The Role of Music Therapy in the State of Alabama’s Early Intervention Curriculum

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Abstract

• Music therapy in early intervention settings has become a vital tool to many pre-kindergarten schools around the country; however, only two programs exist in the state of Alabama.

• The purpose of this study is to examine how music therapy can be used to support Alabama’s early intervention curriculum.

• The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children includes the following areas: social-emotional skills, communication skills, academic skills, health and daily living skills, and physical development.

• The music therapy research literature will be linked to each of these areas and specific examples of music therapy interventions will be provided.
Presentation Outline

I. What is Music Therapy?
II. History of Special Education & Early Intervention
III. Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children
IV. Music Therapy Literature
V. How Music Therapy Can Enhance the Early Intervention Experience
VI. Beneficial Music CD’s
VII. Alabama Early Intervention locations
VIII. Conclusion
What is Music Therapy?

“Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.”

(www.musictherapy.org)
## Differences Between Music Therapists and Music Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music Educator</th>
<th>Music Therapist</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work toward improving general music skills for students</td>
<td>Work toward specific non-musical goals for each student/client</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trained to work with typical students in a classroom setting</td>
<td>Trained to work with exceptional students in one-on-one and group settings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed a music education degree with a one semester internship split between elementary and middle/high school music classes</td>
<td>Completed a Music Therapy degree with a 6 month clinical internship (1200 clinical training hours)</td>
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**Must pass Praxis**

**Must pass Board Certification Exam**

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Music Education

• All classroom teachers in the state of Alabama are required to take a music class to learn how to incorporate music into the classroom*

• However, the teachers at Sprayberry Education Center (Tuscaloosa County School System) request music therapy services provided by upper level music therapy students who are completing their clinical training hours.

• The Sprayberry teachers often request the MT students bring CDs of their songs so they can use them in the classroom, too.

Number of American Music Therapy Members around the United States

Top Four Membership States:
- New York - 327
- California - 230
- Texas - 226
- Ohio - 205
Quick History on Special Education

• The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  • Federal special education law which ensures that individuals ages birth-21 will receive an education that allows the student his/her best chance at educational success by following the principles of IDEA

• The six principles of IDEA include:
  • Zero reject
  • Nondiscriminatory evaluation
  • Appropriate education
  • Least restrictive environment (LRE)
  • Procedural due process
  • Parent and student participation


Early Intervention Services

- Alabama’s Early Intervention System (AEIS) is a part of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
  - For a child to be eligible for early intervention services in the state of Alabama, a child (birth-3 years) must have a developmental delay or a diagnosed disability.

- A developmental delay is diagnosed when the child has a delay of 25% or greater in at least one of these areas:
  - Communication
  - Physical
  - Adaptive
  - Cognitive
  - Social/Emotional

Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children

The State of Alabama’s Preschool Children’s Programs Must Work On:

• Academic Skills
• Communication
• Social-Emotional Skills
• Health and Daily Living Skills
• Physical Development
Academic Skills

• Goals set by the state:
  • Children will develop **curiosity, initiative, self-direction, and persistence**
  • Children will develop **positive attitudes, habits, and learning styles**
  • Children will develop **listening comprehension skills**
  • Children will develop **age appropriate writing skills**
  • Children will develop **alphabet knowledge**

Communication Skills

• Goals set by the state:
  • Children will develop an understanding of **new vocabulary**
    • Name a variety of pictures/objects and/or actions in the natural environment
  • Children will develop **speaking skills** for the purpose of communication
    • Express wants and needs
    • Respond to questions
    • Engage in conversations with peers and adults

Social-Emotional Skills

- Goals set by the state:
  - Children will develop **confidence** and **positive self-awareness**
  - Children will increase the capacity for **self-control**
  - Children will develop **interpersonal** and **social skills** for relating with other people
  - Children will develop a **respect for differences** in people and an appreciation of their role as being a member of the family, classroom, and the community

Health and Daily Living Skills

• Goals set by the State:
  • Children will acquire knowledge of **personal care routines**
  • Children will acquire knowledge of **healthy nutritional practices**
  • Children will acquire knowledge of **safety practices**

Physical Development

• Goals set by the state:
  • Children will develop **gross motor skills**
    • Walking
    • Sitting
    • Rolling
  • Children will develop **fine motor skills**
    • Eye-hand coordination

Music Therapy Literature

• Standley and Hughes (1996) analyzed the use of music therapy in early intervention settings and found that **multiple areas and goals can be addressed** through music therapy interventions.

• Hughes, McKenzie, Robbins, and Robb (1990) found that **integrating classes** with exceptional and typical children can benefit all children involved. The typical children were **more willing to accept** and help the exceptional children when they can have structured interaction. Integration can also be beneficial to the exceptional, by giving them a way to achieve peer acceptance in the classroom.

• Kern, Wakeford, and Aldridge (2007) used the “**piggybacking method**,” changing the lyrics of common children’s songs to those which would be beneficial to the task at hand, to help a child achieve **independence in daily self-care tasks**.


Intervention Example #1

- The music therapist will use paddle drum to allow the child to accompany an upbeat pre-recorded song. The song will involve the lyrics “beat your drum” and “stop.” The music therapist will be in front of the student also holding a paddle drum and following the instructions of the song. The child will be able to listen to the song lyrics and mimic the actions of the therapist to achieve the desired rhythm. If the child is able to control their impulses to beat their drum, they will be reinforced by verbally by the therapist. If a child is unable to control their impulses, the teacher will provide hand over hand guidance allowing the child a chance for success.

*Each scenario and subsequent analysis is the original idea of the author or a modified intervention from other professionals.*
Example #1 Analysis

- Holding the paddle drum requires **fine motor skills**
- Beating the drum requires **hand-eye coordination**
- Following the lyrics of the song requires **listening comprehension**
- Mimicking the actions of the music therapist requires **purposeful response and gross motor skills**

*Reinforcing the appropriate action is a very important part of the learning process. If a child is unable to complete a task at the same level of his/her peers, the therapist must make subtle changes to their expectations of said child, allowing for a greater chance of success.*
Intervention Example #2

A music therapist will use a song where the child gets to decide the color of the item involved in the song.

“If I had a horse, a horse, a horse,
I’d like to have a _________horse,
I’d like to have a _________horse,
whose name was (insert child name)!”

Depending upon the ability of the child, they may say the color, show the American Sign Language (ASL) sign for the color, or point to the color. The music therapist will then repeat the name of the chosen color and then they will show the children the ASL sign for the color. They will ask the class to mimic them and show them the appropriate sign. During the song, the music therapist will sign the selected color and then include the name of the child at the end of the song as positive reinforcement.
Example #2 Analysis

• Choosing the color requires the ability to understand vocabulary and express their thoughts
• Saying the color requires the ability to express wants and needs through speech
• Making the ASL sign for the appropriate color requires the knowledge of ASL vocabulary and fine motor skills
• The ability to point at the preferred color requires gross motor control as well as the ability to express wants and needs non-verbally
• *If the task of naming and signing the color is not a challenge for the children, the therapist may ask a question such as “what does brown start with?” (emphasizing the B sound)
Intervention Example #3

A music therapist will use the “piggybacking” method by taking the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” and adding it to the lyrics:

“I wash my hands yes I do, I wash my hands and you can too. I get the soap and put my hands together. I see the bubbles, their light as a feather. I rinse my hands and pat them dry. Then I turn off the water and wave bye-bye.”

During the session, the music therapist will sing the song and act out the motions of the lyrics. The children will then mimic the singing and the actions of the music therapist. This song will be reviewed daily by the staff while the children are washing their hands.
• Following the lyrics of the song requires **listening comprehension**
• Mimicking the actions of the music therapist requires **purposeful response and gross motor control**
• The **daily repetition** of the original song helps the child **develop habits** which will carry over into the home environment
• The ultimate goal of this intervention is that the child will acquire knowledge of **personal care routines**

Beneficial Uses of Music CD’s in the Early Intervention Setting

• While the use of music as a teaching tool in classrooms can be beneficial due to the academic and social connotations, one must be aware that sometimes the songs are too complex and too fast for the exceptional students to grasp the material or the message.

• Popular artists used by University of Alabama music therapy students in early intervention and elementary settings
  - Hap Palmar
  - Greg & Steve
  - Laurie Berkner

“Bean Bag Boogie I” - Greg & Steve

Early Intervention Locations in Alabama

- *Rise School*- Tuscaloosa, Alabama

- *Hand in Hand Children’s Program*- Birmingham, Alabama

- As well as 2 Board Certified music therapists who have independent contracts with families and school systems
In an early intervention setting, music therapy has endless possibilities. The fact that music therapy has been proven to address multiple goals in minimal activities, is evidence that the use of music in this setting can benefit the children’s future as well as the program’s cost effectiveness. More research in this field would be extremely beneficial to future music therapists in early intervention settings. Useful research topics could include: the use of ASL when teaching color songs, the use of music with elementary puzzle completion, and the effect of music on the gross motor skills of children ages two and below.


• Administrative Code: Alabama State Board of Education, State Department of Education/ State of Alabama, State Department of Education. § 290-3-3-.02(1) (1982).


• www.musictherapy.org

