth between them while the recorded music was going on, or really great grooves that came from my keyboard.

So what we're going to do right now is we're going to watch a 19-second video. You'll see the URL in the corner there that you can go to. Do you want to explain more?

>> MAYA SINGH: Sure. So I believe Sarah has sent out a chat to everybody with the URL for this video demonstration of students doing this activity in the classroom. It's about 19 seconds, so we'll start counting 30 seconds from now and then we'll pick up after everyone has had a chance to watch the video. See you in 30 seconds.

[Watching video].

>> MAYA SINGH: So I think everyone must have had time to watch at least a few seconds of the video, which is just a great demonstration of this particular technique in action.

>> CECILIA SMITH: Now, I also used other -- I have other games and toys and different tools that I bring in that are beyond musical instruments. And this particular game, this is variation with balloons and they're fly swatters, but they're fly swatters that are shaped like hands. Balloons are important because they're not as reactuary as a ball. They're slower than usual. And usually I have them hit the balloons on beat 1. It just works well that way.

And often I play music while this is going on so that they can find beats in recorded music as well. And that way their mind's working on a couple of levels. They're working on listening to music that they liked, and they're also having to concentrate on what's going on with the balloons. And when it's all three together, it is a pretty exciting classroom to hear music and to have these balloons flying around. The VSA newsletter this week, I have an article there that isolates a lot of the music that I play, everyone from Katie Perry to Rafeigi in terms of being able to use some even mild data and jazz artists that I bring in so kids can get used to hearing this music in a very stimulating classroom context.

Now, I want to talk to you about also rate of speed and tempo changes. I use the piece from Linus and Lucy. It also may be known as the Charlie Brown Theme. I use this piece because in terms of music that has been put into our subconscious, it's one of the more interesting pieces of jazz material that a lot of people know but don't know they know it, including young students and older adults. I use this particular song, and I play it so that the kids get a good grasp of how tempo can change. I start the rhythm at 122 beats -- 120 beats per minute and we're going to start with our egg shakers. What I do is I have the tempo happening, and as we're -- all the -- everyone in the classroom has an egg shaker, and I start with a --

[Beat playing].

-- at 120 beats.

[Beat playing].

[Linus and Lucy (Charlie Brown Theme) playing].

>> CECILIA SMITH: And deliberately play quarter notes with my right hand. And as we get through the A section, I deliberately speed the tempo up on the keyboard.

[Faster tempo now].

And they have to follow.

[Beat getting faster].

[Linus and Lucy (Charlie Brown Theme) playing].

>> CECILIA SMITH: All right. And the beat speeds up a little more to the tempo of the piece. This is about 166 beats per minute.

[Faster tempo].

And as the kid starts to play, it might get a little bit crazy, so I might have to clap, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4.

[Faster tempo].

1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4.

>> CECILIA SMITH: Then, depending on the age of the child, I play the beat section and -- have a calling response.

[Music rhythmically playing].

>> CECILIA SMITH: And I might turn the time back on, because it gets a little crazy, because it can. I allow for a little resolution. Here we go.

[Music playing].

>> CECILIA SMITH: And then I slow it down.

Now, the exciting thing about this is that the students all follow me. It doesn't really even matter how old they are, because they go with the excitement and the flow of the music. And with the added adults in the classroom, most of these classrooms, there are a lot of adults, it almost becomes a request every time I come in there. Let's do the Charlie Brown song.

So these are some of my -- some of the things that I do in my classroom, and I hope you've enjoyed it.

Now, here are some of my conclusions. We've played games and not music, but we played games to music. The coordination between games and music is very exciting. It introduces them to things -- introduces items that might not be music-based that will add more visual and tactile for students to connect with. I would say it search for multiple entry points so the students have more ways to connection with materials. Remember, there is no one size fits all method for any concept. I have all kinds of games. These are just a few. And they're engaging, and really ways to share music theory and music concepts to students.

>> MAYA SINGH: Well, we'd like to conclude by saying, again, thank you to VSA International and the Kennedy Center for

providing us with the opportunity to share some of these exciting techniques and strategies with you, and I guess we will pass it back to Sarah for questions and answers. Thank you guys, so much.

>> CECILIA SMITH: Thank you.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Thank you, guys. That was wonderful.

Now, we've actually moved on to the question and answer portion of our webinar. So we received quite a number of questions in the past couple of minutes, so I'm going to start asking them, and they would love to hear from you.

The first comes from Teresa Kirby. She says that I teach ESE pre-K music. My students range from 3 to 5 years old with varying exceptionalities. BPM at 120 seems a bit fast for my students. Do you think that a slower tempo would make it accessible to them?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Well, BPM is march time for most marching bands. The concept for 3 to 5-year-olds, because I'm teaching pre-K and kindergarten class this year, one of the things that I do use is I bring instruments in, and we march and play at the same time, slowing down the beat with the metronome, until they understand how to grasp. You know, and, you know, explaining numbers to children that young makes no sense. It's more of a feeling in terms of, you know, maybe you want to start at 80 beats per minute, without saying, oh, this is 80 beats per minute. I mean, that's not really -- I wouldn't suggest that. But how you use the music and the time as a feeling that they have with egg beaters or sticks, drums are what I use in kindergarten classes, those drums are really, you know, wonderful drums to use for pre-K and kindergarten. I hope that answers your question.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Great. So next, I have a question for you, that is in the throwing the ball exercise, is one student supposed to throw a ball for several times, or do students take turns throwing on 4?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Well, I have seven balls, they get seven chances. I -- they get seven chances, depending on how large the classroom is, the autism class, the autism classes tend to be small classes, 7 to 9, and maybe 12 students, so I have seven balls and it just kind of works out that that works very well, so all the children are engaged with rhythm keeping with rhythm sticks.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Great. Thank you. Our next question, can you speak to or provide an example of an adaptation you've used for students who have sensory issues related the noise levels and/or mixed sounds, like shakers, piano and metronome at the same time?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Well, understand that the metronome and the keyboard rhythms, and those are for pretty -- kids who are on the autism spectrum who have a great amount of intellect. I have encountered a lot of classes where the keyboard has to be turned down very low. The egg shakers, I cannot emphasize more that egg shakers were great for kids who have sensory issues because they're so pleasing to the ear. Tambourines are often too loud. Maracas are often too loud. The other instruments I use are raining sticks, long ones. I use those to close a lot of my programs out because they do sound like rain, and they work very well with kids who have issues with sounds.

>> SARA MITCHELL: I think that's helpful. We have a number of questions that were similar to that.

The next question is, hoping for a couple more game ideas that might coincide with music. Are there any other games that you didn't mention during your webinar that you used frequently?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Yeah, I use scarves. Scarves float around in the air. I also bring in -- it's not a game, but I bring the microphone and small speaker, a pig nose speaker, actually, is the name of the company that makes it.

I have a lot of -- one of the major breakthroughs I have with a lot of kids who are non-verbal is I sing one song over -- every time I come into a class, I do a song called "The Hello Song," and I sing it every week, regardless of what's going on, and I've had a lot of kids be able to sing that have never sung before. And when they do that, I bring in microphones so that they can hear their voices. That's also quite moving. I also use a parachute. There's not a lot of time to explain that. Maybe that could be in another webinar. But the parachute is very exciting. And it's also explained in the article that I have for the VSA newsletter this week. I mean, those are the things that I can think of off the top of my head. I do have some other games as well.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Great. There are a number of suggestions in there that I think are incredibly helpful. Now, we have a couple of people who have raised their hands to ask verbally so I'm going to just unmute their microphones in turn. The first is Nora Bleem.

>> Hello?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Hello.

>> Can you hear me? Yes, ma'am. I have -- I teach K through 5 autistic classes, and generally they are included in with the general population of students, and some of the classes are more easily integrated than others. I'm wondering if you have any suggestions. Many of my students are extremely verbal, and they have fun with what we're doing. Do you have any suggestions for when the sound is just too much, the singing is too much, and

the other autistic kids is vocalizing, then the class becomes loud, which, of course when it's too loud, that makes it hard for other students that are more sensitive to sound. Do you understand what I'm saying? This is part of my main trouble.

>> CECILIA SMITH: For sure. One of the things that we did not talk about -- right now, we talked about the games that I use, but I have a whole repertoire of children's songs, and one of the things that I really emphasize are volume, or dynamics, and so we have a few songs that are sung just above a whisper, where the sounds are -- the volume, or the dynamics are either increased or decreased. And I also like to say that some of our friends are more sensitive to sound, and so we're going to sing as quietly as we can today on particular pieces of music. Like I said, we didn't get to my song repertoire, but I have a large one. It's a song repertoire for children that deals with different dynamics.

And I would think -- I've not heard it in the class that I have this year that has a mixture of disabilities in general ed, but there is also -- I just started calling kids friends, because I hear a lot of teachers say some of our friends are such and such and such and such, or more sensitive to sound than others, or getting a little excited, so we're going to do something very calm right now. Those things do help bring a sense of calm to kids who have these challenges. So hopefully that answers your question a little bit.

>> Thank you.

>> CECILIA SMITH: You're welcome.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Great. Thank you, Nora. I'm going to re-mute your microphone now.

All right. The next person who would like to ask you a question is Katherine McGinty. Katherine, I'm going to unmute your microphone now. Hi, Katherine, are you able to hear us?

>> Hello?

>> SARA MITCHELL: Well, it looks like Katherine is not able to ask her question at the moment. We can always follow up with her afterwards and see if we can get that question in writing.

Just a quick announcement. Cecilia's tips that she's referencing are at our blog on [vsainternationalwordpress.com](http://vsainternational.wordpress.com). I will put that into the chat box and we will also send it up in the follow-up E-mail.

Next question is from Evelyn Moore. She asks: What intrinsically fueled your determination in working with these students?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Wow. Intrinsically. Well, I'm a hard-core musician. I mean, I love music. I've been a hard-core musician since I was 12 years old. And I just believe that music should be more part of what we do every day. And so

being able to share music and think about what excites these particular individuals, and enhance their lives and have fun with it, I mean, it's just become part of my mission. And I really believe that music and musicians should have this type of understanding or mission. Of course, it's not for everyone. I have friends, you know, who often question, why do you work with this population? They can't possibly understand the stuff you play, you know, but it's not even about, you know, what I can play as a jazz musician. It's music in general that I remember when we were putting this together and we were talking about music being universal, and I think that's a little -- I mean, it's often overused because it often refers to people who may not speak English or your language, but we can get together and play, but from a more humanistic perspective of music speaks to people who may have learning differences, or who may operate from, you know, what is quote unquote the general population, music enhances their lives and often makes them more manageable. It has to be a part of the culture like everyone else. I think that that is very -- I love being part of that. And, you know -- and it's fun, you know, I love finding, you know, kids who are glad to see me each week. And it's extremely rewarding for myself, and, you know, anybody who comes in contact with the classes that I offer.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Great. Thank you, Cecilia. Now, Katherine has shared her question with me, and she is interested in learning how long your classes usually are, and how frequently you tend to visit the same students, and how many times you visit them, or are these focused more on stand-alone classes?

>> CECILIA SMITH: For Marquis Studios, Marquis Studios classes are anywhere from 10 to 12 sessions. They're anywhere from 45 to 50 minutes, of course, you know, depending on what the school has. Most of the time they're once a week. Toward the end of the school year sometimes we double up because it gets complicated in terms of the number of requests that we have, and to be able to fit everybody, you know, what they've asked for in terms of numbers of class, but it's usually once a week, 10 to 12 weeks per session. Marquis Studios runs on three stabilize, one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring, and they're 10 to 12-week cycles, cycle 1, 2 and 3.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Great. Thank you. That gives a nice frame of reference for a number of our participants. We are running out of time, so I'm going to ask one or two more. If I did not get to your question, we will share them with Cecilia and Maya and hopefully we will be able to respond to you directly after the webinar.

Cecilia, you mentioned a number of materials, like the koosh ball and paddle, or the large hand swatters. Is there a place that you usually find those materials?

>> CECILIA SMITH: Sure. S & S Worldwide is one. That's a huge catalog, from, you know, visual arts materials to therapeutic materials, games, all kinds of things. That's where I got the koosh ball. Those paddles are exclusively through them. There are some other paddles for koosh balls, and the other site that I use is Oriental -- what is -- Oriental Trading Company, and I also bought the egg shakers through Amazon. And the interesting thing is that there are a lot of third party vendors on Amazon, and the last two that I ordered all came from China, and I thought that was interesting. And they were also fairly inexpensive. So some of the materials belong to me and some are supplied by Marquis Studios. And I also order extra different size koosh balls. I change the koosh balls up, come very small, some very large, depending on what the students have mastered.

And I will also say that if I've been in a class for a long time, especially classes that were initially hard to manage at the beginning of the cycle, I begin to introduce some of these games to almost all of my classes as they progress, and offer what I have to offer.

>> SARA MITCHELL: Great. Thank you.

Now, we are running out of time so we're going to close this up. If you do have any additional questions, please feel free to send them on and we will pass them along to Maya and Cecilia. Great.

I would like to ask all of our webinar participants, if you can remain on the webinar a few moments longer and complete a short evaluation survey that will open once you close the window. We really appreciate your feedback, both for how we can run our webinars better and it's useful feedback for our presenters. Otherwise, thank you so much for joining us. As you can see, here's my contact information. For any questions or comments, please feel free to give me a phone call or shoot me an E-mail.

Otherwise, thank you, and I hope you have a great afternoon.
[Webinar concluded]