

What Music Together Has Given ME!

by Beth Hampshire, MT-BC

In 2005, I set out to find an early childhood music and movement program to offer in our music therapy studios. Local families of young children with special needs simply couldn't find a good inclusion program, and I knew music was the perfect venue.

After researching many programs, I quickly decided Music Together was the best fit. With its developmentally appropriate approach to mixed-age music learning, its great music, and its strong research, the program was the obvious choice for our needs.

My expectations of Music Together were simple—I would provide an inclusion class for local families and bring in some extra revenue. I had no idea I would get SO MUCH MORE!

With our first semester underway, I began to realize that teaching Music Together was a craft. It takes practice to lead a GOOD class! I met with the music therapists in my studios

regularly to learn more about the program and hone our skills. We shared ideas for developing songs and incorporating PEMs, practiced rhythm and tonal patterns, and also shared fun adaptation ideas.

As I continued teaching classes and working with my colleagues to become a better teacher, I was indeed meeting my initial expectations of offering an opportunity for inclusion and making some extra income. But I also realized that there were *other* benefits of teaching Music Together.

For one, I was feeling musically fulfilled from this new addition to my work. Being a music therapist is an extremely rewarding job, but it can also be musically draining. When I work with patients in a therapeutic setting, I often use music in its most elemental form. Using those basic elements to shape non-musical goals, while maintaining musicality, is a constant challenge. Teaching Music Together offered

me a chance to put those elements together and build musical experiences in the classes.

Music Together gave me the opportunity to simply focus on making music. The freedom from tracking goals and objectives and collecting data was a welcome hour in a hectic week! Focusing on new ways to introduce and develop songs with novel instrumentation, vocal diversity, unique lyrics, and creative movement was simply FUN!

As the music therapists in my office, including myself, grew as Music Together teachers, I watched our classes reap the rewards. I observed children and their families embrace the songs and embed them into their lives, and I felt fulfilled. What fun to

welcome such amazing families into our community! Besides the addition of our new families, I also gained new colleagues. The Music Together staff in Princeton and the teachers in my area have become strong allies. I didn't know that the addition of the Music Together program would expand my community so much!

As I begin my sixth year of teaching Music Together, I have become

aware of another gift. Teaching classes has helped me and the therapists who work with me become *better music therapists*. When I observe music therapy sessions in my clinics, I hear a wider variety of keys and time signatures being used with clients. I notice more musically-sound experiences formed from simple vocals and rhythms. I watch engaging body percussion and movement being utilized. I see therapists better tuned into the musical contributions of clients. I hear therapists with stronger vocal skills. And the infusion of creativity is obvious!

I am so grateful to have discovered Music Together. The program has provided amazing benefits to my students, my families, and my clients—and, much to my surprise, to ME!

—Beth Hampshire is the Owner/Director of Music Therapy Services of Greater Atlanta

