A Sensory-Friendly Musicking Experience

Emma Stumpf
Bowling Green State University, estumpf@bgsu.edu

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A Sensory-Friendly Musicking Experience

EMMA STUMPF
Project Context

• In the United States 1 in 59 children has been identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Centers For Disease Control, 2018).

• Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other Sensory Processing Disorders (SPDs) often become overwhelmed when being overstimulated through multiple senses at a time, processing more than two senses at a time can lead to sensory overload (Jones, Quigney & Huws, 2003).

• Sensory Friendly Concerts (SFCs) aim to provide an environment tailored to individuals with SPDs
Need for the Project

• “SFCs provide accommodations for persons with different sensory needs and promotes a safe and understanding environment where different responses to music are respected” (Shiloh, LaGasse, 2014, p. 2).

• Limited sensory friendly music making opportunities in NW Ohio.

• This event provided children with SPDs the chance to engage with music in a space tailored to their unique needs.
Purpose of the Project

• To research the unique needs of children with SPDs.

• To engage preservice teachers in the College of Musical Arts and the College of Education and Human Development in collaborative, service-based learning to serve the needs of children with SPDs.

• To provide a Sensory-Friendly Musicking Experience at Bowling Green State University.
Guiding Questions

• What characterizes the challenges that children with SPDs experience when engaging with traditional concert experiences?

• What strategies are commonly implemented to ensure that traditional concert experiences are accessible to children with SPDs and why?

• What elements are involved in creating and executing a sensory friendly music experience for children with SPDs?
• Examples of self-stimulatory behaviors (stimming) in an overload situation are hand flapping, scratching, snapping fingers, making vocal sounds.

• Howell (2004) highlighted behavioral tendencies of individuals with ASD and discussed the ways that these tendencies may present themselves in various musical situations.
  • Tendencies include loss of focus, extraneous movement, and verbal outbursts.

(Fründt et al., 2017; Howell, 2004; Quigney & Huws, 2003; Kerchner, 2014).
Literature Review

• Special considerations are made for children with SPDs in the music classroom. Considerations include:
  • Handling sensory overload in students.
  • Creating effective and accessible lesson plans to engage students with SPDs in active musicking with their peers.

Project Preparation

• Consultation with area experts:
  • ProMedica Toledo Children’s Hospital Autism Center
  • Autism Society of Northwest Ohio
  • Center for Autism, Findlay
  • BGSU professors and community members

• Launched volunteer application:
  • Required to come from the College of Musical Arts or the College of Education and Human development
  • Pre-requisite class requirements
  • Resume
  • Description of interest
Project Preparation

• Marketing:
  - Social media
  - Sentinel-Tribune
  - BG Independent News
  - Physical marketing materials
  - Interactive website

At BGSU, we believe music education is important for all children. We also know that some children experience challenges with processing sensory-saturated experiences, such as traditional concerts or other performances. On April 6th, we are hosting two sensory-friendly musicking experiences for students in our community with Autism or other sensory-processing disorders. Together with their families, we invite these students to engage with music in a safe space catered to their needs.
Website

• Session schedules
• Instrument pictures/demonstrations
• Activity demonstrations
• Concert recordings
• Logistical information (parking, etc.)
• Registration
Proposed Layout
Accommodations and Adaptations

- Subdued Lighting and noises
- Headphones and sunglasses
- Sensory room
- Flexible seating
Layout
Layout
Session Breakdown

SESSION OFFERINGS

• Two varied sessions, structured to address students’ differing needs
  • 1: More guidance and structure
  • 2: More independence and exploration

• Families self-selected session in registration process

SESSION BREAKDOWN

5 mins: Welcome, Introductions, Getting to Know the Space

25 mins: Musicking Activities

5 mins: Shake-it-Out Break

20 mins: Interactive Concert

5 mins: Closure and Farewells
Session Activities
Session Videos
Follow Up

• 80% of respondents reported that the event met or exceeded their expectations
  • The other 20% reported that the event met most of their expectations

• 60% of our attendees found out about our event online
  • The other 40% were via word-of-mouth or similar experiences

• When asked how we can make events such as this more successful in the future, families responded:
  • Recommendation to include white noise
  • “More events! We loved it!”
  • “This is a seriously neat event.”
Next Steps

• Replication of experience as annual event.
• Opportunities to make adaptations/ accommodations to existing performances on campuses.
• Musical partnerships with stakeholders in the event.
References


