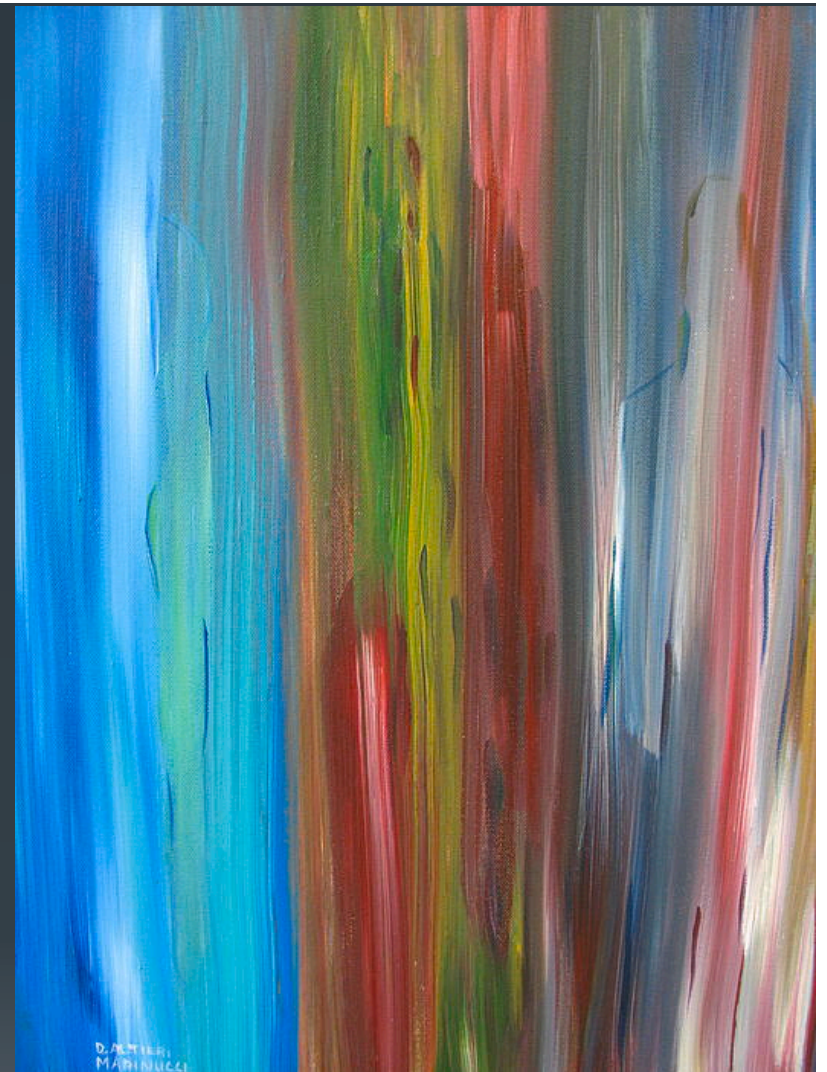


# Hidden in Plain Sight

Case study of a music therapist and a music educator in a public school



Jacqueline C. Smith

# Background



- Brian, the K-12 Music Coordinator, invited me to his school district to help a first year teacher working with students with Autism spectrum disorder.
- He told me a story that changed our perspective on music teaching in his school district and prompted this study.

# Accidental Communication

Brian: I saw a woman with a guitar walking away from the music department. I thought she might be lost so I introduced myself. She said that she was the music therapist. “Oh, really?” I said, “I didn’t know we had music therapy here.”



Music therapy services have been offered in the district for five years.

# Misunderstanding

- Pheobe, a first year music teacher, arrived to teach music to the students in the self-contained classroom. The teachers told her that the music therapist came to do music that day so she did not need to come.



# Purpose

- Examine the roles of the music therapist and music educator in a suburban public school district in the Northeast.
  - Students taught in the self-contained music classes received both music education and music therapy services.



# Research Questions



- What are the goals of the music teacher and the music therapist for the students in their classrooms?
- What are the perceptions of the music teacher regarding music therapy services in an educational setting?
- What are the perceptions of the music therapist regarding what students experience in the music classroom?
- In what ways do the music therapist and music educator collaborate, or not, to improve outcomes for students with special needs?

# What is Music Therapy?

- The clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.
- Goals can be physical, emotional, cognitive or social and can be met through music experiences that include creating, singing, moving to, and/or listening to music.





# Music Therapy Services Offered in Madison

- Educational Enrichment

- Group music therapy targeted to improve socialization, communication, and academic skills
- Not listed on IEP
- Provides music therapy to all students in the group





# Method



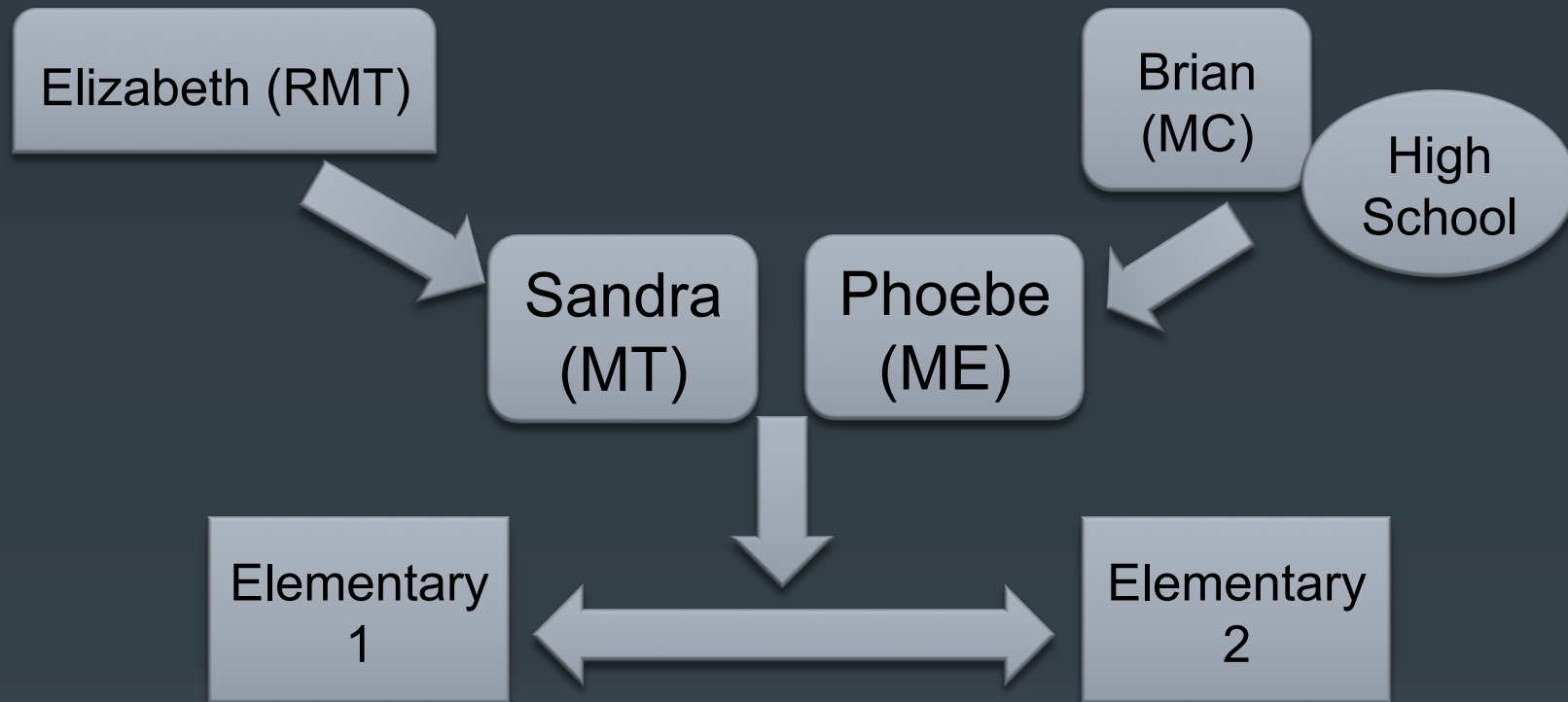
- *Setting:* Two elementary schools where the music educator and music therapist traveled each week.
- Ethnically diverse population
- Over 50% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch
- Schools had self-contained classrooms for some students with autism spectrum disorder.
- Students received music therapy once a week.
- Students received music education once every three days.

# *Actors:*



- Phoebe: A first-year music teacher (ME for music educator)
- Sandra: A second-year music therapist (MT for music therapist)
- Brian: K – 12 Music Coordinator for Madison School District (MC for Music Coordinator)
- Elizabeth: Clinical Coordinator and Co-Director of Regional Music Therapy Services (RMT)

# The Case



## The Madison School District

## *Events:*

- Interviews with all actors
- Observations of Phoebe's classes
- Interviewed Sandra and Phoebe twice
  - Once before and once after they observed each other working with students.



# Processes:

- I focused on the teacher and teaching methods
- Strategies employed for working with learning differences
- “A day in the life of Phoebe (ME)”
- Did not focus on actions of students
- Did not observe Sandra (MT)



# *Data Collection*

- Took field notes during observations through jottings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011)
- Collected documents such as curriculum and lesson plans
- Created interview protocols (Creswell, 2013)
- Balanced main questions, follow-ups, and probes following Rubin and Rubin (2005):
  - Teaching methodology
  - Strategies for teaching special learners
  - Communication between personnel
  - Goals for music classes
  - Goals for music therapy sessions



# *Data Analysis*

- Recorded personal reflections as asides and commentaries in analytic memos (Emerson, et al., 2011).
- Transcribed interviews using HyperScribe software
- Used HyperResearch to create first and second cycle codes according to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014).
- To increase trustworthiness:
  - Triangulation
  - Peer debriefing
  - Member checking





# Findings

Four emergent themes:

- Issues of communication
- Goal differences in each discipline
- Feelings of not being valued
- Adaptations in the classroom



# *Issues of Communication*

- Music teachers and music therapists have not met before this study
- All actors felt they would benefit from collaboration



Brian (MC): I think it's fascinating to find out the difference between music education and music therapy. What are they doing over there? What are we doing in our classrooms? I know it sounds obvious, we're teaching music, but maybe there's something about this music, the way we can reach a child, a way that we didn't know.

# *“Imposter Syndrome”*

- Elizabeth (RMT) explained a possible barrier to communication:

It's hard when you're fresh out of school and you know that feeling of like, “I'm pretending to be a music therapist, I'm playing music therapist.” You know, when you first started doing it? You don't trust that you have all of the tools, right? But you need to go in as the expert and then also know when it's appropriate to ask questions, when the teacher might know better than you, and how to work together.

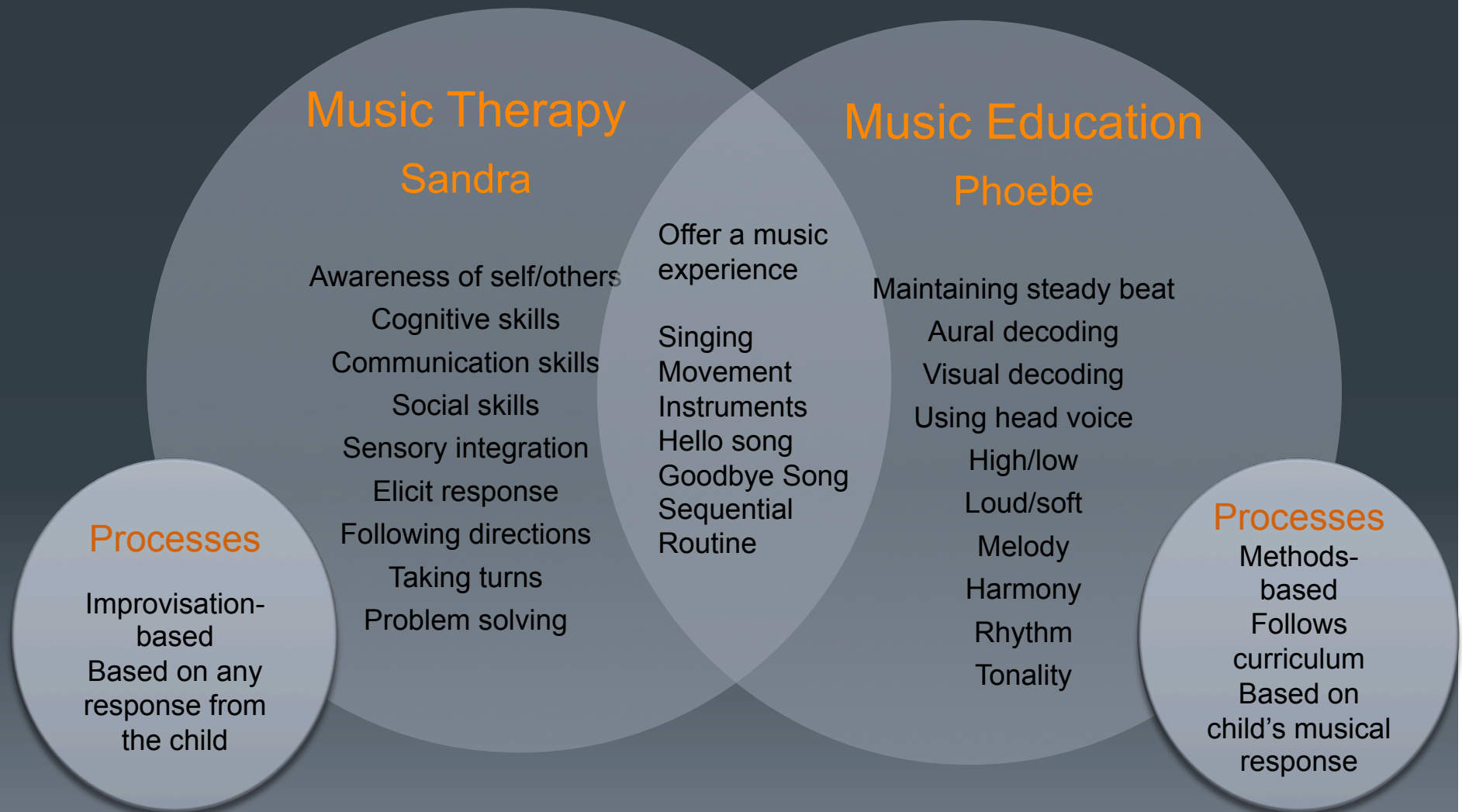


# Other communication issues

- Both Phoebe (ME) and Sandra (MT) did not receive IEP or 504 plans
- Sandra did not feel that she had an opportunity to provide feedback regarding student progress.
- They both felt that no one was interested in what they had to say.



# Same Modality, Different Goals



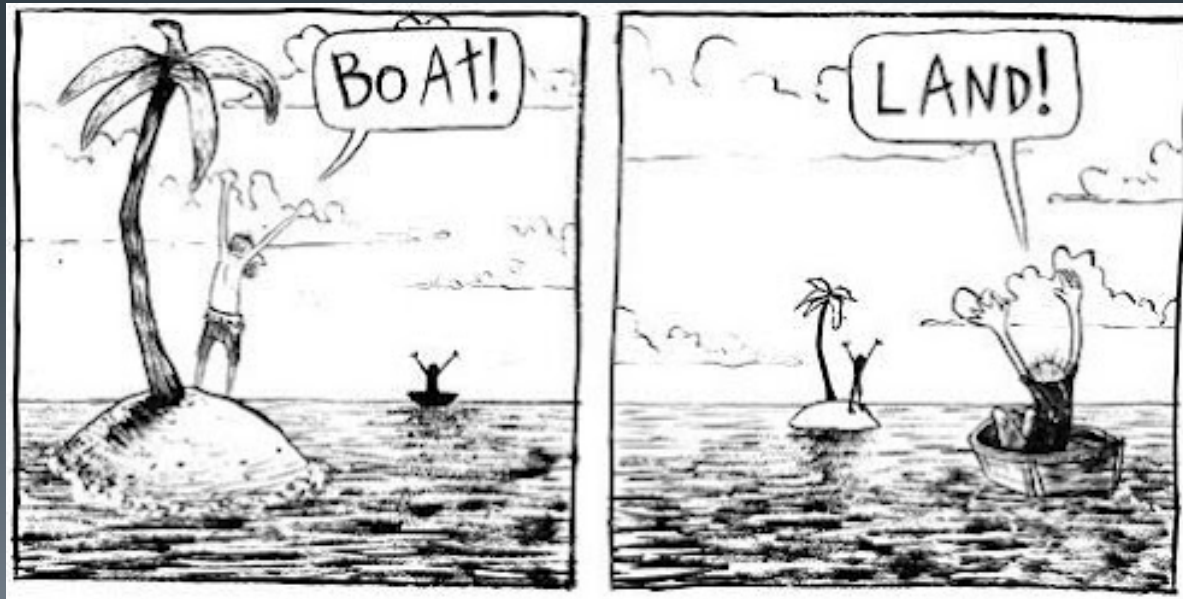
# Sample of Phoebe's (ME) Lesson Plan Template

MAP Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Rotation #: \_\_\_\_\_

Skill Area		Objectives	ES 1	ES 2	-
S V	Vocal Exploration				
	Echo Song/Call and Response				
	Simple Song				
	Arioso/Listening				
M L & D	Steady Beat				
	Creative Movement/Exploration				
	Game				
	Action Song/Finger Play				
M L	Vocabulary/About				

# Sandra's (MT) observations

- She described music therapy goals in Phoebe's class:
  - Vocalizations as group gathering
  - Maintaining a beat as supporting one another musically along with self-regulation
  - Activities involving rests or loud/soft as problem solving



Depends on  
perspective.



# Phoebe's (ME) observations

- Noticed that it was improvisation-based
- Only 2 – 4 songs/activities compared to 8 – 10 in music class
- Focused on the individual rather than the group
- Sandra was in close proximity with the students



# *“Music self-actualization”*

- Phoebe (ME) was impressed by how often Sandra (MT) used each child's name.
- She describe the music therapy experience as “music self-actualization”



# Feelings of not being valued

- Music therapy is just recreation
- No one is interested in their input about student progress.
- Feel like a vagabond
- Have been called a “bag lady”

Hidden in plain sight



# *Adaptations*

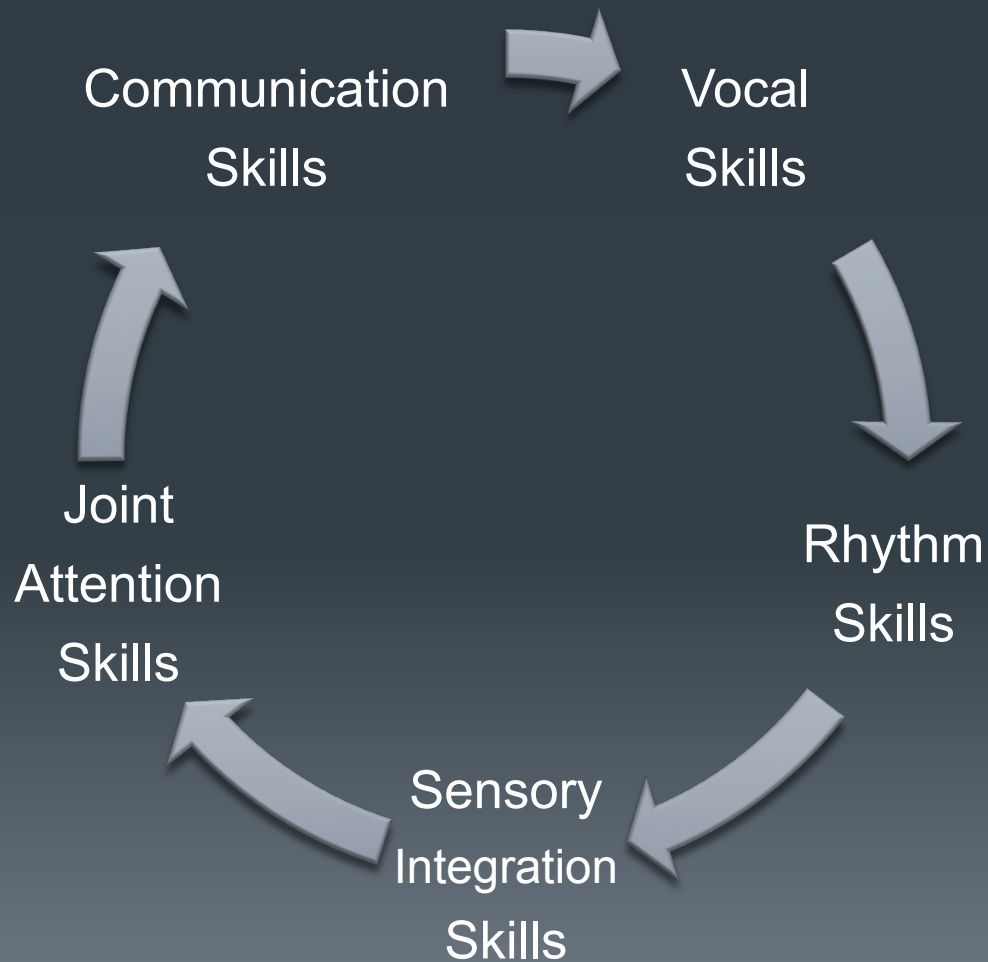
- Phoebe felt that she was not able to think about adaptations
- “I’m just trying to survive.”
- Sandra made adaptations throughout music therapy sessions, based on the child’s response.



# Implications

- Music therapists can help children with social and emotional goals so that they can learn in music class with a goal of inclusion.
- Music teachers can work with students in self-contained classrooms to gain music skills so that they can be a tool in music therapy and then lead to inclusion.
- Jellison (2015) Calls for schools to “Make inclusive music education a goal for all students with disabilities to the extent possible” (p.93).

# Collaborative Music Education/ Therapy Cycle (sample of skills)





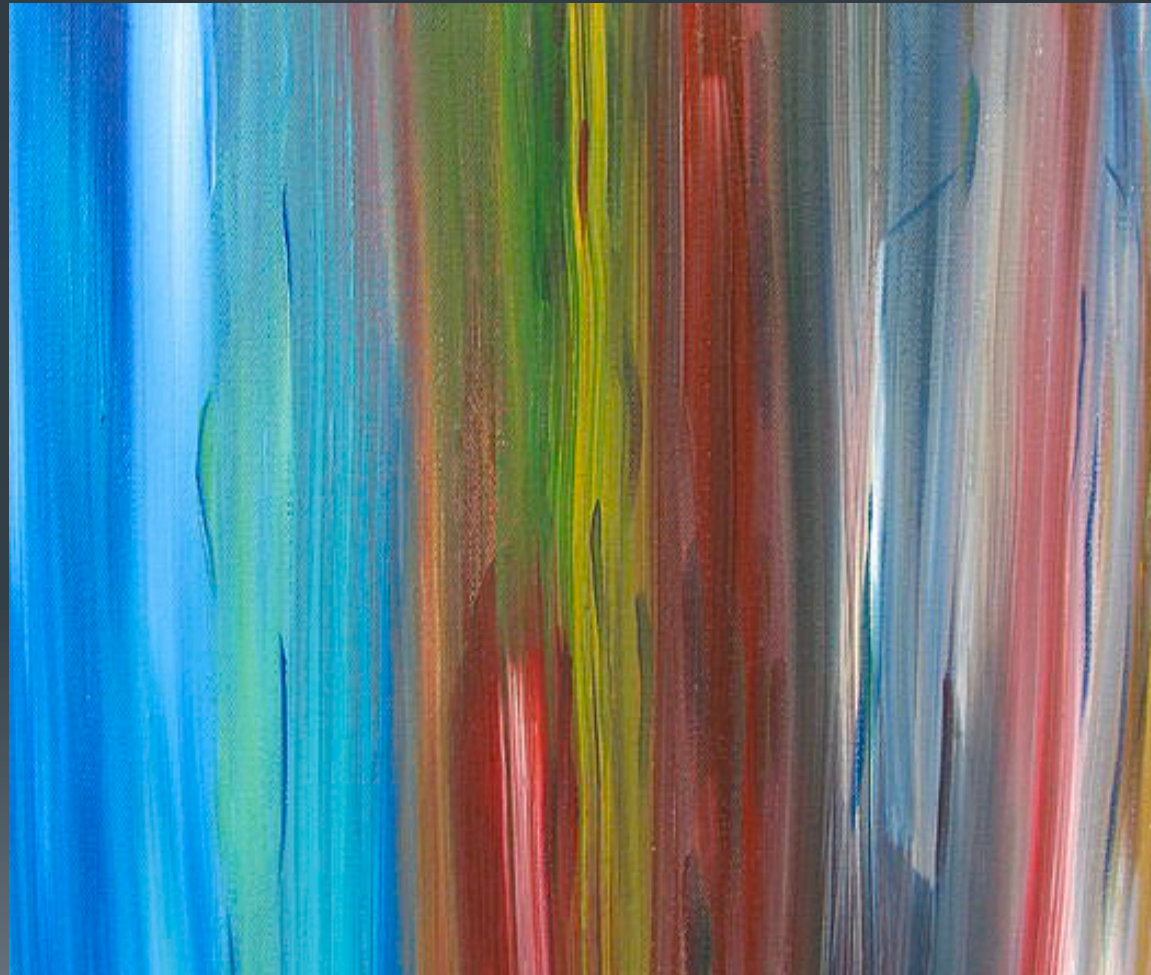
# Beneficial outcomes



- Brian explained that he was glad to learn of the music therapists and hopes to have them work with his teachers.
- He knows now that his teachers may not be getting the IEP or 504 plans, he will follow up to be sure they get them.
- He realized that his new teachers need more support and better classroom spaces.
- Phoebe (ME) and Sandra (MT) can now share ideas and resources
- Elizabeth did not realize that the music teachers did not know about the music therapists. She intends to make a point of seeking out the music teachers in the schools where her therapists work.

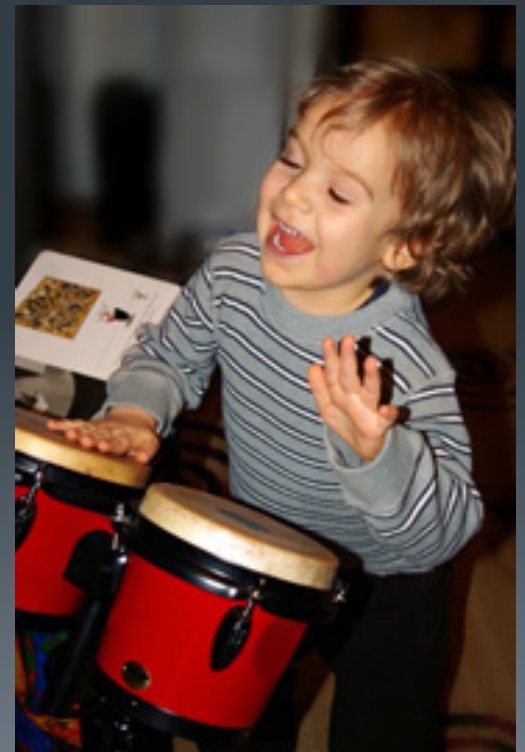



# Hidden in Plain Sight



# What they want us to know....

- Phoebe: I want you to know, I'm a first year teacher. I feel like I'm surviving the year and I want to be a really good teacher. I'm not there yet.
- Sandra: At the end of the day, I think that's what we're doing, we're building self-esteem. These kids have some boundaries, but they can overcome them and tap into that intrinsic musicality that we all have. We all have that.





*Alone we can do so little,  
together we can do so  
much.*

*~Helen Keller*

# Resources

- Adamek, M. S. & Darrow, A. A. (2010). *Music in special education*. Silver Spring, MD: The American Music Therapy Association.
- Hammel, A. M. & Hourigan, R. M. (2013). *Teaching music to students with autism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Jellison, J. A. (2015). *Including everyone: Creating music classrooms where all children learn*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.



# Thank You

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