

Project Topic Proposal

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COM 49100 - Seminar in Applied Communications

Instructor

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Introduction

Dr. Temple Grandin, an autistic pioneer in research regarding humane livestock practices and a prominent voice for the autism community once said, "There needs to be a lot more emphasis on what kids can do than what they can't" (Grandin, n.d). In an autistic child's world, communication difficulties often stifle progress in other developmental areas, so finding a way for a child to communicate with those around them is critical. Without a common code between the transmitter and the sender, communication does not take place, and the individual with autism stays locked in their own thoughts, unable to have meaningful interaction with those around them. In order to make significant progress in this population, researchers and educators need to embrace Dr. Grandin's view that all children can learn if given the proper tools. Music therapy advances provide hope to improving communication competencies for those on the autism spectrum.

In recent years, music therapy has been shown to be an effective way of increasing the communication abilities in nonverbal children (Sandiford, 2013). My research paper will present evidence that music is a common code that allows for verbal and nonverbal communication of a person's ideas and values, allowing autistic children to develop stronger communication skills

Project Scope and Structure

This research paper will present the most current research and review of literature from academic and medical journals, as well as government and private entities that are associated with the many facets of pervasive developmental disorders. Sources from the disciplines of communication, psychology, and education will be consulted as further resources on music theory as it relates to the study of the communication needs and challenges of those with autism. I will present the specific communication challenges for individuals and families with autistic

members and show how music therapy addresses those issues. In the course of my research, I will also demonstrate that the effect of music on brain function is substantial as a nonverbal mode of communication, enabling the message transmitter to communicate thoughts, values, and emotions that they previously had been unable to express verbally (Silverman, 2008).

Conclusion

In a world where vital personal and business communication happens instantaneously on a global scale, leaving autistic children with many gifts needed to better mankind enclosed in a world where they cannot share their thoughts with others is tragic. Communication between human beings involves the ability to share a common language with common signals so that the transmission of the message occurs (Gattino, Riesgo, Longo, Leite, & Faccini, 2011). Communication is not optional for a meaningful life, and must happen in an effective manner in many contexts in order for lives to be full. Nonverbal autistic children are hindered from living full and free lives where their ideas are heard, gifts shared, values developed and expressed, and love given and received.

As a communications major, I believe I will make a significant contribution to this field and the world in so far as I look for ways to help those who lack the ability to speak for themselves. The autism community continues to benefit from those who do research and champion the cause of this neurological condition that affects so many. By researching the advancements in music therapy and its viability for increasing the communication capacity of those with autism, I believe I will successfully demonstrate the continued impact of the field of communications on the greater global community.

References

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