

# Art & Music Therapy: A Viable Therapy Option

By: Amy F. Weinberger



Art and music really matter but it isn't just about coloring and rock-n-roll anymore. Both of these subjects definitely measure up in and out of the classroom. In the era of credibility and accountability, art and music classes that are coordinated by a team of school counselors, as well as, creative art and music therapists, are really making the grade.

Art therapy is a psycho-educational therapeutic intervention or a healing art that can work in any medium and provides students many different opportunities of expression that might not be tolerated in a traditional arts classroom. Since the cathartic release of strong emotions is encouraged, students become quickly engaged in the process of problem solving through strategies, testing and maintaining patience and persevering through an emotion. The outcomes of direct art therapy are shown to improve a student's ability to maintain focus for sustained periods of time and improve social skills such as

conflict resolution, anger management, and cooperation skills.

The Jersey City Public School System thinks art therapy is a top priority that supports a safe learning environment and promotes student achievement. It has had an Arts Therapy Program since 1993. It even received a Best Practices Award from the New Jersey Department of Education. The GAP School, a remarkable intervention school in Sarasota County, also considers art therapy to be a top priority. It received a grant from the Visual Society of Arts that provided funds for an art therapist to work with a group of middle school students who needed more experience with group projects and communication skills.

Music therapy is also considered an established healthcare profession. It uses music to address physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs of people of all ages. The research shows that it improves the quality of life for students who are well and it

meets the needs of children and adults with disabilities or illnesses. The GAP School also includes music therapy in its Get Social Camp Program and its day school program during the regular school year. It is part of the curriculum of the social skills training classes that promote better verbal and non-verbal communication skills and encourages stress management strategies. On the academic side, music therapy enhances attention, memory, sequencing and auditory processing abilities. Music therapy interventions, such as singing, dancing, and instrument playing, apply the inherent order of music to set behavioral expectations, provide reassurance, and maintain structure for children with disabilities.

Art Therapy is available in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Laura Dessauer, M.A., ATR is a registered art therapist who has her practices at Encouragement Institute and The Thinking Center. For more details on Laura's work and community involvement, please contact her directly at [msslaurajj@yahoo.com](mailto:msslaurajj@yahoo.com) or view the website [www.sarasotaarttherapist.com](http://www.sarasotaarttherapist.com).

Virginia Bibler, MT-BC, is a music therapist who is also located in Sarasota and Manatee counties. She is involved with many different schools and organizations that all provide Music Therapy services for children with disabilities such as The Thinking Center, The GAP School, The Rocco Gerolmo Foundation, Giraffic Park Therapy Center and Pinnacle Academy. Her main office is located at Pinnacle. Her contact information is [virginia\\_bibler@yahoo.com](mailto:virginia_bibler@yahoo.com).

So, if you suspect that your child needs some emotional support, consider including music and/or art therapy in their enrichment plan. It is not just for younger children, it is also for preteen and adolescents. For example, when an issue comes up at school regarding friendships, test taking and other anxieties, it is a significant short-term intervention that offers our developing children tools they need to navigate their worlds better. ❀