Research question: How does music therapy help children with learning disabilities to improve academically?

Keywords and search terms: music therapy; music; musicology; children; elementary students; learning disabilities; special needs; learning; achievement; grades; student growth; motivation in education; children with disabilities; music therapy for children

Citation style: APA

Search Strategy: I am going to search the education, psychology and sociology databases as well as a couple of the general information databases and a newspaper collection. I will search Google to find a website and Youtube to locate a video.

The full list of databases: Academic Search Premier, Education Abstracts, ERIC, Professional Development Collection, MASTERFile Premier, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection, SocINDEX Full Text, Newspaper Source Plus


I located this book in the Dugan Library catalog by searching for Music Therapy. This was the only book in the library that was about my topic. The book is published by a reputable publisher known for high quality publications. Although it is a bit dated, over 40 years old, I believe it can offer an historical perspective of my topic. This book covers the way that music was used to help students function better in educational settings. It summarizes the way that music therapists and teachers work with students individually and in small groups to offer this therapy.


I found this newspaper article with the same EBSCO search for several other resources in my bibliography. I limited my results to newspapers only so that I could find that particular type of publication. The reporter writing the article listed the therapist who is the focus of the article along with her credentials and experience. It goes into detail about her educational background. This article provides a good summary about the day to day experiences of a music therapist in a school setting. The therapist describes what she does, the types of students she works with, the variety of schools that she visits during her work week.
Judd, Ryan. (2014, January 9). Special education resources: 5 reasons why music is so powerful for kids with special needs. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNiQ2Ku-gVE

I located this video on Youtube searching with the combination of “music therapy” and “disabled children”. It is a video demonstration from a music therapist in different therapy situations. I visited the main website for the therapist in the video and there was information about his educational background and the different types of jobs he has held in the field. I think that this will be a helpful source because of the demonstrations of sessions where you could hear what was happening and seeing the reactions from the students. After looking at a variety of sources that tell about how music therapy works it is helpful to see how these sessions play out in real time. He featured a variety of students with various types of disabilities so that viewers can see multiple types of therapy sessions.


I located this resource by doing a Google search using my search terms: music therapy and children with disabilities. The website looks like it is a collection of content from a wide variety of writers, a type of blog with some editorial control to make sure that the information is formatted and displayed according to their standards. They accept advertising, but it appears to be limited to relevant content. The author for this article cites multiple sources from journals, magazines, websites and even includes a YouTube video. I would use this resource because it appears to be reliable, citing legitimate sources and the information appears factual. The author is trying to communicate the value of music therapy for a specific population, children who stutter. The information about music and how it impacts people of all types and abilities would be valuable background information as I think about the different types of disabilities that exist and how music therapy can assist them.


I found this article in the EBSCO databases along with several of the other items on my bibliography. I identified this one with the same keyword search, but limiting by material type to ‘magazine.’ This publication is written for teachers and is information specific to education. I think it is a good source because it is a quick summary of how music therapy has been used and can be used in classrooms. It references specific government programs that are related to education for children with disabilities that I can follow up on later. The therapist that is profiled works in Kentucky, so it helpful that the government program referenced is federal, so it should also apply in Kansas.

I found this journal article searching the mix of databases using the terms: “music therapy” and “children” and “disabilities”. This article is published in a peer-reviewed journal that is closely related to my topic. Based on the title and the abstract it seemed like it would be a good fit. When I accessed the full text article, I scanned the article to see if was what I thought it would be. In the case studies they described the different disabilities, what type of music therapy was used and the initial results from their experiment. They were able to conclude that it was beneficial for the students and recommended that music therapy be included in curriculum for children with disabilities. The results of this study show strong support for my research question.


I located this book using WorldCat Discovery. I used the search terms: “music therapy” and children and education. I limited the date ranges to books written since 2010 to have something more current than the other book I located in Dugan Library. After reading the table of contents, I was able to get a good idea about the book. I think it will be helpful since one of my key ideas centers around education and the entire book is about the use of music therapy in schools. The book talks about the uses of music therapy in school for all children, not just the ones that have disabilities. It will be helpful to know other uses for music therapy in education settings. There are also several chapters about use of music therapy with children with disabilities.


I found this journal article in the same search with the other articles in the EBSCO databases. It is a peer-reviewed article, so I know it’s been through an editing and revision process to verify the quality of the information. This article has a different approach than the other information I’ve located because it is more focused on the response of the students rather than the experience and practices of the music therapist. Because the article comes from a music therapy journal, I know that is the main focus. The authors detailed work they had done to develop specific therapy programs for individual students. They described the consultation process and then tailored the therapy to each individual child and evaluated the results. It seems a valuable way to approach the therapy to have a bigger, long-lasting impact on each student, but also a very labor intensive process that may not always be practical if a therapist has many students.