Voices Together: Music Therapy and Autism in Elementary Schools
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Background

• Music stimulates both spoken and sung language areas of the brain and enhances connectivity of the neural pathways between them.¹ ²
• Music therapy (MT) uses music as a medium to implement therapeutic techniques designed to improve verbal output, socialization, and self-advocacy.³
• Few studies have systematically tested the effects of MT for individuals with ASD.³
• We worked with Voices Together – a non-profit organization that provides structured MT lessons – to test the efficacy of a MT program.

Research Question

What are the effects of the Voices Together MT program on social, emotional, and communicative skills of children with ASD in elementary school classrooms?

Participants

N = 64
9 classrooms from a school system in NC

Participant characteristics
Average language level: 3.02
• Able to creatively combine 2-3 words, increasing vocabulary

Methods

Probes

• 23 probes measure change over time in communication & awareness of self and others
• Possible total score: 1-47

Teacher Measures

• Teacher assessments of each student before and after MT treatment
• PDDBI
  • Assesses problem behaviors, and social, language, & learning skills
• Student Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ)
  • Assesses group engagement, self-regulation, & turn-taking

Preliminary Results

Average Probe Scores

*Pre-treatment probe scores did not significantly differ

Average Probe Scores by Language Levels

*Probes seem to be correlated with language ability

Future Directions

• Currently collecting probe data for times 5 and 6 to assess changes in skills due to MT sessions
• Assessing PDDBI and SAQ to determine change over time and relationship to probe data

Implications

• The aim for this research is to quantitatively assess MT outcomes in order to support Voices Together and improve access to music therapy services.

References


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