

Hello everyone, my name is Kana Kamitsubo. I am a jazz/classical pianist as well as a music/piano teacher - just like many of you. I'm also a board-certified music therapist since 2008 and have been working with children with special needs at schools and sites in NYC, including my private practice, *Kana's Therapeutic Music*. While the field of music therapy distinguishes its practice from music education in that music therapists usually do not teach music in the sessions, I've started to feel that special needs children are also capable of learning music. Indeed, there are many children with autism who exhibit extraordinary musical skills. With this awareness, I have started to explore the ways to provide music education and piano instruction to children with special needs by integrating music therapy techniques into music teaching.

In 2008, I encountered Music Mind Games and found this method fits the music therapy population better than anything else I have known. I started to integrate Music Mind Games into my music classes/lessons with enthusiasm. I have been so impressed with how children with learning disabilities engage so completely when I use Music Mind Games with them. They are able to maintain focus for much longer spans of time than I would have expected. Music Mind Games is such a well-designed program that provides not only fun, but also very clear structures and consequences, which are the key factors for children, especially those who have problems focusing. The children I have used Music Mind Games with started successfully learning and soon improved their self-esteem as well. This enhanced their motivation to learn and their attention spans grew dramatically.

Of course, there are many strategies and considerations upon communicating with special needs children before they are ready for learning, but the contribution of Music Mind Games to their successful learning was very significant. It was amazing to see the 3-year old boy who could not sit on his chair for more than 10 seconds being able to learn and complete many games using materials such as *alphabet cards*, *blue jello cards*, *rhythm playing cards*, and *grand staff slates*.

As I develop my methods and start to share ideas with music teachers, I have become more aware that a lot of music teachers face situations where their students demonstrate disruptive behaviors and/or problems with attention and find difficulties working with them. I shared my ideas and methods with Michiko when I attended my second teacher-training workshop at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music in February 2011 and she encouraged me to share them with Music Mind Games teachers. In future articles, I would like to share the strategies I have discovered to prepare those students for learning activities. I will also discuss the games that I feel work well with special needs children and suggest some adjustments and modifications for students to successfully play and learn from them. I will also suggest techniques to introduce the games and materials so they won't over-stimulate students with attention deficits and learning disabilities.

Michiko and I are thinking to share my ideas through newsletters and possibly workshops. I would be happy to answer and to give suggestions and advice to interested teachers and parents. So, please feel free to contact me (kkamitsubo@gmail.com) if you have anything to discuss. Since these special needs children are very unique and the approach needs to be customized to each individual's uniqueness, the more specifically you describe your cases, the easier it will be for me to give my suggestions and advice.

Thank you and looking forward to hearing from you.

Kana Kamitsubo, MT-BC