

Michaela Goodloe  
“Bridging Resources”  
A Pilot Study: Connecting music therapy students with on campus clinics  
Summer Arts Research Grant Proposal  
Utah State University

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## “Bridging Resources”

### A Pilot Study: Connecting music therapy students with on campus clinics

I have been working with the Aggies Elevated program at Utah State University as a student mentor since fall of 2019. Last semester as I began my first music therapy practicum experience, I started to question why on campus programs like Aggies Elevated did not have connections to our music therapy program? The population I served in my practicum setting had very similar needs to the students I was working with through Aggies Elevated which inspired me to find a way to build some sort of connection between Aggies Elevated and music therapy students. The summer arts research grant will give me the opportunity to conduct a pilot study which will examine the facilitation of student-led group music therapy to support the needs of Aggies Elevated students. This grant will allow me to focus on the project by covering my living expenses and costs of supplies needed for this study.

Aggies Elevated is a program at Utah State University that allows students with intellectual disabilities to earn a two-year certificate in Integrated College and Community Studies. These students are offered the full college experience, including living in the dorms, taking classes geared to their specific interests, and having part time jobs or internships. Aggies Elevated utilizes a person-centered model which gives students the tools they need to reach goals in areas such as career development, independent living, and community engagement. The majority of students who complete this program go on to find full time jobs and complete associate or bachelor's degrees.

For this project I will work with my mentor, Allison Fox, Clinical Assistant Professor of Music Therapy, to conduct a qualitative study examining the use of group music therapy with Aggies Elevated students to increase group cohesion and decrease anxiety around starting college. I chose these goals based on my observations working with these students as well as insight from the director of the program, Sue Reeves. A strong sense of community and support systems are an integral part of each student's success in this program. Coming to college for the first time can be challenging for many students and students with disabilities have extra barriers to navigate. My hope is that the use of music therapy can help them get comfortable with their peers and ease some of the anxiety they may feel about starting the semester.

#### Specifics of the study:

- 8 weekly 1 hour virtual sessions (see attached, “Session 1”) over the summer leading up to the start of the 2021 fall semester.
- Open to first year and second year Aggies Elevated students (second year students can act as “mentors” and help to build the first year students’ community on campus)
- Data will be collected based on the students’ response to a survey given at the start and completion of the study and observations made by the music therapy student each week.
- A consent form detailing the program’s intentions and structure will be sent to students and their families, and participation will be voluntary.
- This research will be overseen by the USU institutional review board and will follow all guidelines and recommendations to maintain an ethical practice.

- Due to scheduling, this will be an open group, meaning that students are encouraged to attend every week, but if that is not possible they may drop in whenever they are available.
- I will meet weekly with my mentor to review session plans and data.

Projected Outcomes:

- Improved group cohesion
- Increased support network for Aggies Elevated students
- Increase use of healthy coping skills
- Improved group communication (possibly more openness/willingness to engage in difficult conversations.)
- Create partnerships between university programs, possibility to continue services during the academic school year.
- Create opportunities for music therapy students to practice clinical skills, especially group facilitation.
- Possibility to build relationships and provide services to other university clinics.

I am hopeful that the success of this project will open doors for music therapy students and the Aggie community for many years to come. There are so many clinics on our campus that could benefit from music therapy services including early intervention programs, speech and language services and clinical rehabilitation counseling. Music therapy students are required to complete four semesters of clinical practicum experience and several hours of clinical observation. Currently practicum experiences take place all over Cache Valley and into Idaho. I think this project has the potential to host future practicum sites and observations closer to home by providing services to programs already established on campus.

I plan to present my findings from this project to USU music therapy students at the beginning of fall semester during a weekly seminar for juniors and seniors in the program. I also plan to apply to present my project at the fall 2021 Utah Association of Music Therapists (UMTA) conference and the Spring 2022 Western Region American Music Therapy Association (WRAMTA) conference. I have not received or applied for any other funding for this project.

## Projected Session Plan:

### **Session 1- I am and I Belong**

Setup and Material Requirements: All participants will join the group via Zoom. Materials will be emailed to students prior to the session.

Group Participants: 6-8 Aggies Elevated Students and music therapy student (MTS)

1. Warm-Up (10 minutes): Group Leader will welcome participants to the group. MTS will lead participants in the Hello song activity “Hello You Beautiful Thing.” Leader will then ask each participant to offer a sound or movement to express how they are feeling in that moment one at a time going around the circle after first modeling an example. Participants will mirror back each presented sound or movement after it is offered.

Goals: To welcome group members and establish intentions. To promote body awareness. To set up a safe space. To enhance focus and attention. To foster connections between group members. To assess where each participant is emotionally through their chosen expression.

Variations: Offer percussion instruments for group members to provide a sound or rhythm on an instrument that embodies their current feeling.

2. Intervention (10 minutes): “Hello Song Lyric Analysis” Watch the lyric video to “Hello You Beautiful Thing” Invite participants to share things that they are “waiting for” Prompt the students to come up with an adjective to describe themselves. Take turns replacing the word “Beautiful” in the song with each person’s adjective. Ask that all other members who also feel like they possess that trait or quality to sing along with each statement. Pause and allow for silences.

Process/Discussion (5 minutes): Possible questions: How did it feel to share your traits/qualities? Was it easy or difficult to think of things to share? What qualities that were mentioned stood out to you most? How did it feel when the other members felt the same way as you? When they didn’t?

Goals: To increase feelings of identity and connectedness. To begin to incorporate music making in a non-threatening way. To boost feelings of autonomy and security. To enhance group cohesion, mutual support.

Variations: Include another round of sharing revolving around the statement, “I am not...”, etc.

3. Intervention (20 minutes): “Puzzle”. Invite participants to get their printed puzzle piece and any art materials that they have access to/feel drawn to. Prompt: Ask participants to think of qualities/traits/interests that reflect who they are and what they are bringing to the group and depict these qualities on their chosen puzzle piece using arts materials. Play live music as students are working on their puzzle pieces.

Process/Discussion (5 minutes): Come together and discuss pieces created individually. Ask participants to put the puzzle together and reflect on the resulting collaborative artistic expression of the group. Does this feel like it accurately depicts us as individuals? As a group? Promote group discussion.

Goals: To deepen group connections and establish/honor individual identities within the group. To view the group as a whole in addition the sum of its parts. To establish group norms and comfortability.

4. Closing (5 minutes): Goodbye Song parody of “See you Again”

Personal Statement:

Receiving the summer arts research grant to conduct this study will help me to find a fulfilling internship, conduct further research with this population, and prepare me for a master's program.

In order to become a board certified music therapist, I will need to complete a 6-9 month internship following the completion of my undergraduate degree at USU. Over the past few years I have found that I am passionate about working with adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Unfortunately there are limited internship sites that specialize in this population. I have selected three internship sites that seem to align with my goals however these are highly sought after, well established programs with very competitive selection processes. Receiving this grant and conducting research as an undergraduate will help me to stand out among a pool of highly qualified applicants.

Through working with this population I have found that there has been very little research done regarding adults with disabilities and music therapy. Without substantial research, it is difficult for this population to receive music therapy services. I hope to continue conducting this crucial research as a professional music therapist to help these individuals obtain the support they need, like music therapy, to have the best quality of life possible. Having the opportunity to learn these research skills as an undergraduate will help me feel confident in my future research endeavors.

I am interested in attending Heidelberg University in Germany to earn my master's in music therapy. I know that for my master's thesis I will need to conduct a substantial research project. The summer arts research grant will give me the research experience I need to feel prepared for graduate school.