Music Therapy-opening Doors for Children

Center for Persons With Disabilities

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cpd_blog

Recommended Citation
MUSIC THERAPY-OPENING DOORS FOR CHILDREN

April 19, 2012 by cpehrson

If you walk down the halls at the CPD at just the right time on just the right day, you will hear some delightful sounds coming out of the Lil' Aggies Preschool classroom. You'll be tempted to stop and peek inside to see what the noise is all about. What you'll find are some very happy little kids dancing, singing, and playing instruments.

It's Music Therapy day at Up to 3.

This semester, two USU Music Therapy undergraduate students have come once a week for 30 minutes to give the little children a great experience with all types of musical instruments. Drums, bells, ukuleles, Glockenspiel, shakers, a xylophone, all have found their way into the classroom and into the tiny hands of children who are usually resistant to trying new things.

One of the biggest challenges was to make the activities age and developmentally appropriate to meet the needs of the children.

The USU students learned about wait time—waiting long enough for the children to respond—giving limited options—only one or two—instead of ten that might overwhelm them, encouraging language—waiting for them to use their words to ask for something.

The children learned many things, also: becoming comfortable interacting with unfamiliar adults; using their words to communicate their wants or needs; such as requesting an instrument; practicing gross and fine motor skills—hitting the drum, ringing the bells, touching the guitar strings; following directions—shake the maracas, stop, wait your turn; and learning to express themselves through music and movement. The music was also a great avenue for teaching concepts such as opposites—loud and soft, high or low; fast or slow.

"Our primary goal this semester was to help the children with socialization through direction following, sharing of instruments, and participation in the different activities through positive experiences with music," shares Michele Folster, one of the Music Therapy students.

Involving movement with the children turned out to be the key to keeping them interested as well as involved. "The children have danced with one another, two of the girls even holding hands while dancing," Michele said.
It was fun for the therapists to see that some of the children were more naturally drawn to music than some of their peers; the child that danced around the room, or hit the drum to the music, or used the shakers with little encouragement from the adults.

One image that will forever stay with the therapists is watching one little girl correctly hold a push button guitar with both her hands, pushing the buttons with her left hand like she was really playing a guitar, and bending her knees to dance along as the music played.

Music has power to enrich the lives of all people, but especially those with disabilities.

Aliandra Hansen, another of the Music Therapy students, has seen the power of music first hand as she worked with her little brother, who is on the autism spectrum. At age 3, he was not speaking very much. Through the next few years, as Aliandra spent time with him at the piano, playing and singing his favorite songs, she watched him starting to sing along, with his words becoming more and more clear. Soon he began to vocalize more in general and his vocabulary grew quickly. Over time, he became very good at communicating. Aliandra says that, "The music was a catalyst. It unlocked a door and helped him make a connection regarding communication that he hadn't seemed to make before."

That is the power of music, enriching lives and opening new doors.