



Early Childhood Newsletter

Volume 1

Spring, 1996

Here it is -- the first edition of the "NAMT Early Childhood Newsletter"! This publication was suggested by the participants in attendance at the second annual *Early Childhood Roundtable* which met this past November, 1995 at the NAMT Conference and was then endorsed by the executive board of NAMT. Ronna Davis and I agreed to chair the Early Childhood Network and to help members communicate through a newsletter. This is to be *YOUR* publication. It can be whatever you want it to be; we welcome all suggestions and contributions. A big thanks to our guest writers for this first edition. They offer helpful and very relevant information regarding the use of music therapy with young children.

Please take a minute to fill out the *survey* and return it to Ronna or me. Please feel free to suggest topics for discussion at the Nashville conference. In addition, I would love to receive articles or commentaries of any length.

We hope to hear from you soon!!!

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Everything -- Including the Bathroom Sink!

by J. Craig Williams, RMT

Being a music therapist, I should have known if I open my mouth I should be singing and not extracting my foot, but that's just what I ended up doing. I called Marcia Humpal the other day and said, "Hey, where's the newsletter?" and Marcia said, "Hey, where's your article?" So here it is; hope you enjoy it (and remember, you asked for it!). [Ed. note: hint, hint to all our readers!].

I want to talk about instruments. I love them and I can't get enough of them! I believe in sound. As much as my therapeutic ego wants to take credit for the small breakthrough that every so often blesses my day, in my mind of minds, I know it was the sound of the

instrument that facilitated the breakthrough. It was the sound that made possible the learning process to take place. I want to talk about one instrument that has worked for me: it is called a Vibra-tone. But first, please indulge me by allowing me to give you a bit of background information.

I service five school districts in and around the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Here in Texas we call it the Metroplex...sounds metropolitan, doesn't it? The area music therapists are fortunate in that music therapy is a highly regarded and used service in the Texas school system. Approximately thirty-six districts in and around the Metroplex employ music therapists, many as employees and the rest as contractors. My weekly school caseload is 22 - 24 classes a week, serviced in 3 1/2 days. I travel approximately 600 miles a week and I carry alot of equipment.

At any one time I may carry in my little wagon over 35 instruments: four string instruments (*a 12-string, a 6-string nylon folk, a 5-string banjo and a mandolin [if you're wondering...8 strings]*), twelve drums with associated percussion, keyboard and omnichord. The list goes on to include, for lack of an intelligent term, my "specialty instruments" such as novelty items like a wa-wa hammer (a hammer that squeaks), a Peruvian wrist shaker (of sheep toe nails), a vibra-tone bar and an African music bow.

Since we are *music* therapists, the medium we work with is the physical aspect of *sound*. I believe the greater the variety of instruments you can present to your students, the greater possibility of facilitating the learning process and making the necessary connections between you and your students.

The Vibra-tone

This is a heavy metallic cylinder that is split and has a sound hole to produce sound effects similar to a wa-wa. Available in two metallic colors, it comes with a hard rubber head mallet.

I have found this instrument to be good for physical objectives/fine motor control because of the manipulation of the thumb/finger(s) and/or palm that is necessary to create the wa-wa effect. The weight of the instrument and its circumference is an additional challenge to the student to maintain hand/instrument balance. The sound and tactile aspects are different enough to be unique to many students. The clear bell resonate is similar to other chime/tone bars but its weight and size allow for the production of many muting effects. The wa-wa effect is ear-catching and is regulated by the movement over the sound hole. I use the wa-wa effect along with my voice mimicking "wa-wa" to establish vocal engagement with some of my students who are just beginning to vocalize.

The tactile aspect is just as fun. The vibra-tone vibrates very fast and it tickles when you touch the very end of the tube. I use that tickling effect to: tickle my students' arms, neck and face (cheeks) to elicit laughter and to have the students tickle each other. I use the vibrating effect on my students with severe and profound levels of disabilities for orientation to physical placement of instruments, to elicit physical response and to tickle them as well.

One other aspect of the vibra-tone, one that is non-musical but fascinating to the students, is that the vibra-tone gets very cold and stays cold for some time. When the temperature is cold or freezing outside and my instruments have been in the car, the vibra-tone feels like an ice-cube. After singing my "Hello" and "Day" songs, I bring out the vibra-tone and start passing it from student to student. We play "ice-potato" by playing and passing the vibra-tone from

student to student -- it's a real *ice-breaker* (pun intended!). This activity always causes a bunch of laughter and silliness. By the way, I call my vibra-tone my "*WA WA TUBE*", because of the sounds that can be produced, and because the students like saying "Wa Wa".

You can buy the vibra-tone from any full service music store or from the music catalogues that you receive (e.g. West, Interstate, Music is Elementary). The cost is approximately \$18.00. Very small vibra-tones are available, too, which can be easily held by toddlers. *World Beat* markets these and calls them "WOW Earth Bells". They are actually produced by Latin Percussion.

In the next newsletter, I will tell you about my African Music Bow and how I had to wrestle it away from a six year old child with autism.

I want to hear about your experiences and stories that have taken place because of the instruments you use. Let's share thoughts about an instrument that really works for you.

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Where Can I Find That Song?

by Rebecca Tweedle, RMT

Many of us have spent more time than we want to searching for a particular song on a record, tape or CD. Luckily, there are resources available now which will considerably shorten the search time, assist with locating songs by theme and help identify outstanding recordings.

Index of Songs on Children's Recordings (2nd Ed.) was compiled by Barbara Snow and published by Staccato Press, Eugene, OR. It lists over 7,300 song titles from 674 tapes, records and CDs. The book consists of an alphabetical list of recordings, a list of indexed recordings with contents (a discography), song title index, performer index, producer/distributor list, and a list of children's recording awards given over the past two decades.

In *Growing Up With Music: A Guide to the Best Recorded Children's Music*, author Laurie Sale reviews over 350 recordings. The recordings are grouped according to age level (0 - 2, 2 - 4, 4 - 10), and there are also sections reviewing holiday music, classical music and recordings in French and Spanish. Sale, owner of the Children's Book and Music Center

in Los Angeles, also rates her favorite recordings. As with *Index of Songs*, this book contains a song title index. It is published by Avon Books.

Children's Jukebox: A Subject Guide to Musical Recordings and Programming Ideas for Songster Ages One to Twelve, is a subject reference index of children's recordings. The songs on over 300 recordings are grouped into themes ranging from Anatomy to Weather. Author Rob Reid, a children's librarian and entertainer, also lists hello and good-bye songs, call and response songs, cumulative songs, round, songs in foreign languages, and songs that feature sound effects. The back of the book contains a song title index. *Children's Jukebox* is published by the American Library Association.

Check your local library or book store for these helpful sources.

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Our Members Want to Know...

Barbara Steenrod of the Toledo, Ohio area is very interested to learn how music therapy is being funded in early childhood settings. She writes, "Teachers and parents who are aware of the benefits of music therapy would like music therapy to be included in the IEP. Parents would also like their children to have music therapy services provided on an individual basis. Currently in my area, a mother is seeking funding for music therapy for her four year old developmentally delayed son who is also receiving chemotherapy treatments for cancer. Nurses and social workers in the hospital where he is being treated have also expressed a desire for music therapy for pediatric oncology patients.

Although interest is high, funding is almost nonexistent for this nonmandated service. I would appreciate hearing from other music therapists who have faced this dilemma and have found solutions to this problem."

This is certainly a vital issue for our field. Drop a line to the Editor and your answers will be published in the next edition of this newsletter.

Music Therapy with Multi-Risk Families

by Iris M. Shiraishi, Ph.D., RMT

The Reuben Lindh Learning Center (RLLC) in Minneapolis, Minnesota is a human services agency which serves high-risk, inner-city families. This rapidly growing agency supports a number of different programs, all of which seek to support and educate parents on their journey towards self-sufficiency and empowerment.

Music therapy is a relatively recent addition to RLLC's programming, which began with a weekly, half-hour volunteer commitment in 1991. At present, RLLC now employs one full-time and one part-time music therapist, both of whom serve six of its seven programs. Music therapy's inclusion in each of these programs is described below.

RLLC's Therapeutic Preschool currently serves 118 children ages 16 months to 5 years old. The majority of these children are being raised in less than optimal economic, social and environmental conditions and are the most likely to "fall between the cracks" when they begin their elementary school careers. RLLC's small teacher/student ratio (1:5) and individualized occupational, speech and play therapies are available to provide a gamut of early childhood experiences which support each student's development.

Each classroom participates in a music therapy session once weekly. The classroom curriculum and individual student goals guide the development of music therapy goals with a special emphasis on appropriate social skills. The diverse cultural heritages of the children is honored and valued through the selection and use of a multi-ethnic music repertoire. The music session provides one more arena where they can find a potentially pleasurable and consistent structure in which to succeed.

To provide culturally-specific programming for Southeast Asian and Native American preschoolers, RLLC has founded two satellite preschool programs in the community. Music sessions for both programs are conducted in English; in the Southeast Asian program, the teacher may translate whenever necessary. One of the primary goals for these groups is to provide an atmosphere in which independent and/or individual participation can be safely attempted within the confines of the larger group.

The Parenting Program serves approximately 25 mothers with mental retardation/illness and their children. It includes parenting information delivered through both individual and classroom formats, group therapy sessions, and structured mother-child activities. The Infant REACH (Resources Entering A Child's

Home) Program identifies first-time mothers in a combination of home visits and group activities in an effort to provide support and information during the initial development of parenting skills. Mothers in both programs have had few, if any, positive interactions within their own families during their formative years. Mother-child music therapy groups are held once weekly for these groups in order to provide an enjoyable vehicle for nurturing positive family interactions. It is essential in these groups to provide activities that are attractive and enticing to both the mothers and their children in a fast-paced, upbeat format. For many of the mothers, this becomes their first exposure to a participatory music experience.

The RAP (Rebuilding Appropriate Parenting) Program supports adults who are currently receiving or who have completed treatment for chemical dependence. Staff members provide group sessions which cover a wide variety of parenting issues while the individual is in treatment followed by home visits during the aftercare period. Music therapy sessions in this program have focused on the adult and have emphasized using music as a safe and viable emotional release. Drumming and other rhythm-based activities have proved successful for many of the participants in the RAP program and all are given opportunities at the end of every session to practice relaxation exercises (progressive muscle relaxation, facial massage) paired with music as a tool to reduce stress.

The music therapy program at Reuben Lindh Learning Center has grown steadily since its inception and there continues to be a demand for new or expanded services from throughout the agency. Music therapy services for families and their children who have multiple risk factors for developmental delay appears to be a viable vehicle for cultural, social, and emotional growth, for structuring parent-child interactions, and for stress reduction and relaxation. Response to music therapy services by both the staff and the clients has been enthusiastic and unwaveringly supportive.

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Summer Offering.....

The Early Childhood Music Association announces that its 1996 international convention "Musica Encantada" will be held at the Glorieta Conference

Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico August 2 - 6, 1996. The conference program will feature such internationally known clinicians as Grace Nash, John Feierabend, Bill Evans, Stephen Rosenholtz and Paul Madaule.

To request information, contact Doris Sing or Judy Meier Farley at 1-(713) 661-1655.

Hot Off the Press...

The following early childhood music resources are now available from MENC.

- *Strategies for Teaching Prekindergarten Music*, compiled and edited by Wendy Sims (#1644; \$16.50).
- *Prekindergarten Music Education Standards*, a brochure containing content and achievement standards (#4015; set of 10 brochures, \$8.00).

To order, call 1- (800)-828-0229.

Join Us in Nashville!!!

The third annual *Early Childhood Roundtable* has been tentatively scheduled for Monday, November 18, 1996 from 2:45 to 4:15 p.m. at the Joint Music Therapy Conference in Nashville. Bring ideas to share and issues to discuss.

The EC Network – Who and Where

The following pages cite the people who have indicated interest in being part of the NAMT Early Childhood Network as of May, 1996. Please notify the editor of any changes, deletions or additions to this roster.

If you have an e-mail address and wish to share it with network members, send it to the editor. It will be published in the next edition of this newsletter.

