

MUSIC FESTIVAL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Consortium of Disabilities Organization

ONLINE PROJECT

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OUR AIM

As we move into blended and online learning in education in Trinidad and Tobago, our aim this year was to design an interactive online experience specific to students with special needs.

OBJECTIVE

The CODO 2020 music festival for persons with disabilities main objectives were to allow Students to:

- Engage in a virtual music learning experience, supported by instructional scaffolding to help students adapt to an online experience.
- Improve fine motor skills, communication and coordination through online participatory activities.
- Experience being a part of a large ensemble in an online performance of This Melody Sweet, by calypsonian, Baron.
- See video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXUgO1HsJ9Y&ab_channel=CaitlynKamminga

INTRODUCTION

The Consortium of Disability Organization (CODO) Music Festival for Persons with Disabilities (MFPD) has been in existence since 2011. Collaborating with the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT); the Academy for the Performing Arts (APA) and the University of the West Indies (UWI), this project continues to serve as career development and real-world learning to the students at these institutions, referred to in this document as student teaching artists (STAs).

2020 marks the tenth anniversary of this festival. However, what was intended to be an in-person celebration of this achievement, occurred during the ongoing global pandemic. As the country went into lockdown and in-person teaching was suspended, we moved quickly into an online delivery of the program.

Students with disabilities are already faced with many learning challenges in a physical setting, which meant that the immediate transition to online learning was incredibly challenging. Despite this, we had a huge desire to continue connecting with our special needs schools, to engage with our students and ensure that no child should be left behind. Despite the many challenges STAs and their students faced, this online project pushed us into the twenty-first century of learning and magnified the creativity and flexibility of performing artists sorely needed in our school system.

In a normal year, STAs begin visiting their assigned schools in the month of March, generally after Carnival, to give students ample time to prepare for our annual music festival, most often held in June. The program was halted after the 1st visit to schools following the announcement of the lockdown, instructed by Prime Minister The Honorable Dr. Keith Rowley. Our team moved quickly to design an online project, investing time in choosing the best online platforms to use in order to set our particular population of students up for success. And the program was fully in operation starting in June of 2020.

ONLINE PROJECT

The 2020 CODO Music Festival for Persons with Disabilities culminated this year in a video showcasing the works of participating schools. Students joined forces in a collective performance of *This Melody Sweet*, by Trinidadian calypsonian, Baron.

As Trinidad transitioned to online learning during the pandemic, this project served as a rewarding experience for students in schools under the CODO umbrella, as well as timely professional development for participating Student Teaching Artists.



Criteria for STAs

- 1) Ten 10 Lesson Plans
- 2) Five printable music or game activities
- 3) A minimum of three 3 video or audio recordings

The project commenced with a mandatory online training session, initiated and directed by our student teaching artist supervisor and board-certified music therapist, Ms. Jean Raabe. STAs were given resources to aid in designing their online classes and guided on the use of several online platforms and recording tools for a variety of ways to be creative. All STAs were required to submit several resources such as lesson plans before teaching online. See criteria for STAs above.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

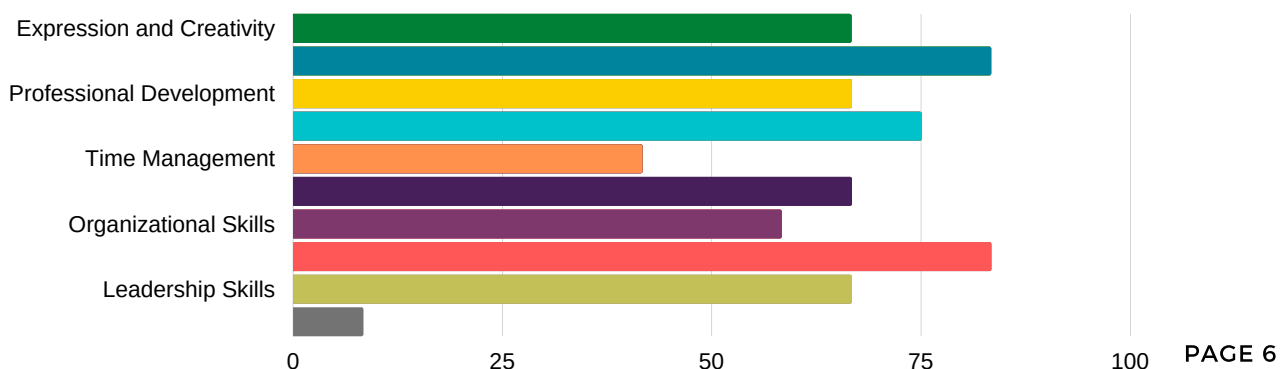
BENEFITS OF ONLINE TEACHING

Music is an important part of any child's education. Experiences in the arts play a valuable role in helping a person to participate fully in the community and in society as a whole. For students with disabilities, engaging with music can be an enriching part of their life, as well an excellent teaching tool for other subject areas.

As such, the administrative team has now test piloted a variety of online platforms, and developed a new curriculum, as well as taking time to research best practices, which going forward can be used effectively for our population of students with special needs.

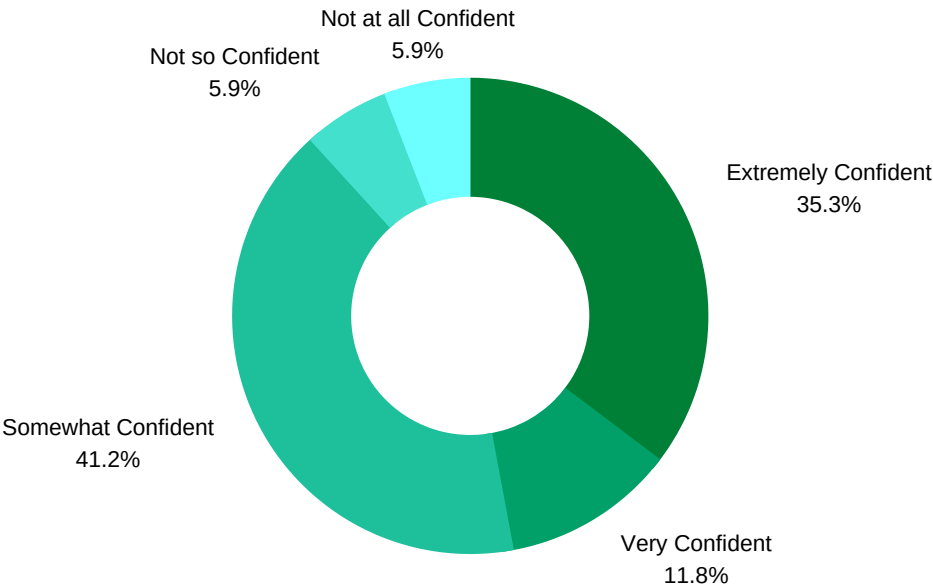
Some of our creative projects with our students include performing simple rhythm exercises together using household items for percussion instruments such as tapping two wooden spoons or on a biscuit tin. They were creative as they made their own instruments from recycled items, a practice deeply rooted in Trinidadian history. They engaged in clapping patterns, singing together, and also dancing, which are all beneficial ways to relax and find joy through music.

Adapting to online teaching required further demands on our STAs, but also creating wonderful learning experiences for them. When asked what they gained most from teaching online, 83.33% indicated the they gained knowledge in the use of technology and working as a team. 75% indicated that they learned patience, while 66.67% felt they had gained leadership skills. Other teaching skills gained included communication skills, use of expression and creativity as well as an increase of growth in their professional development.



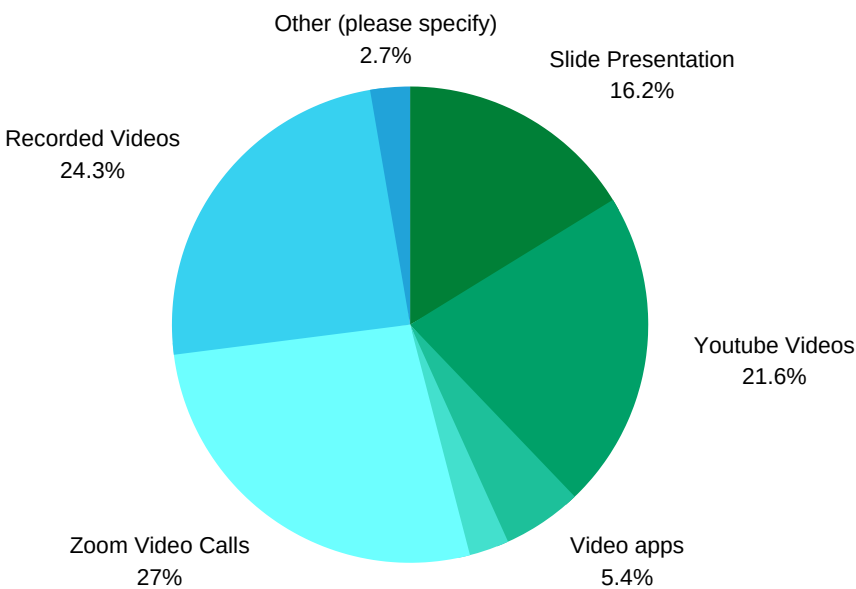
Confidence in Teaching Online

When Student Teaching Artists were asked how confident they were after the training session with their supervisor, the majority indicated that they gained confidence which is displayed on the graph below.



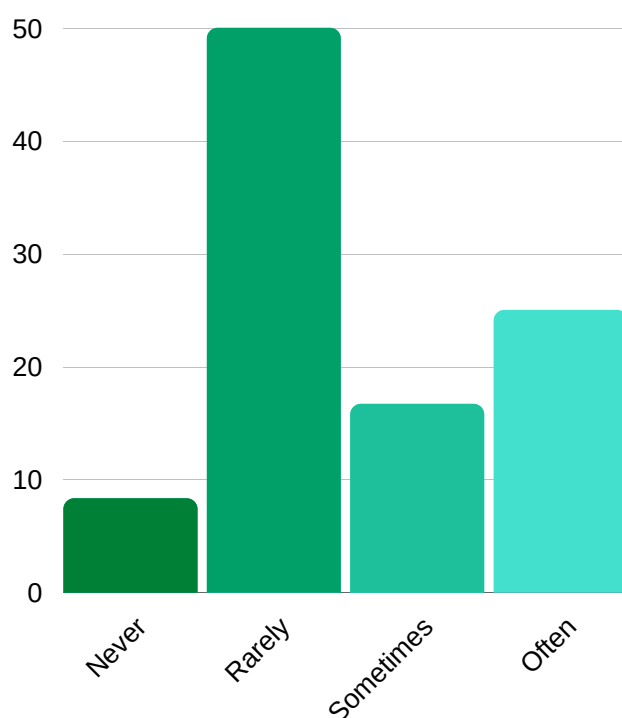
Tools Beneficial to Online Teaching

In the training provided by the STA supervisor, STAs were introduced to a variety of ways to deliver their lessons in a fun and creative way while meeting their objectives. Below a graph is shown, highlighting the main tools used by STAs to effectively meet the needs of their students.



On a scale of 1 - 10, 6.1 was the average figure STAs identified in effectively meeting the needs of their students while teaching online. It is important to note, however, that prior to the pandemic, STAs had rarely used any of the resources highlighted above. This experience has been a particularly valuable learning process for all involved. And the data collected highlights tremendous growth in our STAs professional development, all of which Trinidad and Tobago will gain from, as these young men and women move into the employment sector.

Question asked: How often have you used the tools selected above prior to covid 19?



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Our online project naturally stemmed from different instructional strategies as we aimed to meet the needs of a wide range of students. Because the learning needs of the students were so diverse and varied with age and ability, our STA supervisor made a list of appropriate websites for STAs to access a variety of teaching tools and ideas.

The design of the program was student centered and student driven while giving space for student teaching artists to be creative and explore different strategies. Zoom was our main platform, allowing us to interact face to face with the students.

Other platforms include, google drive, powerpoint, youtube, canva and flipgrid.

Flipgrid was particularly useful in engaging with students, allowing them to transition to online learning as it was very user friendly and easy to navigate.

With a few tutorial sessions led by STAs, students were able to upload a simple introductory video. This was an inclusive experience, a way to say "Hello" and Engage with their friends who they were used to seeing everyday. With assistance from parents and carers, this platform was Also used for students to record their final video for submission.

ONLINE PLATFORMS



2020

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

With such a sudden transition to online learning, some schools experienced many challenges which prevented them from participating fully in our online project.

Some restrictions included accessibility to devices as well as internet Connectivity issues. This is something the team is examining in order to find ways to help schools navigate these challenges, in order to include more schools in the future.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Immortelle Children's Centre
Seniors & Juniors
Academy for Special Needs
LIFE Centre
Wharton Patrick

The schools who were fortunate to participate all had a great experience and the students were very eager to attend their weekly sessions. Although submitting the videos proved challenging to some, they all worked very hard and looked forward to the final compilation.



REASONS FOR STAS PARTICIPATION

Feedback from our Student Teaching Artists

- "I want to work with special needs children as a career."
- "My love for teaching music to the students and seeing them sing and dance at the end of it all, knowing that all the hard work paid off."
- "My main reason for joining was to gain the experience of working with students who are physically/mentally challenged as one day I aspire to become a Music Therapist"
- "My main reason for participating in this program, was to open my mind and character. During this program I learnt how to be comfortable with being silly and making goofy faces etc, only to see our students' smiling faces!"
- "To teach the Children and gain teaching experience"
- "I love working with student regardless of the disadvantages also it helped me to get creative in the way I taught my students"
- "My main reason for participating in the MFPD program was to get the opportunity to work with special needs children while teaching, which is something I would like to do in the future along with Music therapy"
- "The joy of providing a music service to the schools of PWDs and continued delivery practice."
- "I enjoy it and it's what we need for the next generation to progress."
- "I love being able to put a smile on someone else's face"
- "I am mainly here for the teaching experience. When I started last I did it mainly to see what it was like and from then I can truly say that I have gained a wealth of knowledge and a few tricks to use when working with students of different levels of understanding. and different means of engagement."
- "I love being around students/persons with disabilities because of their authenticity and genuine nature, it is so fulfilling to witness achievement of goals and objectives accomplished by the students despite their disabilities and the MFPD program supplies the opportunity for me to grow and learn as I aspire to become a music therapist. I am entirely grateful!"

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Feedback from our Student Teaching Artists

- "Memorable- Interacting with students Passing on of Information and inconsistent commitment to online classes"
- "The most memorable moment was my last session the other two coaches and I did a recording for the students for the students the process was fun and the end result was great and the students really liked it"
- "Taking lead and teaching our students, the "I know a chicken" song all by myself!!! It was really fun and entertaining"
- "Most memorable moments were finding new ways to teach class in a fast and effective way. I made multiple videos and sent to my students."
- "My most memorable moment was when one of the students sang the lyrics to the calypso before we taught them it. Additionally, seeing the smiling faces of the students when they enjoyed singing, dancing and playing musical instruments throughout the sessions brought a lot of joy "
- "Most memorable : The excitement of the participants and their continuous requests for their favourite songs and activities; also, making instruments from items at home."
- "Most memorable moment was being able to share one the students Birthday via zoom"
- "A memorable moment for me was seeing the genuine excitement and participation from the students at Wharton Patrick who highly appreciate the continuation of the festival."
- "Introducing new activities and getting positive/effective reactions from students and supervisors"

CHALLENGING MOMENTS

Feedback from our Student Teaching Artists

- "The most challenging moment for me was learning that my school would not be participating. Additionally, I really struggled with being able to deliver with all of the problems that Covid19 presented me with."
- "A challenging moment was trying to get the students excited during class because as they were home, it was harder to get some of them out of their comfort zone and fully participate."
- "Another challenging moment was getting students to actually do the exercises/homework I have requested. For example, the students who submitted videos took a while to submit them. Also getting all students to show up for class deemed a big challenging as well."
- "Overall, connecting with the school and students that I worked with was extremely difficult."
- "My most challenging moments were not being able to see all the students participate in the sessions."
- "Making the lesson plan interactive by talking to the camera directly as if students were there. One of the students asked if I live in the bush, I use outdoors for the lush greenery."

SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS

WE ACHIEVED OUR GOAL, BUT DID WE DO IT EFFICIENTLY?

Feedback from our Student Teaching Artists

- "Everything was fine on your part. Just for the students and parents to be more enthusiastic about the virtual classes."
- "Ensure that participating schools are connected with novices and mentors to ensure the success of the programme."
- "I loved that all schools had to prepare one song but i would have liked the opportunity to still do another song with my school. Although the music festival song was a great choice, the tempo was a bit fast for my students and because most of my students are non verbal or wouldn't sing, it was a bit challenging to get them to interact with the song."
- "I think for the most part CODO did a great job planning the switch to the online festival. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the teams !! :)"
- "Good communication throughout the experience and you learned and adjusted as you go, thank you."
- "In an online environment, probably delivering sponsor branded products like instruments, tshirts to the participants would assist mental wellness in this pandemic. This year's pilot online programme was well done despite the new elements and tech kinks. Congrats to the CODO team and thanks to all sponsors!"
- "I think it may help if STA's share new activities that they found successful in teaching because it may help other STA's In engaging their own students. We along with the schools should try to encourage parents a bit more to attend sessions with the students. These sessions help the students/ participants to express themselves In a different way through music and generally makes them happy."
- "I thought it was great I didn't seem to have any issues I am content with how it went."
- "Appointment more sessions for STA because 10 sessions for 30 mins is very limited in getting the lesson that needs to be taught to the students effectively."
- "I would suggest that this program continues to be kept going, mainly because I enjoy working with our students and the school. It brings joy and excitement to me, seeing their faces light up when their music instructors come online!!! I can't help myself but to have a big silly grin on my face! If this program continues to go on; I can't wait to play a few parang pieces for my students!! Let's end the year on an awesome note! No pun intended"

THANK YOU!



A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR FIRST CITIZENS BANK.

On behalf of our students, parents, principals,
Student Teaching Artists, Coordinators,
Organizers and everyone who was touched by
this program.



First Citizens