

## Mary Brake Inclusive Programs

# BELONGING AND PARTICIPATING THROUGH MUSICAL COMMUNITY

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*Students, who are marginalised in some way, usually have some social difficulties that sabotage their efforts of connection. This session demonstrates provision and facilitation of those connections while also actively developing self-esteem. Special moments are created for each individual as the understanding is fostered that each of us is worth while, each of us is successful, yet each of us is one part of a larger group. Success in that group setting is ensured, as are 'safe' opportunities for self-expression and enjoyment.*

**CREATE A SPECIAL SPACE FOR EACH STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE.**

**INVITE EACH INDIVIDUAL INTO THE COMMUNITY  
DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY DO HAVE A PLACE AND  
THAT THEY ARE ESTEEMED**

*A space is an allocated and prescribed opportunity or amount of time during which the existence of a particular individual is acknowledged, validated and celebrated.*

In creating a special space for each student, we must ask the question: 'what does this student have to contribute that I can frame as a meaningful and important self-expression?' 'What is this student presenting that I can validate, simplify and celebrate?'

This session explores the potentials of three different 'special space opportunities'. They are

1. A space to **move**
2. A space to **play** a non-tuned percussion instrument
3. A space to make a **vocal sound**

Especially composed lyrics and music by Susie Davies-Splitter and Phil Splitter provide a framework for activities. The songs then provide the structure for activities, thereby facilitating

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repetition and predictability for students. The music is engaging for students through its funky and creative energy.

## ➤ A space to move

Music is an action word, if we can hear it, if we are in its proximity, we are physically responding to it. It is not possible to sit back and let 'music' happen separate to our being. There is no such thing as 'music' –but there is 'musicking'! (Small 1998). Let's put the phenomena of musicking to good use!

### **Activity/song: 'Get into the Groove'.**

This activity invites students to move. Most of the students whom we are working with can contribute something to this activity –it might be as minute as a blink, but there will be something! Through making a contribution to the group activity the individual becomes a member of the community, an initiator of ideas and a leader!

## ➤ A space to play a non-tuned percussion instrument

“We are focusing on what a person can do and how can that be developed rather than looking at how a person is restricted and classifying them accordingly. The basis of this music therapy is to look at the potential...and develop that potential to improvise until the smallest musical idea develops into a song or a symphony” (Aldridge, 1996, p.42).

### **Activity/song: 'On with the Show'**

The song is designed to ensure safety:

- The song itself provides a firm structure –it is consistent and predictable.
- Each space for contribution is clearly defined.
- The structure of the song engenders feelings of safety.
- If a risk is taken, the student knows what the prescribed time is –it won't last forever!

The structure provided through the song is a most important framework for the activity. The song structure offers predictability and safety while the song itself also engages students through its beat. Ensure that instruments are exciting and motivating. Group awareness, turn-taking, self-expression, initiation of ideas, engagement, fun, and developing a positive self-esteem are all integral components of this activity. It is not possible to perform this incorrectly. Whatever the student offers through their playing of their chosen instrument is accepted as a valid contribution and is respected and given appropriate attention.

It is hoped that students realise that they are successful in a school setting and that what they have to offer is valued and respected.

## ➤ A space to make a vocal sound

If a particular student has only one sound that they can produce, then it must be given a meaningful framework for performance. The student's sound must be amplified and celebrated. A framework needs to be devised to give meaning to the sound, to motivate the student to produce it and to ensure that the student can be heard. If we have but one sound then it is extremely important that our only sound is validated and applauded!

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## Activity/song: 'What is it'

This song has been written specifically to provide a framework enabling students to contribute sounds which may be familiar and used by them. For example, many students who do not actually verbalise *may* make the sound of their family pet! Narrowing the 'world of choices' to a specific area enables a student to more readily make a decision independent of others. A framework that prompts 'make a sound' may yield no results, but a framework that focuses attention to a specific area is more likely to enable students to respond. Find out about your students who are non-verbal. -Do they have any animals at home? If they don't have a pet, perhaps they help dad collect the eggs and are familiar with chook sounds, or perhaps a kookaburra sits on their fence and laughs. Do some homework so that you are able to prompt if necessary. -The song itself gives many playful prompts of animal sounds through the introduction and interludes at the conclusion of each persons turn.

'What is it' also features

- **Student's name:** In an endeavour to engage the student and alert them to the fact that their turn is coming, this song enables the student's name to be emphasised. A gap is left in the lyrics for you to fill in the student's name.
- **Processing time:** prior notice is given to students of their turn -facilitating processing time: - 'Let's ask 'Sam' what sound to do... come on 'Sam', we'll listen to you.' -This enables students' preparation for their big moment!
- **Sounds with intent:** Apparent random sounds may be shaped into sounds that are *consciously* prepared and made with intent within this framework.
- **Alternative communication:** if the child is using alternative communication (e.g. signs, pictures, and high tech devices) they should also *show* the animal sound that they are vocalising. This enables the group to accurately reinforce their vocal sound if it is not readily identifiable. For example, if the student makes an indistinct sound, but signs 'dog', then dog is reinforced.

## MEMBERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND FUN WITHIN THE MUSICAL COMMUNITY

## Activity/song: 'Clouds'

'Clouds' has especially been created for use with a colourful parachute. The parachute offers similar *visible* inclusion to that of the rainbow ring. The lyrics encourage playful movements morphing the parachute into clouds that

- rumble
- zip
- float
- billow
- flutter

The irresistible conclusion of the song is that the parachute becomes an umbrella that everyone hides under seeking protection from the clouds as they rain!

The arts can attract people who otherwise might not be attracted to participate in community activities, help the process of development of community and increase individuals' personal development (Goodlad,R., Hamilton,C. & Taylor,P. 2002).

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Activity/song: 'The rainbow rave'

## ***Just hold on there! –and you are visibly a member of a community!***

The rainbow ring has the potential to be an extremely powerful aid to inclusion. Added to its impact is its visual effect -individuals not only *feel* part of the group, but they can *see* that they are! The visual effect is a great reinforcer for the emotional! Consider students who are challenged to participate due to blindness. They only need to hold on to the ring to learn a dance proficiently with the remainder of the class. They feel as the ring moves around, up or down, and speed and direction. "The arts have increasingly been regarded as an important vehicle for promoting inclusion and enhancing the levels and quality of participation of vulnerable groups, including disabled people" (Allan, citing Goodlad, Hamilton & Taylor, 2005, p.31).

The usual amount of noncontingent positive experiences that a person with a disability enjoys in their life is significantly less than those of their peer group that do not have a disability (Willis & La Vigna, 1996, p.12).

Activity/song: 'Bubble Trouble'

Fun activities can sometimes be difficult to facilitate for individuals with disabilities but whilst 'fun' is being had, critical developments are taking place in the areas of:

- fine and gross motor skills,
- language,
- co-ordination and
- self-expression.

Activity/song: 'My reflection'

Due to the physical constraints of many students with disabilities, they simply do not sit in front of a mirror doing their hair, and nor do they frequently 'check themselves out' or admire themselves in the mirror. I suspect that parents in the busy routine of the necessities of the day caring for dependant children rarely sit their child in front of a mirror either. *My Reflection* is for all of those students who hardly know what they look like. It is a song encouraging self-recognition and self-esteem.

Activity/song: 'You're the crazy conductor'

## ***From passive acceptance to active leadership and decision making!***

Many individuals challenged by disability have numerous aspects of their lives catered for by others. This can encourage and maintain a passive acceptance of decisions that others make on their behalf. It is empowering for such individuals to be 'the boss' –to experience the power and strength of being 'in control'.

***Above all, the individual is discovering that despite the challenges and possible limitations of a disability, life can still be exciting, fun and worthwhile!***

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All activities, music and lyrics are from an especially designed program:

## ‘Your Stage’

- **Your Stage** is an especially designed program for inclusion
- **Your Stage** provides opportunities for each individual to shine in their special moment
- **Your Stage** is based in music –providing energy, structure, and repetition
- **Your Stage** is consumer friendly, and does not require the facilitator to have musical expertise.

Activity design and text  
by Mary Brake

Funky music by Susie Davies-Splitter  
& Phil Splitter

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- Complete program manual and CD
- Staff/Centre Professional development

*Mary Brake –Inclusive Programs*

Ph. 0427 944483 Email: [mary.brake@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:mary.brake@education.tas.gov.au)