

**MUSIC AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS
IN CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

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I hereby certify that this thesis
has not been submitted for a higher degree
to any other university or institution

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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this thesis was derived from an interest in the role of music for children experiencing learning difficulties. This interest was extended to determine whether participation in music activities can facilitate the academic, cognitive, and social development of children with learning difficulties in the classroom.

Information in the literature indicates that music is a cognitively challenging activity involving skills of attention, comprehension, memory, problem solving, social, and listening. A difficulty lies however, in accounting for the acquisition of these skills through music. This study utilised the skill of listening, a component of music programs in use in Australian schools, to examine whether music activities could develop cognitive processing skills in children with learning difficulties. Two programs identified with developing listening skills, a music program and a story-telling program, were implemented by teachers with students in Junior Assessment Classes in the Australian Capital Territory. The design of the study involved applying the programs during an intervention period, the administration of pretests, posttests and postposttests to the students participating in the study, and students selected as case studies.

The results from the experimental data indicated that participation in regular music activities by students with learning difficulties had a positive effect on the development of their receptive vocabulary skills, phonological processing skills, and listening comprehension skills. Observational data, and information obtained about the case study students, also indicated that participation in the music activities provided opportunities for active interactions leading to an improvement in the social skills of the students.