



# American Music Therapy Association, Inc.

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## **MUSIC THERAPY AND MUSIC EDUCATION**

### **Meeting the Needs of Children with Disabilities**

#### ***What is Music Therapy?***

Music Therapy is the clinical and evidenced-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. Music therapy is a well-established allied health profession similar to occupational therapy and physical therapy. It consists of using music therapeutically to address physical, psychological, cognitive and/or social functioning. Because music therapy is a powerful and non-threatening medium, unique outcomes are possible. In music therapy, each individual is provided support and encouragement in the acquisition of new skills and abilities. Because music touches each person in so many different ways, participation in music therapy offers opportunities for learning, creativity and expression that may be significantly different from more traditional educational/therapeutic approaches.

#### ***What is the Rationale for Providing Music Therapy Services in the School Setting?***

According to Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act) subsequently renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with special education needs are entitled to the same educational opportunities as their typically developing peers. The concept of providing education in the “least restrictive environment” is defined to mean that ALL students, regardless of disability, should have full access to the general education curriculum. As a result, students with more severe learning problems are now included in general education classrooms not only to meet academic needs but also to increase socialization opportunities.

Music therapists typically use music activities to foster the development of motor, communication, cognitive, and social abilities in students with special education needs. Music therapy can be used to address many of the goals targeted in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) such as the learning of academic concepts, increasing cooperation and appropriate social behavior, providing avenues for communication, increasing self-esteem and self confidence, improving motoric responses and agility, and encouraging exploration and examination of issues that impact the life of the student. By creating, singing, moving, and listening to music, a wide range of cognitive, emotional and physical abilities are brought into focus. Under the direction of a qualified music therapist, the new skills learned in the music therapy setting can be transferred to other areas of the student’s life.

#### ***What is the IEP and Why is it Important for the Music Educator to be Involved in this Process?***

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the legal document that results from the initial assessment and periodic reviews of students receiving special education services. Among other things, the IEP identifies the educational goals and suggested teaching strategies for each student along with

what related services are required to meet those goals. Since placement in a music classroom may be a part of the student's IEP, the music educator needs to understand how the process works and what services may be available to the student in order to ensure a successful participation. A music therapist can assist the music educator in defining and developing the pre-requisite musical, behavioral, and social skills necessary for the student to be successful in the music classroom.

### ***Are Music Therapists Employed in Public/Private Schools?***

Nationwide, hundreds of credentialed music therapists are currently employed by local school districts and private educational centers. Music therapy is recognized as a related service that can be an integral component in helping the student receiving special education services reach his or her IEP goals. In many school districts, music therapists also offer support services for music educators in the form of direct service, consultation, or inservice training.

### ***Specifically, How Can a Music Therapist be of Assistance to a Music Educator?***

Published research studies indicate that music educators often report lacking adequate training regarding the educational needs of students with disabilities and limited knowledge of effective teaching strategies to meet those needs. Music therapists can assist the music educator in the following ways:

#### **Consultant**

Music therapists can assist the music educator in designing and implementing appropriate music education experiences for students with disabilities.

#### **Direct Service**

*In the regular music education classroom:*

- Music therapists may accompany the student to assess the skills needed for successful participation and to assist with development of those skills.

*In the self-contained classroom:*

- The music therapist may work alone or in concert with a music educator who has been assigned to teach a self-contained class.

*Outside the classroom:*

- In some cases, it may be necessary to provide individualized services outside the classroom in order to assist the student with to develop the skills needed to successfully participate in the classroom setting.

#### **Inservice Education**

Music educators frequently call upon music therapists to provide support in the development of techniques and strategies that will lead to successful inclusion. Specifically, music therapists can help the music educator with the development of augmentative devices, adaptation of equipment and instruments, simplification of musical arrangements, and various teaching strategies.

### ***Why Music Therapy?***

Music therapy, practiced by highly skilled and specially trained professionals, can profoundly affect the lives of the individuals participating in the therapy.

*M. is 7 years old. She was diagnosed at birth with Tuberous Sclerosis, a neurological disorder that can result in autistic-like behavior and significant developmental delays. M. has a very limited use of language. While she appears to understand and receive language, she rarely talks or verbally communicates with others. However, M. loves to sing and play instruments. M. can recall and sing, with remarkably accurate pitch and rhythm, almost any song she hears. At times, the lyrics of the songs she sings can be clearly understood. Through music therapy, M. is learning to interact with her therapist, her family, and her surroundings. She has learned to follow directions, make requests, and organize herself through singing. After three years of work, M. is now responding to spoken language and is using words and music to communicate with the world around her. She has much more to learn, but music and music therapy will be a part of her life for a long time to come.*

### ***Who is Qualified as a Music Therapist?***

Graduates of colleges or universities from more than 70 approved music therapy programs are eligible to take a national examination administered by the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT), an independent, non-profit certifying agency fully accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. After successful completion of the CBMT examination, graduates are issued the credential necessary for professional practice, Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC). In addition to the MT-BC credential, other recognized professional designations are Registered Music Therapists (RMT), Certified Music Therapists (CMT), and Advanced Certified Music Therapist (ACMT) listed with the National Music Therapy Registry. Any individual who does not have proper training and credentials is not qualified to provide music therapy services.

### ***Where do Music Therapists Work?***

Besides schools and other special education programs, music therapists offer services to individuals and groups from early intervention to the elderly in a variety of settings. These settings include, but are not limited to, mental health clinics, rehabilitation facilities, outpatient clinics, wellness programs, schools, nursing homes, senior centers, private practice, group homes, day care treatment centers, medical and psychiatric hospitals, substance abuse programs, hospice and bereavement programs, and correctional and forensic facilities. Some music therapists are self-employed and may be hired on a contractual basis to provide assessment, consultation, or treatment services for children and adults.

### ***What is AMTA?***

The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) represents over 5,000 music therapists, corporate members, and related associations worldwide. AMTA's roots date back to organizations founded in 1950 and 1971. Those two organizations merged in 1998 to ensure the progressive development of the therapeutic use of music in rehabilitation, special education, and medical and community settings. AMTA is committed to the advancement of education, training, professional standards, and research in support of the music therapy profession. The mission of the organization is to advance public knowledge of music therapy benefits and increase access to quality music therapy

services. Currently, AMTA establishes criteria for the education and clinical training of music therapists. Professional members of AMTA adhere to a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice in their delivery of music therapy services.

***Related Resources Available from AMTA:***

- Music in Special Education, Written by Mary S. Adamek and Alice-Ann Darrow  
*Explains essential features of special education that are important for interdisciplinary communication and effective teaching. Part I introduces the reader to historical and instructional foundations of music in special education. Major topics and developments in the field of special education, important terminology, and curricular issues are covered in Part I. Part II introduces the characteristics of students with specific disabilities, the educational effects of these disabilities, appropriate adaptations, as well as music education and music therapy approaches used with students who have these disabilities. ISBN #1-884914-15-2*
- Models of Music Therapy Intervention in School Settings, Edited by Brian L. Wilson  
*This book addresses both theoretical issues and practical applications of music therapy in educational settings. 17 chapters written by a variety of authors, each dealing with a different setting or issue. A valuable resource for demonstrating the efficacy of music therapy to school administrators and officials. ISBN #1-884914-04-7*

***How Can You Find a Music Therapist or Get More Information?***

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