



Suzanne Kane-Filshill Music Therapist



I am a Music Therapist at a facility for children and adults who have visual impairments as well as other challenges.

How long have you been a music therapist?

I have been at this school for 17 years, and before that, I was a Music Therapist at a mental health facility for 3 years.

Where do you currently work?

The name of my facility is Royer-Greaves School for Blind. It is in Paoli, PA.

How do you spend most of your time at work?

Most of my time at work is making music! All day long! Either in group sessions, jamming and rocking out, or in individual sessions, meeting goals and making progress! I play the guitar, ukulele, drums, bells, shakers, piano, guiros and tambourines! It's a very musical job!!!

Why did you choose this career?

I thought that I wanted to be a professional violinist as my career, or maybe a psychiatrist, it was a toss up of one of those. I went to a college fair and heard about Music Therapy and that was it! It was a combination of the two jobs I was interested in – a perfect match!



SUZANNE'S FUN FACTS

My family loves to watch old shows like "Malcolm in the Middle" in order. We also all LOVE musicals and try to see one each year.

What did you do to prepare for this career?

I had to audition for a college that had Music Therapy, and chose Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. I say audition because it was a school of music and you need to audition for a music school. After I got into the University, I had to study music, psychology and education all at the same time. That gave me a degree in Music Therapy. I had to do a 1,000-hour internship after that, and then take a Board Certification exam.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy everything about my job! (OK, maybe not all of the paperwork...) I get to work with people who LOVE music and they are their very best selves when working with me. If there is a student who has to work on arm movements, they might give their other therapists a hard time, but if I give them a drum stick, they are moving their arm and not even thinking about it! I love when it is time for one of our concerts and the students/adults are so happy to hear the audience clap for them! It is the highlight of all of the practicing! I love it when a student who can't speak very well opens their mouth and sings a song!! There are so many things that I love about my job!

What do you find most challenging about your job?

My job is so great, I don't have very many challenges, but sometimes a student receives so many different services that we have to figure out who gets to see who, and I have to make sure that I can keep my schedule up to date.

What is one piece of advice you would give to a young person who is interested in your profession?

If you love music, but don't want to have to perform as a job, Music Therapy might be a great choice. Also, you may need to really search for a job because not every place knows what Music Therapy is. But if you can talk enough about it, some places may even start a new program just because you told them how important Music Therapy is.



More about Suzanne's job as a Music Therapist:



I am a Music Therapist at Royer-Greaves School for Blind, a facility for children and adults who have visual impairments as well as other challenges. The children are in school and the adults are in a training facility. The school teaches life skills and Braille for those who are able to learn it.

Everyone at the school and the adult center get music therapy groups every day! The children also get individual music therapy sessions. In the group sessions, everyone gets to choose which instruments they would like to play and they get to pick the songs they want to play/sing. We have a "Hello" and "Goodbye" song, we sing about the date and greet everyone by name.

During the individual sessions, I follow the students' goals and help them meet those goals. If they need help speaking, we use devices that they can push to say the words for them. If they have trouble holding instruments, I help them come up with different ways that they can still be successful with the instruments. We write songs together and sometimes they learn instruments like piano and ukulele. We have a Winter show and a Spring concert where their families come to see all of their progress.

