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Special-needs students reap benefits of music classes

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Director of Outreach Programs Lisa Sandagata said costs to local schools range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 a year. Yorktown pays \$100 per session, putting the cost around \$8,000 annually for the two classes of more than two dozen students in all.

But the benefits, say educators, are invaluable.

"It's valuable from a K-12 perspective that we have this wonderful music program," Mohansic Principal Susan Berry said.

In her school, the participating grade levels are able to collaborate both with one another and with the larger curricular programs in which all these students participate to varying degrees.

Sandagata said the program works because music engages students socially, cognitively and other ways and helps them learn to focus, listen, collaborate and be confident. The music itself, actually, is less the goal than these processes the students are developing.

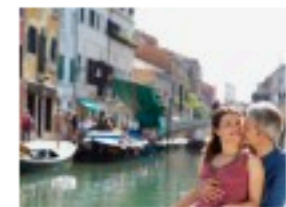
Back in Haggerty's class, Brown displayed an impressively varied repertoire, transitioning from "My Girl" to "The Addams Family Theme" to "Amazing Grace," and finishing up with Erin Mitchell's favorite, "Don't Stop Believing," which the whole class knows as the song from the TV show "Glee."

For Mitchell, 16, this is about the best part of her week.

"I get to sing with my friends," she said. "I'd have to say that's a very important thing."

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