FOCUSING THROUGH MUSIC

A graduate project submitted in fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Masters of Arts in Special Education

Mild/Moderate Disabilities

By

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ABSTRACT

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Students who receive special education services deal with many issues that hinder their learning. Several potential solutions have been introduced into the special education classrooms. This study was conducted to see if incorporating background music into a special education classroom would improve the students’ behavior and work habits. Behavior was compared in a classroom with music versus behavior in the classroom without music. Music seemed to have a positive effect on the students and their study skills. Participants for this study included 1 Resource (RSP) class that consisted of 11 students, 1 female student and 10 male students, with labels ranging from specific learning disabilities to attention deficit disorders. Although this study was done in one classroom only, the findings were clear; when background music was played in the classroom it had a calming effect on the students’ behavior allowing them to concentrate more on their studies. After the study was completed, a Website was created for parents explaining to them the benefits of music in the classroom and how we the special education department at the Academy of Scientific Explorations has helped students succeed.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Students who received special education classroom services often find it difficult to stay focused during a class lectures or while working on class activities resulting in their misbehavior. It is not that students want to do poorly in school or want to draw negative attention to themselves. Most students with disabilities misbehave out of frustration (Buck, 1992). Lack of focus allows students to become sidetracked. When students are not focused, they tend be less productive. Often times, students stare off into space, get up, walk around, or disrupt other students. When activities and tasks are too difficult for them, this can results in acting out and aggressive behavior (Jackson & Joyce, 2003). This behavior is what gets students with special needs in trouble with their teachers and the school. In addition, when students exhibit this unfocused, disruptive behavior, teachers, administrators, and other staff members have to discipline them to help address the behavior. Such disciplinary actions include, detentions, referrals to the principal, phone calls home, and behavior plans. What can be done to help the growing issue of students with special needs and their lack of focus in the special education classroom? Instead of disciplining students with special needs who exhibit the distracted and disruptive behavior that is a result of lack of focus, this study focuses on giving students with special needs the tools to help them stay focused. By simply adding a positive behavior support plan (BSP) to an individual education program (IEP), faculty members can add the use of music in the classroom as a tool to stay focused.

Playing music in the classroom allows students to concentrate by blocking out other distractions and allowing them to focus on their work. Ziv, Granot, Hai, Dassa, and Haimov (2007) conducted a study was done where 28 participants were observed both with and
without stimulative, familiar background music. Results showed both a significant increase in positive social behaviors and a significant decrease in negative behaviors related to agitation when music was played. Various ways to allow students the use of music in the classroom can be developed. With modern technology and its infinite advances, a teacher can allow students to listen to their iPods, or if electronic devices are not allowed, then teachers can stream background music from their computers. In addition, research has shown that music has helped in the classroom in many ways. Several of these articles will be discussed further. They explain how the incorporation of music into the classroom can help students with listening skills, literacy, and focus, and behavior.

If students in a special education classroom are allowed to listen to music while they work, then their poor work habits will improve. Music can be used as a tool to help them focus more on their assignments. Once a student places his or her headphones on, the outside noises or distractions are lessened. This study examines the effects that playing background music in a special education classroom has on students with special needs. It shows how music helps them focus while allowing them to finish their assignments.

**Background**

It has been increasingly difficult to keep students’ behavior under control in the classroom. (Buck, 1992). Teachers find it difficult to maintain a level of classroom management that helps keep the classroom lessons flowing from beginning to end (Buck). Students often talk back to the teachers when they are asked to do something, and they often have side conversations while instruction is taking place. Additionally, teachers report that students are rude and disrespectful to them and do not see them as an authority figures (Buck). These behaviors are not drastic but are severe enough to disrupt the classroom.
There does not seem to be any end in sight as student behavior in general appears to be worsening in frequency and intensity: increased gang violence, vandalism, drug abuse, and a general disrespect for authority are having a profound impact on many of the nation's classrooms (Buck).

What are the reasons students misbehave? Why do they feel it is acceptable to exhibit these behaviors? Some students misbehave is to get attention. No matter how interesting a lesson might be, it is difficult to compete with peer attention (Buck, 1992). Students crave the status they get from being the center of attention, and often lack the ability to determine where and when it is appropriate to get that attention. It is important to remind students where and when it is appropriate to behave in a way that draws attention to them.

Another reason students misbehave is out of frustration. Activities and tasks that are too difficult for students will frequently result in acting out, aggressive, or withdrawn behavior (Buck, 1992). It is simply more socially acceptable to be seen as the troublemaker versus a student who lacks the academic skills to succeed. But, this lack of focus on academics can be turned around through the use of music.

Music can help students in the classroom. It can help with awareness and concentration as shown by the Mozart Effect. The Mozart Effect for Children says that listening to Mozart music written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart heightens spatial awareness and intelligence temporarily, as well as improves listeners’ concentration and speech abilities (Routier, 2003). The Mozart Effect can be used in a classroom where students lack focus and thus suffer academically. If it can help a students become more aware, then their attention on the task will be greater and more information will be grasped. In addition, the use of music in the classroom is crucial in having an effectively managed classroom (Routier, 2003).
Successful classroom management means that the teacher plans, organizes, and anticipates any problems that might occur in the course of the school day (Routier, 2003). A music curriculum spans the gap between the challenges of learning and student discipline (Jackson & Joyce, 2003). Playing music in the classroom allows students to concentrate by blocking out distractions. Both hemispheres of the brain are engaged, when music is played, helping students remain engaged and the need for disciplinary interventions is lowered (Jackson & Joyce, 2003).

**Statement of the Problem**

Teachers are finding it more and more difficult to control the level of misbehavior in their classrooms; therefore, they need to find strategies to help them control these situations. One strategy teachers can use is allowing students to listen to music in the classroom while they work. If students in a special education classroom listen to music while they work, then their poor work habits will improve. The music will be used as a tool to help them focus more on their assignments more. This study examines the effects that playing background music in a special education classroom has on children with special needs.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to show that the use of music in the classroom can help a students focus or change their behaviors to allow them to become more focused. This study was created in four steps: 1) Students were given a survey asking them about their preferences regarding whether or not they like to listen to music while doing their class work. They were also asked if they thought that listening to music might change their behavior in the classroom, and if so, how? (See Appendix A for survey questions). 2) The class was observed to determine its ability to focus without music. 3) The same class was observed
and its ability to focus while music played in the background was determined. The students were observed while working on independent work to see how well they worked with out any music. The independent work consisted of vocabulary, note taking, and chapter questions. The same type of work was assigned as music played in the background. Students’ behavior, and work effort or work production were observed for changes, improvements, or any evidence of worsening. 4) Students were given a second survey at the end of the study. Students were asked to report any changes in behavior from the time they worked without music to the time they worked with music. (See Appendix B for survey questions)

Theoretical Framework

The surveys are written in such a manner that both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered. The student survey was more quantitative in that it helped determine what percentage of students who enjoyed the use of music in the classroom, and what percentage that felt that it would help them focus. The teacher survey was more qualitative in that it will helped assess the differences in student behavior after the use of music was implemented. The data were collected and a table of all the findings was made to determine whether the use of music in the classroom does make a difference.

Definition of Terms

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts (Fryer, 2006).

Quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. (Given, 2008).
Teachers in a Resource Specialist Program (RSP) provides instruction and services to students with disabilities assigned to the general education classroom for the majority of the school day. The goal of the RSP is to enable students with disabilities to succeed in the general education environment. The program provides assistance in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of a particular student (Schools for All Children, 2010).

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a syndrome that causes a malfunction of parts of the brain, including the portion that controls the "executive functions": the ability to organize, to remember what you were asked to do, and to finish a task (Shannon, 2005).

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) is a life-long developmental disorder that is usually diagnosed in preschool-age children. Children with ADHD usually exhibit the following behaviors: easily distracted, jumping from one activity to another, not being able to finish tasks that she starts, not "paying attention," being overly active (not being able to sit still, fidgeting, and/ or talking too much), interrupting others, being impatient or unable to take turns, and not being able to restrain from hitting or other inappropriate behavior (Davis & Williams, 2011).

Learning disability (LD) is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems (Schools for All Children, 2010). LD can cause a person to have trouble learning and using certain skills. The skills most often affected are reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math (Schools for All Children, 2010).

Dyslexia refers to difficulties in reading (Schools for All Children, 2010).

Dysgraphia refers to difficulties in writing (Schools for All Children, 2010).

Dyscalculia refers to difficulties in math (Schools for All Children, 2010).
Each *Individual Education Plan* (IEP) must be designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability (Schools for All Children, 2010).

A *behavior support plan* is a document that is added to an IEP that can be used as a “proactive action plan to address behavior(s) that are impeding learning of the student or others.” (Schools for All Children, 2010)

**Justification**

This study examines the effects that playing background music in a special education classroom has on children with special needs. It also attempts to show that through the use of music in the classroom students will be able to focus more on their work and/or change their behavior to become more focused.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Listening Skills and Literacy

Music can help children with special needs. They must deal with the inability to control their behavior and emotions, and often lack literacy skills (McIntire, 2007). These obstacles hinder their education. Literacy is defined as the ability to use language to communicate by reading, writing, listening, and speaking (McIntire, 2007). Many students who are unable to concentrate on auditory input, or to combine the processes needed for effective listening skills, are not exposed to formal instruction in listening skills, lack sufficient concept imagery skills, and exhibit an absence of internal motivation and the physical preparation necessary for effective listening (Barr, Dittmar, Roberts, & Sheraden, 2002).

Often, teachers report that students’ weaknesses in effective listening skills negatively impacted their academic performance negatively (Barr, et al., 2002). In addition, teachers feel they lack the resources to teach the children with special needs. Reviews of curriculum content and instructional strategies revealed a lack of curricular value and time, insufficient quality of instructional materials, and most importantly, a deficiency in teacher preparedness (Barr, et al., 2002).

A possible solution to these issues includes the direct teaching of effective listening skills, student ownership of self-monitoring, and the positive effects of using music in the classroom (Barr, et al., 2002). Studies show that literacy is naturally developed through music; therefore, musical and literacy development, are linked (McIntire, 2007). Music should be introduced into the classroom at an early age because integrating experiences with
music in the early childhood classroom supports English language learners’ literacy development (Paquette & Rieg, 2008). In addition, music's impact on children with special needs not only increased language development, but also improved emotional adjustments (McIntire, 2007). Music transforms classrooms into positive learning environments where children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally (Paquette & Rieg, 2008).

Hansen, Bernstorf, and Stuberbook (2004) provide a detailed approach to understanding the importance of music in the classroom. They talk about how children are active learners and how music plays an important role in literacy learning. Hansen et al. mention that children learn through musical play. Furthermore, they describe how children construct their own knowledge.

Adults also benefit from music in the classroom. Music can be used to create a learning environment; to build listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing skills; to increase vocabulary; and to expand cultural knowledge (Lems, 2001).

**Use of Music in Special Education**

Music can have a positive effect on the children with special needs as well. Activities in music have been shown to be helpful to children become more aware of their bodies, feelings, and themselves; feel important and accepted; find success, self-satisfaction, and pride in musical accomplishment; and learn life skills through music (Thompson, 1982). In addition, incorporating the arts into the curriculum for students who have special needs helps to enhance learning in all areas as they learn to appreciate their own and others' artistic expressions (Pfeuffer & Kingsley, 1982). Crncec, Wilson and Prior (2006) mention that background music may calm and focus children with special educational needs, thereby enhancing learning. Similarly, the students in special education who were observed also
showed the same calmed and focused behavior when background music was played in the classroom, thus allowing them to concentrate more on their studies.

**Music Preferences**

When discussing the use of background music in the classroom, what types of music should be considered? Does the theory that background music helps students with special needs succeed in the classroom apply to all types of music? Research conducted on this theory only applies only to classical music, but can any music work? Outside of the classroom, market trends suggest that high school students are finding pleasure in listening to digital music at increasingly higher rates (Rodesiler, 2009). Children today expressed distinct preferences for an eclectic range of music from very early ages (Rozman, 2009). Rock and popular music were mentioned frequently as preferred styles by parents and children, with movie and television soundtracks high in popularity (Rozman). Regardless of what type of music works in the classroom, the research is clear-- not only does creativity in music exist in the classroom, with the use of music (Rozman), but it also helps the children with special needs succeed.

**Background Music**

Background music may calm and focus children with special educational needs, thereby enhancing learning (Crncec et al., 2006), although, there are some skeptics who do not believe in this theory that music enhances a students learning in the classroom. Behar (2000) conducted a study of 10 students in special education where they were read different stories while music was and was not played. They were asked the same four story element questions after each story. Results showed no significant differences between the two types of listening sessions.
Other studies have shown otherwise. A study conducted with 72 undergraduate students showed that while music was played in the background, students remembered a high number of facts accurately over the condition where no music was played (Richards, Fassbender, Bilgin, & Thompson, 2008).

**Teachers and Background Music**

If incorporating background music into the classrooms to enhance the learning environment is going to work, educators will need to be equipped with the fundamental knowledge of music psychology. Music psychology, as determined through research in education, health, consumerism, and the work-place, is as follows: background music can, affect mood state, alter perception of time and space, affect physiological change, reduce stress and anxiety, enhance relaxation, cause arousal, motivate, be associated with product, enhance message reception, reduce noise distraction, aid concentration and memorization, increase on task performance, enhance creativity, and increase the enjoyment of mental and physical activity (Griffin, 2006). In addition, while teaching children in various age groups when music was played in the background, teachers' perceived themselves as more confident (Kim & Choy, 2008).

It is important to incorporate music into the classroom because it helps students focus more on their studies allowing them to develop literacy through music. This, in turn, helps students in special education develop listening skills. In addition, background music calms and focuses children with special educational needs, thereby enhancing learning. Regardless of the type of music played in the classroom, the results were always positive. Not only did it helped develop creativity in the classroom, but it also helped the children with special needs succeed (Rozman, 2009). For this theory to work, teachers need to be familiar with the
benefits of incorporating music in the classroom. By doing so, teachers allow students with special needs the opportunity to further concentrate on the task at hand and thereby, improve the learning experience for students in special education.
CHAPTER 3
THE PROJECT

Home Page

The project is a Website for parents. It includes a great deal of information they can use to be active participants in the educational process of their children. The home page has a drop down menu with a link to the classroom page and the staff. The staff page has a short biography of the teacher who runs the resource laboratory. The classroom page has a brief description of the type of classrooms we offered at the Academy of Scientific Exploration.

Resource Lab

Students are allowed daily to use of the resource lab. They are asked to get their assignments and copy the necessary notes, and if needed, are shown how to do their work in the lab. The lab has a lot of resources for students to use. It has a computer cart with WiFi and it is used for research. It has all the textbooks for all the courses offered at the Academy of Scientific Exploration. It also has calculators, math manipulatives, dictionaries, and art supplies. The resource lab is staffed with a resource teacher and a paraprofessional for one-on-one instruction.

Learning Disabilities

The Learning Disabilities page first defines LD and has a detailed description of various types of LD, as well as information that a student with special needs might want. It also includes important facts that parents might want to know if they suspect their child might have LD, as well as next steps they can take. It offers a list of various Websites a parent can go to get more information. In addition, if their child is diagnosed with LD, it
informs parents about what steps to take to ensure that their child gets the specific services he or she needs.

Services

The Services page informs the parents about the services provided at the Academy of Scientific Exploration. It tells them that in both the special day classes, as well as the resource lab, we offer accommodations in the form of changes in course content, teaching strategies, test presentation, location, timing, scheduling, student responses, or environmental structuring that does not substantially change the standard or expectation for student performance are offered. Also available are modifications in the form of changes in course content, teaching strategies, standards, test presentation, location, timing, scheduling, expectations, student responses, or environmental structuring that does not substantially change the standards or level of expectation for student performance. Co-planning is also used between two teachers who share planning, modifications, and evaluation of instruction and behavioral support.

Special Education Process

The Services page also has a drop down menu that has a link to the Special Education process page. The page highlights the four basic steps in the special education process. The first step is the referral for assessment. This step tells parents how to refer their child to special education, but also explains that anyone can refer a student to special education. The second step is the assessment. The assessment process that their child will go through as he or she is approved for a special education assessment is described. The third step is the development of the IEP. What and IEP is and what goes into an IEP is explained. The fourth and final step is the IEP review. It is explained to the parent that their child’s progress
will be reviewed in an IEP meeting that will be held at school annually. It also explains who will be at the review IEP.

**Focusing Through Music**

At the Academy of Scientific Exploration, educators strongly feel that listening to music helps students focus on their studies. Teachers allow their students to listen to background music while they are working on classwork. This page of the Website is provided to the parents to give them a little background information as to why faculty members feel music works and why they encourage the students to use music while they work. This page includes a background sections that explains where the derivation of the idea of using music in the classroom.

**Resources for Parents**

This page provides tips and resources for parents. For example, it tells parents to praise their child when he or she does well. It also tells parents to find out the way their child learns best, i.e., his or her areas of strength. It is explained to parents that they should let their son or daughter help with household chores. This can build self-confidence and concrete skills. Finally, it tells parents to make homework a priority in order to emphasize the importance of an education.

**Contacts**

The Contacts page has information about the Special Education Coordinator and Resource Teacher at the Academy of Scientific Exploration. It also provides the address and phone number for the school. In addition, it has information about the Los Angeles Unified School District Support Unit North. This is the location where the special education administrator is located. It also provides an address and phone number. The Contacts page
also has a drop down menu that links parents to an ‘email us’ page. This page allows parents to email the Special Education Coordinator and Resource Teacher at the Academy of Scientific Exploration directly with any questions or concerns regarding the educational process of their child with special needs.

This Website was created in the hopes of helping parents by providing them with as much information as possible for their children. The information provided was given with the parent in mind. It is information that can directly affect their child. It provides ways for parents to communicate with people who can help their child, as well as ways parents can advocate for their child. It gives parents the knowledge and power to become not just parents, but active members in their child’s educational process.
CHAPTER 4
EVALUATION

This study was done to see if incorporating background music into the special education classroom would improve the students’ behavior and work habits. Behavior was compared in a classroom with music versus behavior in a classroom without music. Music seemed to have a positive effect on the students and their study skills. The participants for this study included one RSP class. This class consisted of 11 students, 1 female student and 10 male students, ranging from labels of SLD to ADD. Although this study was only conducted in one classroom, the findings were clear; when background music was played in the classroom, it had a calming effect on the students’ behavior allowing them to concentrate more on their studies more. After the study, a Website was created for parents explaining to them the benefits of music in the classroom, and how we the special education department at the Academy of Scientific Explorations has helped students succeed. Teachers were asked to evaluate the Website to see if they felt it was a good resource for parents.

Setting

The resource lab was run in a way where it allowed students to receive additional services throughout the day. Students were scheduled in their core classes, and after they received the lesson and their assignment for the class, they were allowed to come down to the lab. In the lab, students could use the any and all resources available, including the computer, their notes, textbooks, dictionaries, flash cards, and one-on-one assistance from the resource teacher. The resource teacher clarified, reread, and broke down the assignments into more manageable parts. Additionally, students were allowed to take tests in the lab.
Participants

This class consisted of 11 students, 1 female student and 10 male students.

Student 1. Student 1 was a ninth grader with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and a specific learning disability (SLD). His disabilities impacted his ability to read, write, and do math, which affected his ability to succeed in the general education classroom setting.

Student 2. Student 2 was also a ninth grader with an SLD. His disability impacted his ability to read, write, and do math, which affected his ability to succeed in the general education classroom setting. He was supposed to be in the 10th grade, but was held back because he did not have enough credits to matriculate to the 10th grade.

Student 3. Student 3’s SLD impaired his ability to read, write, and do math, which impacted his involvement and involvement in the general education curriculum.

Student 4. Student 4 was an 11th grade student with ADD. His disability in attention impaired his ability to read, write, and do math, which negatively impacted his ability to access the general education English curriculum.

Student 5. Student 5 was also held back because he did not have enough credits to matriculate to the 10th grade. Student 5’s SLD impaired his ability to read, which, impacted his involvement and progress in the general education curriculum.

Student 6. Student 6 was a ninth grader who had an SLD in auditory processing. His SLD in auditory processing impacted his ability to read, write, and do math, which affected his ability to succeed in the general education classroom setting.

Student 7. Student 7 was a 10th grader with ADD. His other health impairment in the area of attention impacted his ability to access and participate in the general education curriculum in the areas of reading, writing, and math.
Student 8. Student 8 was a ninth grader with an SLD in visual processing. His disability in visual processing deficit affected his ability to do grade level reading, writing, and math, which impacted his involvement and progress in the general education classroom.

Student 9. Student 9 was a ninth grade student. He should have been in the 10th grade but did not earn enough credits to matriculate. Student 9’s SLD affected his ability to read, write, and do math, which impacted his ability to succeed in the general education curriculum.

Student 10. Student 10 was an 11th grader with an auditory processing deficit. Her disability affected her ability to read, write and do math, which affected her ability to succeed in the general education classroom setting.

Student 11. Student 11 was a ninth grader with a SLD in auditory processing. His SLD affected his ability to read, write, and do math at grade level. This impacted his involvement and progress in the general education classroom.

Instrumentation and Procedure

The purpose of this research was to see if the use of music in the classroom could help a students change their behavior to become more focused. This observation took place over the course of a semester. At the beginning of the semester, students were given a survey asking them about their preferences for using music in the classroom while they worked, and if they thought listening to music might change their behavior in the classroom. (See Appendix A for survey questions). Throughout the semester, students were observed while they were in the lab to see if music helped their focus. At the end of the semester, a second survey was administered. Students were asked to report any changes in behavior from
classes where there was no music to classes where they were allowed to use with music. (See Appendix B for survey questions).

**Results**

This study attempted to determine if students who listened to music while doing classwork were more focused, and if they were able to stay on task. Students were observed twice. Both observations lasted 80 minutes. Students were observed while music was not playing in the background and again while music was playing in the background. Students’ on task behavior was observed. On task behavior was defined as working at a desk without stopping to look around, get up, or disrupt another student. Adding the number of minutes on task and dividing them by the total number of minutes in the class determined the results. This was done for both the class session without music playing in the background and the class session with music playing in the background.

When the class was first observed with out music, Students 1, 3, 8, and 9 were on task 40 of the 80 minutes for a total of 50%. Students 2 and 4 were on task 45 out of the 80 minutes for a total of 56%. Students 5 and 6 were on task 30 out of the 80 minutes for a total of 38%. Student 7 was on task 50 out of the 80 minutes for a total of 62%, and Students’ 10 and 11 were on task 65 out of the 80 minutes for a total of 81%. The class average was determined by adding the students’ total number of minutes on task (i.e., 490 minutes) and dividing them by the total number of minutes each student was in class (i.e., 80 minutes x 11 students = 880). The whole class was on task for 490 minutes out of 880 minutes for a total of 56%.

The second time students were observed music was played in the background. Students 1, 2, 7, and 8 were on task 60 out of the 80 minutes for a total of 75%. Students 3,
6, and 9 were on task 55 out of the 80 minutes for a total of 69%. Students 4, 5, and 10 were on task 65 out of the 80 minutes for a total of 81%, and Student 11 was on task 70 of the 80 minutes for a total of 88%. The class average was determined by adding the students’ total number of minutes on task (i.e., 670 minutes) and dividing them by the total number of minutes each student was in class (i.e., 80 minutes x 11 students = 880). The whole class was on task for 670 minutes out of 880 minutes for a total of 76%.

Students were also given questionnaires to assess their preferences about whether or not they felt listening to music made a difference in their ability to focus. The results of the questionnaire are as follows:

Student 1. Student 1 liked to listen to music and preferred Rock and Rap. He enjoyed listening to music at home, and would like to listen to music at school. When asked if he would like to listen to music at school, he said he might improve and felt that it might help keep him less distracted. At the end of the semester when asked what his behavior was before music was implemented into the classroom, he said, “Distracted.” When music was played in the classroom, he noticed a change and felt that he was less distracted. Student 1 felt that music kept him focused.

Student 2. Student 2 also liked listening to music and preferred Electro. While at home, he listened to music and would like music to be implemented into the classroom. When asked what he thought might happen to his work habits if music was played in the background, he said, “They might change, like from me being distracted to actually being focused on the material.” At the end of the semester, Student 2’s behavior went from distracted, distracting others, and not completing his work to completing his work on time.
Student 3. Student 3 also liked listening to music and his preferences were Rhythm and Blues and Rap. He indicated that he listened to music at home and would like to listen to music at school. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he was allowed to listen to music at school, he replied, “I think they will get better.” Student 3’s behavior before listening to music was calm and relaxed. He felt that when music was played, he worked more and was more focused.

Student 4. Student 4 listened to Hip Hop and would like to listen to music at school because he likes to listen to music while at home. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he was allowed to listen to music at school he replied, “Focused.” At the conclusion of the study when asked what his behavior was like when music was not played, he felt he would get distracted. When music was played in the background, Student 4 felt that he did not get in trouble because it stopped him from talking and it allowed him to do his work.

Student 5. Student 5 enjoyed listening to Hip Hop and Rap. He listened to music at home, and would prefer if music were allowed in school. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he was allowed to listen to music at school, he replied, “Nothing, I will do my work.” Before music was allowed in the class, Student 5 felt bored and distracted, but after he was allowed to use music, he felt that it motivated him to do his work.

Student 6. Student 6 liked listening to Corridos. He listened to music while he worked at home, and would also like to listen to music at school. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he was allowed to listen to music at school, he
replied, “Yes, I get more work done.” When he was not allowed to listen to music, he felt that he was “all over the place.” Student 6 felt that music relaxed him and he felt calm.

Student 7. Student 7 liked to listen to Rap and Hip Hop. When at home, he liked to listen to music and felt that it would be nice if music were allowed at school. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he was allowed to listen to music at school, he replied, “I don’t know. I would ignore other people and listen to music. It would calm me down and I would get to work.” At the end of the semester, Student 7 was asked what he felt happened in classes where music was not played, and he said that he started having conversations with people. When music was played, he felt that he worked more, as music seemed to calm him.

Student 8. Student 8 liked to listen to music and his preference was Rap. While at home, he listened to music while he worked and would like to listen to music while at school. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he was allowed to listen to music at school, he replied, “I would probably like concentrate more.” At the end of the semester, Student 8 was asked what his behavior was like before music was implemented into the classroom? He felt he was distracted. When music was played he felt he talked less and got more work done.

Student 9. Student 9 also liked to listen to music and had no preferences when listening to music. He liked to listen to music while working at home, and would like to listen to music while at school. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he was allowed to listen to music at school, he replied, “I will work well.” When music was not played in the classroom, Student 8 felt that he did not work well, but when music was played, he felt that he worked better and stayed focused on his work.
Student 10. Not all students liked listening to music in the classroom and were either indifferent to music playing in the background or would prefer that it was not playing. Although, Student 10 liked to listen to music while she worked at home and she listened to any kind of music except Country. When asked is she would like to listen to music at school she replied with a “no.” She does not feel that her work habits changed, and was indifferent about having music played in the background.

Student 11. Additionally, Student 11 also liked listening to music while at home and preferred Rock and Alternative. When asked what he thought would happen to his work habits if he were allowed to listen to music at school, he replied, “No, when working on homework, I shouldn’t have any distractions.” He felt that he would have to concentrate more if music was playing in the background. Student 11 liked working without music.

The staff at the Academy of Scientific Exploration consists of 11 members, 9 general education teachers and 2 special education teachers (the researcher being one of them). Ten were emailed and asked to evaluate the Website to see if they felt it was a good resource for parents. Teachers were asked the following question: Please evaluate the SPED @ ASE Website found by clicking the following link: http://sped-at-ase.weebly.com/index.html. Determine if the Website is a good resource for parents. Of the 10 staff members emailed, 3 out of the 10 responded. The three who responded felt very positive about the Webpage. Teacher 1, a general education science teacher, said, “Great site. It explains everything a parent would need to know about enrolling students in our school and getting services.” Teacher 2, a special education, special day program, teachers said, “The page looks really good and it has a lot of important information.” Teacher 3, a general education math teacher said, “Your special education website is very informative and very organized. I was able to
find information about different types of learning disabilities and signs that students might have a particular LD. I am also able to get information on how I can provide instruction to address students' special needs. I am also glad that you have a resource section for parents.”

7 teachers did not respond.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Music Versus Silence

When comparing student behavior in a class with background music versus a class without background music, the evidence was clear: the students’ behavior changed from distracted to focused. When the classroom was without music, students asked to use the pass, walked around the classroom, and were less focused on schoolwork and more concerned with socializing. When music was played, students exhibited a change in behavior. The students were quiet and got to work without interrupting each other. They were calmer as the music seemed to have a positive effect on them and their study skills.

Limitations

The following limitations should be considered: This study was limited in range as only one class was observed. Had there been a larger number of students receiving special education services observed, the validity of the study might have been stronger. In addition, if the survey was not administered in person, the students might have given a more detailed answers if they were allowed to answer the questions in an interview instead of writing them out in a survey.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although the evidence is clear, incorporating background music into the classroom does help children in special education focus, it was discouraging to find so few articles on this topic. It would be beneficial to students receiving special education services if further research was done on the topic. In addition, it would also be interesting to find out what
other benefits incorporating music into the special education classroom might have. Could it possibly increase test scores, reading skills, memorization, or arithmetic?

**Conclusion**

Students in the special education classroom found it difficult to concentrate or stay focused, which allowed them to become sidetracked, often leading to inappropriate classroom behavior. When music was played in the background, students tended to be quieter and got to work without interrupting each other. They were calmer and seem more focused. Background music calmed students and helped focus their behavior in the classroom, thus allowing them to concentrate more on their studies. This correlated with Crncec et al.’s (2006) study indicating that background music may calm and focus children with special education needs, thereby enhancing learning.
REFERENCES


Reston, VA: The National Association for Music Education (MENC)


APPENDIX A

Questionnaire 1

1. Do you like to listen to music?
2. What kind(s) of music do you listen to?
3. Do you listen to music while you work at home?
4. Would you like to listen to music while you work in the classroom?
5. What do you think might happen to your work habits if music is played in the background?
APPENDIX B

*Questionnaire 2*

1. What was your behavior like before music was implemented into the classroom?

2. When music was playing, did you notice a change in your behavior?

3. What did you notice?

4. What happened while you were listening to music?
## APPENDIX C

**Student Responses Questionnaire 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>Q 1</th>
<th>Q 2</th>
<th>Q 3</th>
<th>Q 4</th>
<th>Q 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rock and Rap</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They might improve and keep me less distracted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Electro</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They might change, like for me being distracted to actually being focused on the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>R&amp;B and Rap</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I think they will get better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hip Hop</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yeah</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Hip Hop &amp; Rap</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Nothing, I will do my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Corridos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, I get more work done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rap &amp; Hip Hop</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I don’t know, I would ignore other people and listen to music. I would calm me down and I would get to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Rap</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I would probably like concentrate more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I will work well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Any kind except</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Nothing, I will still get my work done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, when working on homework I shouldn’t have any distractions</td>
<td>I would have to concentrate a little bit more.</td>
<td>Rock and Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Country

Yes

No, when working on homework I shouldn’t have any distractions

I would have to concentrate a little bit more.
## APPENDIX D

*Student Responses Questionnaire 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S</th>
<th>Q 1</th>
<th>Q 2</th>
<th>Q 3</th>
<th>Q 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Distracted</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>That I am less distracted</td>
<td>It keeps me focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Distracted, distracting others, incomplete work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>That I actually did my work</td>
<td>My work got completed on time and it was complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Calm and relaxed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I work more</td>
<td>I get more focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Getting distracted</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I didn’t get in trouble because I wasn’t talking</td>
<td>I do my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I do my work</td>
<td>I do my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I’m all over the place</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I’m more relaxed and calmed down</td>
<td>Nothing I’m calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I start having conversations with people</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Music would calm me down more</td>
<td>Music makes me think a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Distracted</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I talk less</td>
<td>I get more work done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t work well</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>That I worked better</td>
<td>I just stay focused on my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>I would do the same thing</td>
<td>Same thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Focused and working without stopping</td>
<td>No really</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>I have to focus a little more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Teacher Evaluations

Please evaluate the SPED @ ASE Website found by clicking on the following link:

http://sped-at-ase.weebly.com/index.html. Determine if the Website is a good resource for parents.
APPENDIX F

Teacher Evaluation Responses

Teacher 1
Great site. It explains everything a parent would need to know about enrolling students in our school and getting services

Teacher 2
Page looks really good and it has a lot of important information.

Teacher 3
Your special education website is very informative and very organized. I was able to find information about different type of learning disabilities and signs that students might have a particular LD. I am also able to get information on how I can provide instruction to address students' special needs. I am also glad that you have a resource section for parents.
Learning Disabilities

What are Learning Disabilities?

Learning disability is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. A learning disability can cause a person to have trouble learning and using certain skills. The skills most often affected are: reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math.

“Learning disabilities” is not the only term used to describe these difficulties. Others include:

- **dyslexia**—which refers to difficulties in reading;
• *dysgraphia*—which refers to difficulties in writing; and

• *dyscalcula*—which refers to difficulties in math.

All of these are considered learning disabilities.

Learning disabilities (LD) vary from person to person. One person with LD may not have the same kind of learning problems as another person with LD. Sara, in our example above, has trouble with reading and writing. Another person with LD may have problems with understanding math. Still another person may have trouble in both of these areas, as well as with understanding what people are saying.

Researchers think that learning disabilities are caused by differences in how a person’s brain works and how it processes information. Children with learning disabilities are not “dumb” or “lazy.” In fact, they usually have average or above average intelligence. Their brains just process information differently.

There is no “cure” for learning disabilities. They are life-long. However, children with LD can be high achievers and can be taught ways to get around the learning disability. With the right help, children with LD can and do learn successfully.

**How Common are Learning Disabilities?**

Very common! As many as 1 out of every 5 people in the United States has a learning disability. Almost 1 million children (ages 6 through 21) have some form of a learning disability and receive special education in school. In fact, one-third of all children who receive special education have a learning disability (*Twenty-Ninth Annual Report to Congress*, U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

**What Are the Signs of a Learning Disability?**

While there is no one “sign” that a person has a learning disability, there are certain
clues. We’ve listed a few below. Most relate to elementary school tasks, because learning disabilities tend to be identified in elementary school. This is because school focuses on the very things that may be difficult for the child—reading, writing, math, listening, speaking, and reasoning. A child probably won’t show all of these signs, or even most of them. However, if a child shows a number of these problems, then parents and the teacher should consider the possibility that the child has a learning disability.

When a child has a learning disability, he or she:

• may have trouble learning the alphabet, rhyming words, or connecting letters to their sounds;
• may make many mistakes when reading aloud, and repeat and pause often;
• may not understand what he or she reads;
• may have real trouble with spelling;
• may have very messy handwriting or hold a pencil awkwardly;
• may struggle to express ideas in writing;
• may learn language late and have a limited vocabulary;
• may have trouble remembering the sounds that letters make or hearing slight differences between words;
• may have trouble understanding jokes, comic strips, and sarcasm;
• may have trouble following directions;
• may mispronounce words or use a wrong word that sounds similar;
• may have trouble organizing what he or she wants to say or not be able to think of the word he or she needs for writing or conversation;
• may not follow the social rules of conversation, such as taking turns, and may stand
too close to the listener;

- may confuse math symbols and misread numbers;
- may not be able to retell a story in order (what happened first, second, third); or
- may not know where to begin a task or how to go on from there.

If a child has unexpected problems learning to read, write, listen, speak, or do math, then teachers and parents may want to investigate more. The same is true if the child is struggling to do any one of these skills. The child may need to be evaluated to see if he or she has a learning disability.

**About the Evaluation Process**

If you are concerned that your child may have a learning disability, contact his or her school and request that the school conduct an individualized evaluation under IDEA (the nation’s special education law) to see if, in fact, a learning disability is causing your child difficulties in school. Visit NICHCY’s website and read more about the evaluation process, beginning at: http://www.nichcy.org/schoolage/evaluation/

**What if the School System Declines to Evaluate Your Child?**

If the school doesn’t think that your child’s learning problems are caused by a learning disability, it may decline to evaluate your child. If this happens, there are specific actions you can take. These include: Contact your state’s Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for assistance. The PTI can offer you guidance and support in what to do next. Find your PTI by visiting: http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/parentcenterlisting.html

Consider having your child evaluated by an independent evaluator. You may have to pay for this evaluation, or you can ask that the school pay for it. To learn more about independent evaluations, visit NICHCY at: http://www.nichcy.org/schoolage/parental-
Ask for mediation, or use one of IDEA’s other dispute resolution options. Parents have the right to disagree with the school’s decision not to evaluate their child and be heard. To find out more about dispute resolution options, visit NICHCY at:

http://www.nichcy.org/schoolage/disputes/overview/

**IDEA’s Definition of “Specific Learning Disability.”**

Not surprisingly, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes a definition of “specific learning disability” — as follows:

(10) *Specific learning disability* — (i) General. *Specific learning disability* means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

(ii) *Disorders not included.* Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.  [34 CFR §300.8(c)(10)]

IDEA also lists evaluation procedures that must be used at a minimum to identify and document that a child has a specific learning disability. These will now be discussed in brief.

**Additional Evaluation Procedures for Learning Disabilities.**

Now here is the confusing part! The ways in which children are identified as having a learning disability have changed over the years. Until recently, the most common approach
was to use a “severe discrepancy” formula. This referred to the gap, or discrepancy, between the child’s intelligence or aptitude and his or her actual performance. However, in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA, how LD is determined has been expanded. IDEA now requires that states adopt criteria that:

- must not require the use of a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement in determining whether a child has a specific learning disability;
- must permit local educational agencies (LEAs) to use a process based on the child’s response to scientific, research-based intervention; and
- may permit the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.

Basically, what this means is that, instead of using a severe discrepancy approach to determining LD, school systems may provide the student with a research-based intervention and keep close track of the student’s performance. Analyzing the student’s response to that intervention (RTI) may then be considered by school districts in the process of identifying that a child has a learning disability.

There are also other aspects required when evaluating children for LD. These include observing the student in his or her learning environment (including the general education setting) to document academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty.

This entire fact sheet could be devoted to what IDEA requires when children are evaluated for a learning disability. Instead, let us refer you to a training module on the subject. It’s quite detailed, but if you would like to know those details, read through Module 11 of NICHCY’s Building the Legacy curriculum on IDEA 2004. It’s available online, at: http://www.nichcy.org/laws/idea/legacy/module11/
Suppose that the student has been diagnosed with a specific learning disability. What next?

What About School? Once a child is evaluated and found eligible for special education and related services, school staff and parents meet and develop what is known as an Individualized Education Program, or IEP. This document is very important in the educational life of a child with learning disabilities. It describes the child’s needs and the services that the public school system will provide free of charge to address those needs. Learn more about the IEP, what it includes, and how it is developed, at:

http://www.nichey.org/schoolage/iep/

Supports or changes in the classroom (called accommodations) help most students with LD. Common accommodations are listed in the “Tips for Teachers” section below. Accessible instructional materials (AIM) are among the most helpful to students whose LD affects their ability to read and process printed language. Thanks to IDEA 2004, there are numerous places to turn now for AIMs. We’ve listed one central source in the “Resources Especially for Teachers” section.

Assistive technology can also help many students work around their learning disabilities. Assistive technology can range from “low-tech” equipment such as tape recorders to “high-tech” tools such as reading machines (which read books aloud) and voice recognition systems (which allow the student to “write” by talking to the computer). To learn more about AT for students who have learning disabilities, visit LD Online’s Technology section, at: http://www.ldonline.org/indepth/technology

Tips and Resources for Teachers

Learn as much as you can about the different types of LD. The resources and
organizations listed below can help you identify specific techniques and strategies to support the student educationally.

Seize the opportunity to make an enormous difference in this student’s life! Find out and emphasize what the student’s strengths and interests are. Give the student positive feedback and lots of opportunities for practice.

Provide instruction and accommodations to address the student’s special needs.

Examples:

• breaking tasks into smaller steps, and giving directions verbally and in writing;
• giving the student more time to finish schoolwork or take tests;
• letting the student with reading problems use instructional materials that are accessible to those with print disabilities;
• letting the student with listening difficulties borrow notes from a classmate or use a tape recorder; and
• letting the student with writing difficulties use a computer with specialized software that spell checks, grammar checks, or recognizes speech.

Learn about the different testing modifications that can really help a student with LD show what he or she has learned.

Teach organizational skills, study skills, and learning strategies. These help all students but are particularly helpful to those with LD.

Work with the student’s parents to create an IEP tailored to meet the student’s needs.

Establish a positive working relationship with the student’s parents. Through regular communication, exchange information about the student’s progress at school.
**Services**

**Accommodations** - Changes in course content, teaching strategies, test presentation, location, timing, scheduling, student responses, or environmental structuring that do not substantially change the standard or expectation for student performance.

**Modifications** - Changes in course content, teaching strategies, standards, test presentation, location, timing, scheduling, expectations, student responses, or environmental structuring that do substantially change the standards or level of expectation for student performance.

**Co-teaching** - Two teachers sharing instruction, planning, behavioral support, and grading for all students in a classroom.

**Co-planning** - A process by which two teachers share planning, modifications, and evaluation of instruction and behavioral support. This model does not involve co-teaching.

**The Special Education Process**

The special education process determines whether or not your child is eligible for special education services and if so, what special education services are most appropriate for your child.

There are four (4) basic steps in the special education process:

**Step 1: Referral for Assessment**

In many cases, parents or guardians refer their child for assessment for special education services. Teachers, other school personnel, and community members may also refer a child for assessment. Within fifteen 15 days, not counting school vacations greater than five 5 days, of the receipt of a referral for assessment, you will receive a written response from the District. If the District determines that an assessment of your child is not
appropriate, you will receive a written notice of this decision. If the District determines that an assessment is appropriate, you will receive an Assessment Plan.

An Assessment Plan describes the types and purposes of the assessments, which may be used to determine your child's eligibility for special education services. Before your child can be assessed, you must consent to the assessment by signing the Assessment Plan. You have at least fifteen 15 days from the receipt of the Assessment Plan to consent to and sign it. The school has sixty 60 days, not counting school vacations greater than five 5 days, of the receipt of your signed Assessment Plan to complete the assessment and hold an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

**Step 2: Assessment**

An assessment involves gathering information about your child to determine whether your child has a disability and, if he or she is eligible, the nature and extent of special education services that your child may need. Assessments may include individual testing, observation, of the child at school, interviews with the child and school personnel who work with the child, and review of school records, reports and work samples.

**Guidelines for assessment.** When your child is assessed, the following guidelines will be followed:

- Your child will be assessed only after you consent to the Assessment Plan.
- Your child will be assessed in all areas related to his and her suspected disability.
- The Assessment will be administered in your child's primary language or a qualified interpreter will be provided.
- The assessment must include a variety of appropriate tests to measure your child's strengths and needs. The persons administering these tests must be qualified to do so.
• The assessment will be adapted for students with impaired sensory, physical or speaking skills.

• A multidisciplinary team, including at least one teacher or other specialist with knowledge in the area of your child's suspected disability, will assess your child.

• Testing and assessment materials and procedures must not be racially, culturally or sexually discriminatory.

Step 3: Development and Implementation of an IEP

After your child has been assessed, an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting will be held. The IEP meeting must be held at a time and place convenient for both you and the school's representatives. At this meeting, the IEP team will discuss the assessment results and determine whether your child is eligible for special education services. If your child is eligible, then an IEP will also be developed during the meeting.

The following people are members of the IEP team:

• you, as the child's parent or guardian, and/or your representative;

• a school administrator or qualified representative who is knowledgeable about program options appropriate for your child;

• your child's present teacher. If a student does not presently have a teacher, a teacher with the most recent and complete knowledge of the student and who has observed the student's educational performance will participate as an IEP team member. If a teacher with the most recent and complete knowledge of the student is not available, the teacher on the IEP team will be a special education teacher qualified to teach a student of his or her age;

• other persons, such as your child, whom you or the school wish to invite; and
• when appropriate, the person(s) who assessed your child or someone familiar with those assessment procedures.

**What is an IEP?** The IEP is the written plan that describes a child's abilities and needs, and the placement and services designed to meet the child's unique needs. Your child must have an IEP before he or she receives special education services. Your child's IEP must be implemented as soon as possible after the IEP meeting. In addition, your child's IEP must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised once a year or more often upon request. If your child is found to be eligible for special education services, the IEP will contain:

• annual goals and short-term objectives focusing on your child's current level of performance;

• the services that your child will receive;

• when services will begin, how often they will be provided, and for how long;

• the instructional program(s) where these services will be delivered;

• the amount of time your child will spend in general education. If your child is not educated completely in general education, it should state why; and

• how the school will measure your child's progress.

Children with disabilities should attend the school they would ordinarily attend if they were not in special education. This requirement may be waived when a student's IEP requires it and states why.

You will receive a copy of the IEP at the IEP meeting. If you do not attend the IEP meeting, a copy will be mailed to you. You have the right to agree or disagree with any part of the IEP. The school is required to get your consent to the IEP before your child receives special education services. Upon your request, you must be given a copy of the IEP in your
primary language, whenever possible.

**Will I Receive Notice of the IEP Meeting?** The school must provide you with notice of the IEP meeting within a reasonable time prior to the meeting. This notice will include: the date, time, and place of the meeting; the reason for the meeting; who will be at the meeting; and a statement of the right of participants to electronically record the meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you may call the school to reschedule.

**When Must an IEP Meeting be Held?** An IEP meeting must be held:

- once a year to review your child's progress and placement and to make any needed changes to the IEP;
- every three years to review the results of a mandatory comprehensive reevaluation of your child's progress;
- after your child has received a formal assessment or reassessment;
- if you or a teacher feel that your child demonstrates significant educational growth or a lack of anticipated progress;
- when you or a teacher request a meeting to develop, review, or revise the IEP;
- to develop a transition plan, beginning at age sixteen 16 or younger, if appropriate; and/or
- to determine whether a student's misconduct was a manifestation of his or her disability before expelling or suspending the student from school for more than ten 10 school days.

If your child is already enrolled in a special education program and you request an IEP meeting, you must do so in writing. Once your request is received, the meeting must be held within thirty 30 days, not counting school vacations greater than five 5 days.
What are Transition Services? Transition services are a set of coordinated activities to assist a student's movement from school to post-school activities. These services are designed to help your child adjust to life after he or she is no longer eligible for school-related services. The law requires that transition services be provided to all students with disabilities, beginning at fourteen 14 years of age or younger, if appropriate. When appropriate, the IEP team will plan and oversee the implementation of these transition services.

The law also requires that coordinated activities for transition include instruction, community experiences, and the development of employment and other post-school living skills. If your child does not need services in any of the previously listed areas, your child's IEP must state so and why. The coordinated activities for transition must be based on your child's individual needs and take into account his or her preferences and interests. If appropriate, the coordinated activities may also include the acquisition of daily living skills and/or functional vocational evaluation.

If transition services are going to be discussed at an IEP meeting, the notice of the IEP meeting will include the following information:

• indicate that the meeting will discuss transition services;

• indicate that the student will be invited; and

• identify any agency representatives that the school invited who may be able to provide and/or pay for transition services.

If any agency representatives cannot be at the meeting, the District will attempt to obtain their input through other means.

Step 4: IEP Review
If your child is receiving special education services, his or her IEP will be reviewed in an IEP meeting at least once a year to determine how well it is meeting his or her needs. In addition, every three years, your child will be reassessed and his or her IEP reviewed as part of an overall comprehensive reevaluation of your child's progress.

If there are concerns that your child's educational needs are not being met, either you or school personnel may request a reassessment or an IEP meeting to review the IEP at any time during the year. You may request an IEP meeting to review the IEP at anytime during the year. You may request an IEP meeting by sending a written request to the school. Once your request is received, the meeting must be held within 30 days, not counting school vacations greater than 5 days. You may request a reassessment by sending a written request to the school or completing a Request for Special Education Assessment, which can be obtained at any District school. The school must get your permission before it reassesses your child.

*Focusing Through Music*
Students in the special education classroom often find it difficult to stay focused during a class lectures or while working on class activities resulting in them misbehaving. It is not that students want to do poorly in school or want to draw attention. Most students with disabilities are misbehaving out of frustration (Buck, 1992) Lack of focus allows students to get sidetracked. When students are not focused they tend to be less productive. Often times, students stare off into space, get up, walk around, or disrupt other students. Many activities and tasks are too difficult for students, which results in acting out and aggressive behavior (Jackson, & Joyce, 2003). This behavior is what gets students with special needs in trouble with their teachers and the school. In addition, when students exhibit this unfocused, disruptive behavior, teachers, administrators, and staff have to discipline students to help address the behavior. Such disciplinary actions include, detentions, referrals to the principal, phone calls home, and behavior plans.
What can be done to help the growing issue of students with special needs and their lack of focus in the special education classroom? Instead of disciplining students with special needs who exhibit the distracted and disruptive behavior that is a result of lack of focus, let’s give students with special needs the tools to help them stay focused. By simply adding a positive behavior support plan (BSP) to an IEP we can add the use of music in the classroom as a tool to stay focused.

Playing music in the classroom allows students to concentrate by blocking out other distractions and allowing them to focus on their work. A study was done where 28 participants were observed both with and without stimulative, familiar background music. Results showed both a significant increase in positive social behaviors and a significant decrease in negative behaviors related to agitation when music is played (Ziv, Granot, Hai, Dassa, & Haimov, 2007). There can be various ways to allow students the use of music in the classroom. With modern technology and its infinite advances, a teacher can allow students to listen to their iPods, of if electronic devices are not allowed, then a teachers can stream background music from their computers. In addition, research has shown that music has helped in the classroom in many ways. Several articles explain how the incorporation of music into the classroom can help students with listening skills, literacy and focus and behavior.

If students in the special education classroom are allowed to listen to music while they work, then their poor work habits could improve. Music can be used as a tool to help them focus more on their assignments. Once a student places his or her headphones on, the outside noise or distractions are lessened. This study examines the effects that playing background music in the special education classroom has on students with special needs. It
shows how music helps them focus while allowing them to finish their assignments.

**Our Classroom**

What is a Resource Center?

A resource center is a place/room that enables students to improve their academic performance through a variety of learning strategies, one-on-one and group instruction, supplemental instruction, and an interactive subject area computer lab.

What is a Special Day Class?

A special day class is an intensive educational program designed for children with special needs. A child may be eligible for this program if he or she suffers from severe mental or emotional disorders and learning disabilities. These problems must be severe enough so as to cause a child difficulty in performing in a general education school setting, or in alternative less-intensive special education program.

Staff
Who is Mrs. Martinez?

Hello,

My name is Mrs. Martinez. I am the special education coordinator for the Academy of Scientific Exploration at Cesar E. Chavez Learning Academies. This is my ninth year teaching for the Los Angeles Unified School District. I taught at San Fernando High School for 8 years as special day class teacher. In September 2011, I transferred to the Academy of Scientific Exploration.

My formal education is as follows:

- High School Diploma, San Fernando High School, 1996
- Associates Degree, Social Science, College of the Canyons, 2000
- Bachelor’s Degree, Sociology, University of California at Santa Barbara, 2002
- Bachelor’s Degree, Chicano Studies, University of California at Santa Barbara, 2002
- Preliminary Teaching Credential, Special Education, Mild Moderate, CSUN, 2004
- Secondary Teaching Credential, Special Education Mild Moderate, CSUN, 2006
- Specialization, Students with Emotional Disturbances, CSUN, 2006
- Currently working on Masters in Special Education and Autism Certification, CSUN

Resources for Parents

A child with learning disabilities may need help at home as well as in school. Here are a number of suggestions and considerations for parents.

- Learn about LD. The more you know, the more you can help yourself and your child. Take advantage of the excellent resources out there for parents (see the next section, below).
- Praise your child when he or she does well. Children with LD are often very good at
a variety of things. Find out what your child really enjoys doing, such as dancing, playing soccer, or working with computers. Give your child plenty of opportunities to pursue his or her strengths and talents.

• Find out the ways your child learns best. Does he or she learn by hands-on practice, looking, or listening? Help your child learn through his or her areas of strength.

• Let your son or daughter help with household chores. These can build self-confidence and concrete skills. Keep instructions simple, break down tasks into smaller steps, and reward your child’s efforts with praise.

• Make homework a priority. Read more about how to help your child be a success at homework in the resources listed below.

• Pay attention to your child’s mental health (and your own!). Be open to counseling, which can help your child deal with frustration, feel better about himself or herself, and learn more about social skills.

• Talk to other parents whose children have LD. Parents can share practical advice and emotional support. You can identify parent groups in your area via NICHCY’s State Resource Sheets. Go to the section entitled “Disability-Specific Agencies” and scroll down until you reach “learning disabilities.”

• Meet with school personnel and help develop an IEP to address your child’s needs. Plan what accommodations your child needs, and don’t forget to talk about AIM or assistive technology!

• Establish a positive working relationship with your child’s teacher. Through regular communication, exchange information about your child’s progress at home and at school.
Resources for Parents

LD Online | For Parents
http://www.ldonline.org/parents

LD Online | Parenting and Family
http://www.ldonline.org/indepth/parenting

National Center for Learning Disabilities | In the Home
http://www.nclld.org/in-the-home

Learning Disabilities Association of America | For Parents
http://www.ldanatl.org/aboutld/parents/index.asp

Reading Rockets | For Parents
http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents

Contacts

The Academy of Scientific Exploration, 1001 Arroyo Avenue, San Fernando, CA. 91340, (818) 838 – 3926, Fax (818) 838-3945, Mrs. M. Martinez, Special Education Coordinator, Resource Teacher

Support Unit North, Cindy Welden, Administrator, 6505 Zelzah Avenue, Reseda, CA 91335, (818) 654-5000, Fax (818) 654-1611

Email Us

Note: All email's will be sent to Mrs. Martinez' LAUSD email, Name, First, Last, Email, Comment, Submit.