

Using Music in Special Education to Develop Language and Literacy

Music can be incorporated into instructional programs to facilitate the development of communication, social interaction, and academic skills. Srinivasan and Bhat (2013) reviewed music and movement therapies that have been found to facilitate multisystem development in children with autism spectrum disorders. Adding a "music therapy" component to the instructional curriculum can benefit many students with learning difficulties.

Rock and rap music are being used to help students with communication disorders and special learning needs acquire basic language and literacy skills. Music that students enjoy motivates them to become actively involved in learning activities. It also helps children to use both the left and right hemispheres to learn new information. Rap music is great for teach rhyming words and basic literacy skills. Children can create their own raps using stories that they create. Music with a beat can be used to strengthen vocabulary, knowledge of basic facts, skill in producing speech sounds, listening comprehension, and other basic skills. Academic Communication Associates offers a variety of educational products for special education students that incorporate rock and rap music.

- **Rap 'n Rock** was created by James Bryer, a public school teacher in Florida, to strengthen basic language and literacy skills. Event sequencing, parts of speech, getting the main idea, question forms, synonyms/antonyms, and other skills are emphasized in this high-energy music activity program. The repetitive songs help students to remember information that is relevant to their performance in the classroom.
- **Rap it Up**, created by Mark Weakland, uses simple raps to build language and reading skills that are important in the early school grades. The program even includes rap beats without lyrics so that teachers and students can create their own raps.
- **In Tune with Language** uses songs in conjunction with stories, worksheets, and other materials to build language skills and strategies for effective social interaction. Rock, rap, country, and other musical styles motivate students to participate actively in the learning activities. In addition to building language skills, the songs and activities help children to understand individual differences and to respect others who are "different" from them. The constant beat that accompanies many rap and rock songs seems to work well with children who have autism and other severe disabilities. Music makes learning fun for both teachers and students!

To listen to music samples from these programs, visit www.acadcom.com

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