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The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts  
Developing University Programs for Arts Students to Learn  
about Working with Students with Disabilities

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>> The webinar will begin shortly. Please remain on the line.

>> The broadcast is now starting. All attendees are in listen-only mode.

>> Hello, everyone, and welcome to Stories from the Field of Arts, Disability, and Education, with Dr. Kimberly McCord and Dr. Sandra Zielinski on this first day of fall. I'm Lisa Damico, your moderator and organizer here with Rachel Neese, our co-coordinator.

Today's webinar is part of a monthly series that comes out of the office of DSA and advocates. This series addresses topics related to arts, disability, and education.

If you would like to view live-stream captioning of the 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 take a moment to ensure you're familiar with the Got To Webinar control panel on the right side of your screen. If you need to leave the webinar early, you can exit out of the program by clicking on the X in the upper right corner. Make sure you have selected telephone or mic and speakers to correspond with how you are connected to the webinar. You have the ability to submit questions using the chat pane. If you would prefer to say the question instead of typing it, you can click on the raise-your-hand icon, and I will unmute your telephone. Your questions will come directly to me and Rachel and at the designated time we'll go through them. And today we have planned for extended question and answer time. So think up those questions as you're listening to Dr. McCord and

Dr. Zielinski sharing their stories, and I will relay them to our presenters at the end.

I want to emphasize that following the presentation I will send out a follow-up email with a link to the recording of today's presentation, a copy of the PowerPoint, a handout of resources our presenters want to share and a copy of the transcript. This means you don't need to worry about frantically taking notes during the presentation.

If you're active in social media, we invite you to connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. You can also tweet a post about today's webinar using #VSAwebinar.

And with that, I will turn it over to our presenters. As I believe you can see they're on the webcam today. So I'm going to switch it over to you, Kim.

>> Hi, I'm Kim McCord.

>> And I'm Sandy Zielinski, hi.

>> And we're from Illinois State University out here in the cornfields in normal Illinois, in Central Illinois. And I'm going to start our PowerPoint, so just let me adjust that right now.

Okay. Okay. We grow pretty big corn out here, as you can see.

(laughter).

>> We thought it was appropriate to be in the field when we were talking about field experiences.

>> I should also tell you we have an assistant here who

sometimes can be a little talkative, my Basset, Beatrix potter, so she's inside, and if you hear tap dancing, that's her little feet. Okay. We just wanted to remind everybody the reason why this topic is so important is that it really is a civil right for all students to have access to quality instruction in the arts. And this includes opportunities to participate and perform in meaningful activities and performances with their typical peers. I think the IDEA law is clear about the right for all children to have a free and appropriate education.

Watching others perform is really not the intent of inclusion. Children should be actively engaged with their typical peers. And our new core arts standards that just came out are written with the assumption that all children will participate fully in arts classes, pre-K through 12. And I know from at least the music area Alice Andero work quite hard on making all the music corp standards accessibility to all students with disabilities.

>> While at Illinois State University, the content areas are now being picked up instead of the college of education. They don't have the time to cover everything that they need to do because of federal mandates. So this has transferred to the content areas. Even though special education courses might be available for undergraduates, there seems to be two concerns. The first concern is that students do not have extra hours in their schedule for more education courses

because of the hours already required by the college of education or hours mandated by state and federal law. Also, if a student is taking a second course then they have those hours plus their content and general hours. A second point is that teaching the arts can be very tricky. The professor must be equipped with an arts background to be able to relay ideas with hands-on best practice.

>> So I think what we really need to instill in arts educators is a real paradigm shift, and focus more on providing our pre-service teachers with more hands-on experience with kids with disabilities. Arts teachers are sometimes so focused on putting the art before the student that the University methods professors really have to make sure that they model current strategies for inclusion. Professors need to be aware and understand IDEA and the responsibilities of teachers for implementing the law.

Professors also need to know how it works best within their discipline. In other words, what are the best ways to include students with disabilities in your particular art discipline. For example, there are many assistive technology devices that enable children with disabilities to participate in music instruments. Essentially, we all just need to become more comfortable with inclusion and interacting with children with various disabilities.

>> So I think the question becomes how do we feel more comfortable and enable us to work with students with

disabilities. Now, this is my learning curve. My story. My awakening.

The beginning of my story: On our first observation day at North Side Learning Center in Chicago, the team visited a classroom of students with severe intellectual disabilities. The teacher and aids were in the middle of an activity that centered around the Alaskan Iditarod. White paper was spread on the hall corridor. And included on this paper was the exact trail that would be run by the sled dog racers. Each student was given a team of huskies and each day upon hearing the race results, the student would move their team to the next location, with the help of paraprofessionals. I stood and I watched. One young man hid in the classroom. Another ran up and down the corridor, really not pausing to even look at what was to the side of him. One girl in a wheelchair couldn't raise her arm because of meds for her condition that day. And the rest was everything in between, which also included two lovers who were more focused on each other.

Now, I'm a veteran teacher of some 30 years. What I did was I turned away and I began to cry. Thinking how in the world can I help anybody here? I have no experience, I have nothing to give. Which saddened me and I just couldn't look.

Now let's fast forward to the end of our visit, some three months later. A production of Grease was given for most students in the school and parents. By jumping in and

helping Michelle, the director special education teacher, I learned I had something to give. I was joyous, my heart was with students as they sang, danced, and even walked. What strength was shown. I cried that day too. But not for what I couldn't do, but for what was done.

I awakened to the possibilities. Now, I came to feel the disabilities we as teachers have are primarily one is fear, as in my story. The fear of not having anything to give. The fear of working with students I simply don't know.

And the second is the fact that I was not trained. And I always let the college of education know my feelings, I am not trained to do this. All of this bundle of inadequacy changed to the following mantra: My mantra: One must dispel the fear, jump in, and get over it.

>> And these are some great pictures of the final production of Grease at the North Side Learning Center in Chicago that sandy assisted with.

>> What -- look at this, marvelous students who know their lines, can sing, and also you see teachers and paraprofessionals on stage with the students.

>> So a recent study, national study at Florida State University was focused on K through 12 music teachers and their perceived comfort with teaching children with disabilities.

Teachers listed four areas that they struggled with when including students with disabilities in music. These four

areas are the same as earlier research that was conducted in 1990. So that tells me that as a profession music teachers are still not prepared to teach children with disabilities.

And I suspect this is probably true in all of the arts.

Music teachers struggle with grading students with disabilities on the same standards as typical students. In this study only 38% of teachers are confident all students are able to even be assessed on the same musical content.

Music teachers struggle particularly with students with vision and hearing loss, intellectual disabilities, and multiple disabilities. And they say that the group that is most difficult for them to include are students with emotional and behavioral disturbance.

>> Students in performing ensembles are expected to perform at a certain level, yet music teachers report these groups of students are unable to meet performance standards. It's interesting to look further at what teachers are successful with in -- with inclusion and the survey found that the teachers that were most comfortable were the teachers with the most experience teaching and those were primarily elementary general music teachers.

The second strongest group were choral middle school teachers and instrumental secondary teachers were the least comfortable with including students with disabilities.

So again, this study is focused on music, but I suspect it's true of all of the arts, particularly the performing

arts. But I'm also guessing that visual art is likely doing a little bit better than us in the performing arts.

>> Now, if we take Kim's example concerning K through 12 music teachers and their perceived discomfort with teaching children with disabilities, and add to this the pressure teachers experience within the teaching and displaying of their art with we might come up with these basic questions: What are our beliefs, our philosophy, that is passed on to our students? Why do we do what we do? Why are we in theater, music, art, dance in what are we instilling in our undergraduate students? Let's take the following as an example: Why do high school theater arts teachers succumb to the win the trophy pressures? We might teach our undergraduate students that a secondary program should be for everybody and not just the gifted; you know, the basketball player, the budding journalist, and the chess master. But do we include students with disabilities? We might teach that we are our art. That the teacher soon will become the program.

Administrators, however, might not know anything about the arts and the benefits an arts program can bring to a student body. One way to be noticed and in fact receive more money to expand programs, is to win contests.

Juried art shows or placement in festivals simply by putting our best foot forward. Therefore, arts teachers have the added pressure of choosing the best students for

contests, programs, exhibits, and fully-staged productions. Only in this label the teacher begin to gain area, state, and edge regional notice or affirmations. A principal pays attention to positive feedback and a winning program. Therefore, a young teacher has the added pressure of using the best to be the best. Do you believe students with disabilities will be included in these programs?

>> One way that I found that is really helpful for arts educators to explore as a way to include students in their classrooms and performing ensembles is through universal design for learning.

And here are two examples. iPads are wonderful ways to reach kids with all kinds of different disabilities, and the photograph at the bottom was actually taken at a Kennedy Center conference and shows print-making in a way that's accessible to a student with -- in a wheelchair.

But UDL is a brilliant way to help teachers plan, implement, and access all students fairly. So some guidelines for using universal design in your lesson planning is to make sure that you have equitable use, flexibility, simple and intuitive ways to access the curriculum. Perceptible information. A tolerance for error. Low physical effort. And size and space for approach and use.

Essentially, universal design revolves around these three principles that we provide multiple means of representation. So that there are a variety of ways that

students can acquire information.

Multiple means of action and expression, we offer a variety of ways for students to demonstrate that they understand our content.

And finally, multiple means of engagement are different ways that we motivate and capture and sustain the students' attention.

Because we know that engaged students are students that are excited about learning.

So it really just boils down to teachers being flexible. And that's an important word to remember. If you'd like to find out more about universal design, go to [cast.org](http://cast.org), that website, and there is everything you ever wanted to know about UDL. There this is an example of universal design here with a student that I worked with who was not able to use her hands, but was pretty good with a head stick and accessing an orff bass xylophone.

Sandy mentioned we both worked together in Chicago public schools at North Side Learning Center, which is a school for students with intellectual disabilities, a high school, and all of the teachers there are special educators.

But the really exciting thing about this school is it has an arts focus, and the special educators are hired with expertise in one or more of the arts. So we got to know the teachers there and work with them closely, but also got to see some of the exciting ways that they adapted instruction

in the arts for students with disabilities.

And we're going to stick -- share some success stories that both sandy and I have had, starting with Sandy's story about Michelle, the special educator theater teacher.

>> Meet Michelle Copkie. There she is. She is talking to the audience prior to the performance of Grease. She's a special educator with one theater class as background preparation for directing large musicals. Liz Meckee also helps Michelle. She's a special educator and dance teacher. Also, Jay, an area choreographer and other paraprofessionals work together to produce a pretty sensational musical every year. Now, the bottom line is that anyone in the junior class who wants to be in the school musical can participate. As Kim said, these students have intellectual and physical disabilities. Now, the team's job is to figure out how to take a full musical, cut it down to 60 to 75 minutes, tell the story and fit the production to this group of students in this junior class.

In the fall semester the musical is chosen, script is prepared with mostly musical numbers which will contain dance and spoken dialogue. The film of Grease is shown and every student is cast in a role. Every student will participate in the production whether as an actor, a stage manager, set or props person. Everybody has a job to do in front of the lights or back stage.

Around October rehearsals begin. Michelle uses two

off-site rehearsal spaces. One is in the community center and the second is in a theater. Students leave school after lunch and return before school lets out. The team spends the next six months rehearsing. Look at those faces! You have to love them. You have to.

So some of Michelle's techniques that I observed was that it is key, key to structure and repetition through the whole process. That is part of the key to good behavior and memory. Break into larger sections down to -- break the larger sections, excuse me, down to sizable chunks or else chaos reigns. Upon entering the rehearsal space, each student had a place to sit. If a student can't read, Michelle or another paraprofessional will shadow the actor. Now, that means that Michelle would stand behind the actor. Michelle would say the lines and then the actor would repeat the lines. So through repetition the actor learns the part. Students are constantly kept involved. Yes, there are screeches. Yes, at times a student will not want to participate. But each incident is handled with grace and ease. Repetition, repetition, repetition.

That's all I have to say with that. Michelle, Liz, Jay, and paraprofessionals are in front leading the dancing and singing. If a performer is just trying out their voice, Michelle will stand by the student as the performer is barely audible, all encouragement is handled in a truthful manner. Students are taught to keep their eyes on Michelle. So that

later in the production and during the performance, distracted won't hinder their concentration and by distracted I mean somebody taking a snapshot. A rendition of the music and words are played throughout the rehearsal and the production. Now, at these times if a student has a strong voice, then the volume is brought down and we hear the student sing. And this happened several times with students that you just stop and want to go up on stage and give everybody a hug. Show time, sets are built, costumed are gathered, and students await buses to take them to northeastern University's main theater. Everybody has a job to do.

And when the program begins, Michelle, Liz, and Jay are in front of the audience on their knees directing groups of excited students through the production. Paraprofessionals and some teachers are dressed in costumes to participate on stage as characters in the play and to help performers through dance moves. What Michelle wanted from me was theater exercises to help focus students, help students concentrate and trust what was going on around them. That is what I shared with Michelle. We worked partners in the learning process. And she gave me so much more than what I could have given her.

>> It was really a great learning experience for both Sandy and I to spend that six months up in Chicago working with students. Another program that I'd like to share as a

success story that I haven't personally had involvement with but something that has really inspired me to think broader than I think what most of us are doing in the United States with inclusion is a program in Helsinki called the Resonaari music school. We all heard about how Finland is such a leader in education right now, and it's certainly true in special music education. At Resonaari, the school is for all ages of people primarily with intellectual disabilities. These people come to Resonaari because they want to learn instruments and they want to sing. What's interesting is that the music that they learn and perform is chosen by the people that go there. And so the music is primarily rock, sometimes heavy metal, and Finnish folk music. So it's based on the interest of the students rather than what the teachers feel the students should learn. Which I think is really fascinating.

Students at Resonaari, they learn to play electric guitar, electric bass, keyboards, and drum sets, and they put on an annual concert at a major hall in Helsinki, and they invited big stars in the Finnish popular music world that come and perform with them.

The exciting thing for me was that Resonaari believes in preparing musicians to be professional musicians who will gig as professional musicians in Helsinki. For example, Siri, this drummer here, is a rock drummer and she's playing with a variety of groups in Helsinki. She's that good. This

really struck me because as a special music educator, I'm trying to prepare my pre-service teachers so hard to just get them to include kids with disabilities in their music classes and ensembles, and I want them to be able to go out and teach and think about giving students with disabilities a quality experience.

But at Resonaari they're so far past that because they're preparing students to be professional musicians.

People want to learn instruments, and they want to be active music makers, and the instruments should be meaningful. Let's visit another success story from our trip up in Chicago and Sandy will talk about our experience at another school in Chicago.

>> The team went to Clara Barton Elementary School in Chicago. Now, Clara Barton is a public school that contains three self-contained special education classrooms. Just like the teachers at North Side Learning Center, these teachers wanted theater exercises to help students focus, concentrate, and move.

So the team worked with special education teachers, Lawrence, Benetta Perkins, and Victoria Rawlins. I introduced the trust circle, the banana rap song for warmups, build the machine for students to work together and transformations for student creativity. Granted, the teachers did not explore all of these exercises while we were there, but they had them to use at their disposal at any time.

Now, what was special with this, as you can see by this slide, the three classes embarked upon a venture that would bring everyone together in a final program for typical peers in grades one through three. Kim and I introduced the classes to *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. Each class did something different with the story.

The older students worked with the puppets of Max and the wild things. Two different sets of puppets were used, one set was the traditional Sendak characters and the second set used the wilder wild things for students who would not need the traditional characters to tell the story. Another class practiced being just wild things. Another made scenery and masks, and another cast characters to deliver lines.

We know that puppet and mask work is great for kids with autism or communication disorders. It is a more accessible way to be on stage as an actor when you can hide behind a puppet and let the narrator do the talking.

In rehearsals prior to the showing everything was put together. At the last moment Victoria Rawlins wanted to add a song that everybody knew at the end of the program. So we added the song that was repeated twice because the crowd went wild, no pun intended, with their response. What a program that brought three classes of special education students together where everyone was successful and experienced a wild audience response, it made all feel proud of the work that

was done.

One of our proudest moments for Kim and myself was seeing our little first grader with multiple disabilities and you see him right there, before the show started he tore his mask and a mask that he had made and he was so despondent and didn't want to go on the stage. But finally, a paraprofessional worked with him and he was on the stage holding his torn mask but he was there as a wild thing.

(laughter).

A great time was had by all.

(laughter).

>> In 2006 and 2008 I had a life-changing experience, I was part of a MacArthur grant at the Henry Viscard iSchool in Long Island as a teaching artist residencies. I visited the school primarily to work with students on playing jazz on instruments, the school is a public school for children with severe physical and medical disabilities. Many students arrive at school by ambulance and are able to attend school because of the medical, physical, and occupational therapy and highly trained teachers and aides that support that provide the support that the students there need.

I was really challenged as somebody who is taught students with disabilities for many years, I was really challenged to find ways for these very enthusiastic students to improvise using instruments. I had never really worked with students who had such severe physical disabilities.

And I really struggled with how to best adapt for children with the many types of disabilities and abilities. I taught students without arms to play symbols. Orff instruments and electronic drum pads using a head stick, or holding mallets with their toes.

I learned to listen to the desires of the students and work with the occupational therapists to find creative ways to access instruments. For example, one little girl with cerebral palsy and a communication disorder eventually taught me she could play an orff by flicking the end of the bar with her fingers rather than trying to play with mallets. Perhaps my biggest challenge and probably my biggest success was Chelsea.

This is Chelsea here, who is on a ventilator and is unable to speak and has no movement except very weak movement in one finger. But her best movement is actually in her right eyebrow. The school owned an electronic instrument I was familiar with, the sound beam. It is an instrument that sends ultraviolet waves from a sensor. You can see the sensor, the red object above Chelsea's head there. It sends these ultraviolet waves out that trigger an electronic MIDI sound, synthesized instrument sound that I had preprogrammed.

The sound beam can be adjusted to sense large movements such as wheelchair moving across a stage or a really tiny movements, like Chelsea's eyebrow. Working with the

occupational therapist we taught Chelsea to use her eyebrow to make music.

Chelsea got so good she was eventually able to play a full octave with accuracy with her eyebrow. This is great for her as a musician, she could really make music, but it also opened up an avenue for her to communicate. Because she could use her eyebrow so well, she was then able to use new technology to type on a computer and she was able to start emailing.

Her occupational therapist got her first email where Chelsea told her that she loved her and thanked her. And it was really exciting that she was able to communicate.

And here is Chelsea playing the sound beam with her eyebrow, you can see her eyebrow up a little bit there.

But what an outcome of the whole thing was that in 2011, Chelsea received the counselor for teacher education -- or the council -- I'm getting the name wrong, but the professional organization for special educators student award for her expertise in using music technology. Her mother and entourage of nurses traveled to Nashville with her to receive the award.

She also demonstrated to special educators attending my session on the sound beam her skill in playing the instrument. Chelsea's mother is a gospel singer in New York and music is very important to Chelsea's family. With the new model of the sound beam that now allows for sampling sounds, Chelsea

is now able to sing with her mother's voice by using her eyebrow. That is really powerful. So her mother has sung into the sound beam machine on an ah or oo sound and were able to program that and then Chelsea uses her eyebrow to sing with her mother's voice. This is a picture of Chelsea with her mother at the CEC conference, the only way for Chelsea to be successful as a musician was through the use of assistive technologies like the sound beam. There are iPad apps that now respond to movement like the sound beam, but for Chelsea, the sound beam allowed her to sing.

We're going to speed up here a little bit. I want to tell you about assistive technology that can also be a great help for arts educators and it can be high tech like the sound beam or low tech like these adaptive devices for artist residencies to paint and draw with. Assistive technology need to be provided without cost to the the family, this is part of the law, when it is needed for the child to access the curriculum. The law says cost should not be a factor, but in reality is probably is. That's one reason why special educators are excited about iPads, tablets, and hand-held electronic devices.

There are so many apps available that I could probably find an appropriate one for every child I work with at the Viscardi School for a low cost. The key is the arts educator needs to get the AT device written into the child's IEP in order for it to be provided. For example, there are standing

positioning devices like this one you see here that would enable a student to be in a standing position like the rest of a choir, or even in a play. The important thing is to make sure that children and adults have quality access to the arts.

For example, this man is playing a red Montessori bell in this photo. Maybe that's the instrument he chose, but I suspect he didn't, since this is an instrument more commonly found in preschools. Someone else in the photo gets to play the guitar. Now, there's all sorts of adaptive devices for guitars that would enable this man to also play basic Gilford car chords.

>> Likewise, the theater teacher shouldn't relegate the student with a disability to pulling the curtains if he prefers being on stage. That isn't being an actor.

A music student in a marching band shouldn't be turned into an engine for pulling a bass drum on the field. That isn't being a musician.

A singer in a wheelchair shouldn't have to sit off stage because he can't stand on risers. There are multiple ways to include the singer without making him sit at the end of the riser away from the choir. And that really -- that picture shows the distance between the two.

And really hurts the student.

>> So one current important way that arts educators and special educators can work together that is really being emphasized now at our University by our department of special

education is co-teaching. And co-teaching is really an exciting way for arts educators who maybe don't know everything about teaching students with disabilities and they're not sure how to collaborate, but one way is to ask the special educator to come in and co-teach with them in the arts classroom. And I do this with a course that I teach at ISU called music for the exceptional child, where I pair two specialists, one a special education pre-service teacher and one a music education major.

So co-teaching is more than collaboration or team teaching. It promotes seamless inclusion and reduces the stigma of being different. All students receive improved instruction, that includes gifted, average ability, students at risk for failure, and students with disabilities.

Students have the benefit of two teachers to help them understand the curriculum. One with expertise in the content area and one with expertise in special education.

And another exciting thing is that when there's two teachers in the room you can share the success of a great lesson and sometimes the ones that aren't so great. And you can get feedback from each other about how a lesson might have crashed. So there's different models, one teach, one observe. One teach, one support. Station teaching where the special educator, for example, might be reading a story book and then the students move to a different station in a classroom. This works particularly well in elementary

level. Parallel teaching with both teachers that equal groups of the class work on different things. And then ultimately team teaching which is where both teachers share instructional activities equally.

Co-teaching really helps arts educators learn how to include children with disabilities and how to teach using universal design, assistive technology and other strategy that's special educators are specially trained in.

It helps us to become better teachers.

>> One way we can help our undergraduate students feel more involved is at universities need to reach out to the community and include populations of individuals with disabilities. For example, it is very difficult for parents to take their children with some types of disabilities to concerts and theater productions. Kids who as I've said before, sheik loudly when they are excited are generally not welcome. It would be easy enough to have concerts and complaints that are designed for children with disabilities.

>> Arts teachers are also consider making a checklist that we'll make available for you to download that they put in the special educators' mailbox at the beginning of the school year. I call it Dear Special Educator. It's a way to introduce yourself and what you teach and then ask the special educator to check if the there might be difficulty for a particular student being successful with something expected in the arts class. For example, in music,

specifically choral music, I might list that students need to stand on risers for a performance, hold music folders while singing, pronounce words with good diction. If the special educator suspects there might be difficulty with one or more on the list, they might talk and get ideas of how to better plan for inclusive classroom.

>> So talking about placements for our pre-service educators, some places we can go are?

>> Well, if you would look around your area, for example, there might be creative drama classes. Or you might be able to start a creative drama class on your Saturday. Boys and Girls Club have a variety of activities and children that might need your help and your undergraduate students' help. Parks programs, a YMCA, YWCA, community centers in your area, to check those out. Special needs programs in your area, for example, in our area we have the penguin project that has been going on for about four years. Now, this is a picture of one of our associates that was working, remember I had mentioned zip zap zop? This is one of our paraprofessionals who was teaching zip zap zop to the class.

Now, if look at the students to the left of him, you see them smiling. And it is a competitive game, but boy, did they get into it. And in fact, every day they wanted this activity.

>> You're going to put up the directions for how to do zip zap zop too.

>> You better believe it, it's a good exercise.

>> So we just kind of like to end with just kind of a thought. I know at least in Illinois our pre-service teachers to be certified to be music teachers and theater educators are being evaluated how well they can adapt their curriculum for students with disabilities.

>> Now, if we think about it are our teachers being tested, those who have been in the field five, ten, 20 years? I think the answer is no. Maybe part of the solution would be that the teacher should be evaluated. Performance-based testing on working with students with disabilities. Wouldn't that be something? (laughter).

>> And really we kind of hate to throw this out there, but we think it might nudge us a little bit if part of our evaluation was hinged on how inclusive our classes are at the University. So that's our talk. This is one of our inclusive concerts for kids with disabilities at ISU and you see a student here with autism feeling the vibrations on a cello. So we would be interested in your questions or comments at this point.

>> All right. Well, thank you, Kim and Sandra, I'm going to turn your webcam back on so people will feel like they're sitting there in your living room with you asking you questions. And actually I've already had -- I think you're going to have to accept that question -- I've already had a few questions come in. Tom would like to know what if the

school does not have the kind of money you need to include this technology for students with disabilities?

>> Um, I'm assuming Tom is referring to the public school. And I think I mentioned what needs to happen to get assistive technology is to have it written into the child's IEP. And once it is written into the child's IEP, legally it has to be provided. And the law actually says cost is not to be a factor. But as I mentioned, we kind of know that that's in reality it is a factor. But in every state there's an assistive technology center usually located in the capital of your state, and your special educator can help you contact them. And there are devices there that you can get -- you can borrow for a couple weeks to try out.

So for example, if you have a student that has a hard time sitting in a chair for an hour rehearsal, there's different devices that help them to be able to wiggle in their chair and it helps them to be more comfortable and be able to focus better. So you can borrow four or five of these devices and try them out and then ask the special educator to write it into the IEP that you need this certain kind of cushion and if it gets written in there, then it gets provided.

But what's important to remember is that all of these devices don't belong to your program, they go with the child wherever -- whatever school they're in until they don't need the device anymore. So it really goes with the child.

>> If we're talking about a University, it really is state-mandated, really federal-mandated that we are able to provide our undergraduates with an education in how to work with students with disabilities. As I mentioned before, many of our colleges of education simply don't have the time to do that. So that has shifted to the content area. And I think this is a very important area that you need to get instruction in, because a theater teacher could get a theater job, let's say in a Chicago suburb, and they have a class where they are working with students with disabilities. And so you don't want that to be their first experience. You want them to have experiences prior to that so they can walk into the classroom confident and ready to go.

>> Great. Thank you.

We've got another question that's come in. What are techniques or strategies for working with children who are nonverbal to allow them to express their emotions?

>> Well, that's where the arts are so great.

>> Yeah, right.

>> Because we're all about expression, aren't we?

>> Uh-huh, uh-huh.

>> And there is a lot of assistive devices that can help kids to communicate. Verbally there's the DynaVox that a lot of kids with communication disabilities use, but we found in working with students with communication disabilities that sometimes a smile is just all we need to know that they're

really enjoying what we're doing in class.

>> There really are so many activities, whether it's through dance, you know, or listening to music or putting one's hands-on something that is vibrating and they feel that. We will include in some of our handouts some of the exercises that could be done. And it can be done as simply as with a balloon, you know, a bouncing of a balloon and you see the joy in a student's face. Or moving with scarfs, we've done that before also.

It becomes something outside of themselves in which they love to even try to do. And you see that on their face. You might not hear anything, but you see that through how their body reacts in an exercise.

>> Talk to your special educator too, this is important for you to collaborate with the special educator, and they can really tell you about how to communicate best with the student with communication disabilities.

>> We've got another question from Gail. What do you think needs to happen so that University pre-service teachers are learning more about disability and how to meaningfully include and teach students with disabilities, given the ADA and increased attention to disability, it surprises me that teachers are not better prepared.

>> Yeah, we were trying to address that with just the -- the difficulty in how to make sure this happens. In some schools special education courses are the way that arts

educators learn about working with kids with disabilities. And then in my case, in music, then they're not sure how that works with, you know, here I teach band, but I don't know how to adapt these instruments for a student who has a physical disability.

So then at my University I teach a course called music for the exceptional child where it's in the content area and we're actually experiencing it in the content area, but not all schools have the luxury of doing that. So it really is difficult. And I think lots of us are trying to find ways to help tool people with becoming more comfortable, but I think the first thing that you can do that is just so easy is to just start holding concerts and plays that are accessible to kids and have your pre-service teachers out there helping the students engage with the art.

>> Now, in theater, unlike Kim, we don't have a class particularly that deals with the subject matter that you're asking about. The college of education always took care of a segment of that. But what I found in -- when we went to Chicago as a team that that's not enough. I think teachers -- again, this is the fear factor, teachers have to assume that responsibility. We have what is known as a capstone course, and I have put some of what I experienced in that course, and it's up to the teacher. The teacher has to take that step or else nobody else is going to do it. You know, you might go to your administrators, you might go to

your chair or your director and say we need this, but you are the one that knows that it's necessary. So you have to be the activist. You have to put it into your curriculum. And I think you have to find the places that you can take your students to observe and then participate. And that's a tall order, I know that. I know we're all busy. But if it is important and if it really is in the federal mandate that we must have this, then we have to find a way not to be fearful, to jump in and start simply start the process.

>> I think this is really a civil rights issue. And I think in the arts we're one of the last areas in education that is lagging behind. And sort of being okay with not including kids with disabilities and it really disturbs me, and I hope that we'll start seeing some change. It's really -- it's not right.

>> Thank you for your thoughts on that question. It was a good one. We have another question from Tom. In the picture of the band where you had all of the children were on risers and there was a child in a wheelchair off to the side, how you would you include that child? On the risers, you just passed it, yeah.

>> Does the choir need to be on risers, first of all? So he could get over closer to them. Or could we slide the choir over closer to him? Could the first row, could he be over on the floor with the first row. There is just been all different kinds of ways that people have done this. The

risers can be larger so it could accommodate him being up higher, but on a platform that would accommodate his wheelchair. There's just -- it just seems like there's a lot of different ways that that could have been achieved.

>> You know, even looking at the picture, it seems so plausible that that child could be on the first row. But I think it's the non-knowing of the director, not thinking, not knowing what the child might be going through. And so it -- it becomes a time of educating those who see -- they don't see a harm here, they're not at a point where they can recognize what they're doing. And I think that sometimes happens, you know, our teachers. To me it's a -- you know, bring the child over if goodness sakes. Or have the choir go to the child. But didn't happen here. So we have to ask the why didn't it happen? Why is this instructor kind of blind to the setup? It's a disturbing -- to me it's a very disturbing picture.

>> Uh-huh.

>> I've got one last question for you two. This comes from Martina. What is your advice for teachers who are employed in charter or private schools that do not have the special needs support that public schools typically have?

>> Well, under my understanding, charter schools are public schools, at least the charter schools that I know about in Chicago. And they would -- students with disabilities in charter schools should either be able to access special

education services at the public school that's closest to the charter school and they should be going there already for services if they have an IEP, or there should be somebody coming to that school. So if the child has an IEP and they're in a charter school, they're being serviced by somebody. So you'd need to find out who's doing that and see if you can collaborate together with them.

>> And that really comes down to advocacy, doesn't it, Kim?

>> Yeah.

>> You have to have an advocate. The parent cannot be shy about their child. And advocating for the child, knowing that services should be provided. And there should be an advocate in the school for this child. And I think that's the greatest -- because many parents don't know. I've run into parents who don't know that they have rights. And so advocacy is so important in the situation that you're talking about.

>> Thank you. And with that, I am going to close your PowerPoint and bring it back to mine. We will wrap this up.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you. All right. Well, thank you, everyone for joining us today. I would like to ask you to remain on the webinar for a few minutes longer after we -- after I close this out. We have a short evaluation survey that will open once you close the window, and we really do value your

answers, Rachel and I look at those and give feedback to the presenters and we also use those to help shape our future webinars. So I really appreciate if you could take just a second to answer those questions. And with that thank you to our presenters, Kim and Sandra, that was wonderful. And thank you to our participants. And hopefully -- we'll be releasing next season's webinar schedule at the end of this month, beginning of October, so keep an eye on your inboxes because we have an exciting line up of webinars planned for you. So thank you and if you have any questions or comments please feel free to reach out to me, Lisa Damico, [LVDamico@Kennedy-center.org](mailto:LVDamico@Kennedy-center.org).

Thank you. Good-bye, everyone.

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