

**SEF GRANTS IN ACTION: Music therapy and yoga offer special benefits**

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Posted May 17, 2018 at 10:00 AM

With the 2017 grant award to CORSE (Community of Resources for Special Education), Scituate Education Foundation (SEF) is proud to have contributed to the enhancement of the ongoing Therapeutic Wellness Student Programs: Music Therapy and Yoga. CORSE President, Tracy Johnston, gave us a little history of these programs.

“CORSE has been running Music Therapy and Yoga programs for the district since 2007, which began with a pilot program for the Early Childhood Center (ECC). Given its incredible impact on the students and staff, CORSE expanded and has continued these programs over the past 11 academic years to include all grades in the district, from ECC through the SHS iExcel class.”

Offered via an award-winning collaboration between CORSE and the South Shore Conservatory, music therapy offers students with special needs the opportunity to practice school-related concepts and skills in a motivational, social, and fun manner. Songs and activities, correlated with classroom themes, help to build language, thinking, and social skills.

A teacher in the Primary Learning Center reports that, “The music therapy program is a great success. For our students with speech and language challenges, the music helps them in so many ways ranging from increasing phonological awareness, rhyming, rhythm and patterns - all foundational pre-literacy and math skills needed to make effective progress. The main thing is it is very motivating and all of the children really enjoy it!”

The benefits of the yoga program are familiar to all who practice this mind-body exercise: mindfulness, concentration, physical ease, and emotional balance.

“It is a great opportunity for students to participate in group exercise and wellness,” says Tracy Johnston.

At the middle school level, teachers recognize that the students are able to use the yoga breathing prompts that they have learned to refocus on academic tasks.

While there’s plenty of serious research that supports the measurable developmental and behavioral benefits that these therapeutic programs have for students with special needs, when you see them in action, it’s not so serious.

We asked Katina Bentley, who took the photos that accompany this piece, to tell us about her visit: “The energy and enthusiasm in the classroom was palpable. From the minute the instructor walked through the door, the students were eager to participate and engage in this hands-on, multisensory learning opportunity.”

And from a parent, ”[my son] loved his music therapy class and the music therapist was wonderful! I had the opportunity to sit in class today and I witnessed all the children thoroughly enjoy the class. Each child had a smile on their face as they played their guitars and it was really a joy to see!”





