

## Story on Elwyn students

The benefits of including music in the lives of special needs children are endless. Music is able to bring smiles and excitement to students who are usually lethargic and can open the doors of creativity for others who before were unable to express themselves. For example, during the James D Ensembles' *Origins of Popular Music* program at the Davidson School at Elwyn, a boy raised his hand and asked how the musicians were able to put the songs that they hear in their heads into music. This excellently constructed question by a boy with both developmental and emotional disabilities showed that he felt a connection to the music that he was hearing, and it inspired him to want to explore a new avenue of his own creativity through musical composition. In addition, it suggested a striking capacity for meta-cognition – thinking about how others think. In posing this question, he leapt over a huge developmental hurdle.

Music is also able to act as a communication bridge, bringing students together who normally would not associate with one another. For example, during the aforementioned program, the ensemble began to play 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow.' Immediately a young Caucasian teenager, who studies interpretive modern dance with their music therapist, stood up and began to dance. A minute later three African-American teenage girls (who typically do not socialize with the modern dance student) began to encourage their friend to dance as well. When one of the African-American girls stood up and took the hands of the Caucasian girl, the entire room immediately broke out into applause and cheers, and they danced together until the song was complete. Deborah Konar, Physical Education teacher, mentioned that she always had difficulty getting these girls to participate in physical education classes, and that it was amazing how eager the girls were to get up, dance, and move around to the music during the Musicopia program. Finally, Konar noted that these girls exhibited "a spontaneous and, more importantly, an appropriate reaction to the music" and that she was going to begin using music during her own classes, as she could see how the music motivated the students to participate.