



# BRAIN matters

an e-newsletter from **THE UPSIDE NMOD**  
organization

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## JAZZING UP THE BRAIN: Music as an Accelerated Learning Tool

*By Frank J. Kros, President of The Upside Down Organization*

"Music...can name the unnamable and communicate the unknowable."

- Leonard Bernstein

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In the early 1970s, sixth grade teacher Terri Korinek at Papillion Junior High School in Nebraska conducted a "lyric exploration" with her students using Don McClean's popular ballad "American Pie." She had her students analyze McClean's lyrics; research the historical content; interpret McClean's reasons for word choice, verse organization and phrasing; and compose songs of their own reflecting an intense emotional experience. Korinek's use of music to teach these critical skills had a profound impact on me — one of those sixth grade musical analysts! Since that powerful experience, I frequently wondered why music wasn't used more often in the many educational settings I later experienced. It seemed that the older I became the less likely teachers used music to enhance or improve

Historically, we know that music is one of the most enduring constructs of human behavior. Modern homo sapiens have been playing bon instruments and saw harps for at least 30 thousand years. All human societies seem to be hardwired ever known have had music, and musical appreciation seems to be hardwired into us. Today, sophisticated research techniques and neuroimaging technologies confirm that the proper use of music in learning environments can improve memory, attentiveness, concentration and cognitive activation while calming stress and activating spatial and analytical brain function. With some many benefits (and so much enjoyment!) arising from the use of music in the learning process, teachers, counselors and therapists can use music to improve their instructional skills and have a lot of fun doing it.



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**Boost Memory, Concentration and Focus:** Experiment with Baroque music in the background while students are learning spelling lists, absorbing facts or reading. Music composed by Bach, Handel or Telemann that is 50-80 beats per minute will help you create an atmosphere of focus that inspires deep concentration. In the counseling or therapeutic arena, use this strategy during non-verbal periods when clients are rereading, journaling or reflecting on new information.

**Jumpstart Creativity:** Classical-style music is also an effective facilitator of the creative process. In his book, *Music and Learning: Integrating Music in the Classroom*, Chris Brewer recommends works like "Piano Forte" by Eric Daub, "Oceans" by Christopher Peacock and "Fairy Ring" by Mike Rowland to enhance creative writing, problem-solving, goal-setting and brainstorming as well as background music for project work.

**Inspire Active Learning** : Like Korinek's lyric exploration of "American Pie," incorporate music to provide depth and emotion to historical or topical information and increase the number of memory hooks students can use to recall information. As Eric Jensen states in his book, *Top Tunes for Teaching*, "[M]usic relates information about history, romance, social events, politics, entertainment, and even science." Examples abound, but a few of my favorites include using music about the Vietnam War to facilitate discussion about its impact (e.g., "The Ballad of the Green Berets" by Sgt. Barry Sadler, "Ohio" by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, "Still in Saigon" by The Charlie Daniels Band); and Native American music to enhance understanding and perspective on the settlement of the American West in the 19th century (e.g., "Traditional Lakota Songs" by The Porcupine Singers and "Takini: Music and Songs of the North American Sioux").

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In the therapeutic arena, my colleague Heather Higgins uses "Adam's Song" by Blink 182 and similar contemporary music to facilitate exploration of topics such as depression and suicide. If there is a topic you are teaching or counseling on, there is probably a song written about it. A great resource is [The Green Book of Songs by Subject](#) (5th Edition) by Jeff Green. *The Green Book* provides songs by topic, subject and theme and is an indispensable resource for using music to expand your topical or historical lesson.

One of the best examples of active learning and music I've experienced was done by The Children's Guild's Dottie Timberlake, AISAunders, and Kelly Spanoghe in "[Jazzing Up Instruction](#)." This combination CD and workbook utilizes the stars and songs of jazz to enhance reading skills in beginning and intermediate readers. To learn more about "Jazzing Up Instruction," see the Upside Down Toolbox.

Try just one of these techniques and you'll improve the richness, enjoyment and effectiveness of the learning experience you're trying to create. Once you've mastered one technique, add another. The response and enthusiasm of your audience will keep you motivated to explore even more ways to incorporate music into your skill set.

## UPSIDE DOWN TOOLBOX "Jazzing Up Instruction" - Grades K-5

Looking for a way to intrigue the brightest students in your elementary class while motivating those who are disinterested or falling behind? Stop looking Jazz-ing Up Instruction is here.

["Jazzing Up Instruction"](#) was created for all the children in your class, including those who are talented and gifted, or learning disabled. It reaches all children because it addresses different cognitive learning styles, engages students in the learning process, stimulates creativity, and promotes active learning.



Music is an effective tool for learning and evidence suggests that music plays an important role in brain development. Music makes learning fun, and "Jazzing Up Instruction" is guaranteed to bring each lesson to life. Lyrics are easy to learn, and students will love the rhythms and tunes. Class will really swing! And the Jazz for Kids CD will also introduce children to a truly American art form.

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Every lesson plan has been thoroughly classroom-tested and they really work. Children will improve their reading and problem-solving skills, and teachers will be able to foster connections across subject areas. Whether used by the elementary classroom teacher or homeschooling parent, "Jazzing Up Instruction" will allow teachers to create learning environments that support every learning style. But these songs do more than pass on an art form. Many were selected because of the character lessons embedded in their lyrics. For example, one song expresses the behavior one expects from a friend, another emphasizes the importance of perseverance, another highlights why doing things right matters, and another touts the importance of staying in school.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

### Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families



[Casa Pacifica](#) is a crisis-care and residential treatment center located in Camarillo, Calif., with satellite offices in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, Calif. Casa's mission is to provide hope and help to abused, neglected, and at-risk children and their families. They are one of the largest non-profit providers of children's mental health services in the south-central coast area of California. More than 400 children and their families are served daily by Casa, and since opening its doors in 1994 more than 6,500 children have been helped by their services.

CasaPacifica is committed to incorporating best practices that will reduce and eventually eliminate the use of seclusion and restraint in both residential and school settings. As a part of reaching this worthy goal, Casa partnered with [The Upside Down Organization](#) (UDO) on a workshop series to educate staff about adolescent brain development and behavior interventions focused on understanding and prevention. In addition, Casa constructed its



Casa constructed its own version of [The Children's Guild's](#) Multi-Sensory De-escalation Room (MSDR), a state-of-the-art facility to proactively teach students how to self-regulate their own behavior. Known as "Seaville," CasaPacifica's MSDR combines brain research, child development theory and occupational therapy principles into an nautically-themed sanctuary where students learn to recognize and positively respond to their escalation behavior.

UDO is proud to recognize [Casa Pacifica](#) for their commitment to reducing seclusion and restraint and for their innovation and dedication in providing their students a whole new way to manage powerful and often overwhelming emotions. Congratulations, Casa!

## ASK FRANK

### Frank J. Kros, UDO president, answers your questions about kids and the brain.

**Dear Frank**// I'm a new parent and have heard that playing classical music for my infant/toddler will make them smarter. Is this true?// **Mozart-playing Mom**



**Dear Mozart-playing Mom**// Unfortunately, no. One of the most enduring myths in all of brain science is this so-called "Mozart Effect," the idea that playing classical music to babies and young children will increase intelligence. The myth has its roots in a 1993 study of college students in which the students showed performance improvement on a spatial reasoning task after listening to a Mozart sonata. Nobody paid much attention to the study until 1997 when author Don Campbell combined his mysticism with some generously interpreted research results to produce the bestseller "The Mozart Effect."

So influential was Campbell's work that it impacted public policy. In the late 1990s, both Georgia and Florida passed legislation touting The Mozart Effect and funding distribution of classical CD stores (Georgia) and mandating state-funded day care centers to play classical music every day (Florida). Nobody questioned how the 1993 study on college students that showed a brief (15-20 minute) increase in a highly specialized skill (spatial reasoning) could support a claim that Mozart increases IQ in young children. To my knowledge, no scientist has ever published a study testing the impact on the intelligence of babies! Nonetheless, the myth persists as evidenced by your question.



What to do instead of bathing your toddler in Beethoven? Have them play music for you. Learning to play a musical instrument has many research-supported benefits to brain development including improved spatial abilities, language development and attention span. Even that seemingly disorganized cacophony of banging on pots with a wooden spoon is helpful. It's not as beautiful as Beethoven, but it's more likely to grow more dendrites!

If you have a question for Frank, e-mail [info@upside-downorganization.org](mailto:info@upside-downorganization.org), subject: "Ask Frank."

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Guide to upcoming events and Upside Down workshops

**July 24-27**

[Brain Expo](#)

Orlando, Fla.

**Aug. 4-6**

[Open Workshop: "What's the Brain Got to do with it? Using Neuroscience to Deliver Phenomenal Presentations"](#)

*Presented by Frank J. Kros*

Baltimore

**Aug. 4-7**

[School Health Interdisciplinary Program Conference](#)

*Keynote by Frank J. Kros, Aug. 7*

Ellicott City, Md.

**Aug. 13-15**

[Texas Network of Youth Services](#)

Austin, Texas

**Aug. 28**

University of Maryland School of Social Work  
*"A New View of AD/HD" presented by Frank J. Kros*  
Largo, Md.

**Sept. 6**

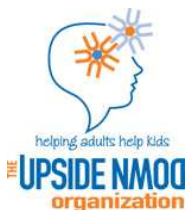
Child Welfare Academy  
*"A New View of AD/HD" presented by Terry Long*  
Caroline County, Md.

**Sept. 12**

University of Maryland School of Social Work  
*"Giving a Fish a Bath: Educating and Protecting the Adolescent Brain" presented by Frank J. Kros*  
Baltimore

[\[Register for an Open Workshop\]](#)

[\[Full Event Calendar\]](#)



**The Upside Down Organization (UDO)**, formerly The Institute for Transformation Education, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the education and advocacy of Transformation Education, an organizational philosophy and operating system for child-serving organizations. UDO offers professional development experiences, mentoring services, learning tools and organizational branding that help improve the skills of people who educate, parent, guide and care for young people.

Visit [UDO online](#), contact 410-444-5415 or e-mail [info@upside-downorganization.org](mailto:info@upside-downorganization.org).