



Giving sound massages to each other fosters social behavior. (Photo: Manfred Kornherr)

We'll Make Munich Ring¹

by Ursula Balmer, Silvia Schindler, Prof. Hella Erler, and Prof. Luis Erler

Preface

The Munich sound project refers to an initiative by Dr. Eleonore Hartl-Grötsch to apply the results of the Regensburg project "Sound Break" to daycare facilities in the state capital of Munich (cf. Hella and Luis Erler: "Project 'Sound Break' Regensburg 2009" in: Sound Massage Therapy 7/2010, pp. 30-34).

The following article, which details the history of the Munich Sound Project from 2009 to today, was created – as was the entire project – in cooperation with Hella and Luis Erler, Ursula Balmer, and Silvia Schindler. As the "Munich Sound Team" – in close collaboration with Dr. Hartl-Grötsch and daycare staff – we initiated, supported, and together

experienced the expansion of sound therapy in Munich's nursery and daycare facilities. Today, six years after launch, this article is a welcome opportunity to take stock of the project.

Pilot project Sound Break Munich 2010/2011

In the following, Ursula and Silvia describe the steps of the project and their experiences during the project's progression:

In our work as consultants for quality and education in daycare facilities of the state capital Munich, we were asked to attend a conference held by the European Association

¹ During preparation for the workshop for sound breaks at the KaleidoPäd Conference 2015 in Munich, one teacher spontaneously and excitedly yelled out "We'll make Munich ring". We find this exclamation to be a fitting title for our article.



The soft sounds of singing bowls are ideally suited for hearing exercises. (Photo: Manfred Kornherr)

for Sound Massage Therapy e.V. on the topic of "Building bridges into the therapeutic-medical reality". Within the framework of employee healthcare, new ways and opportunities to build an occupational healthcare plan were to be explored. The strike by daycare personnel in 2009 was the starting point of these discussions. The strike brought the physical and psychological burdens associated with the profession to light for the first time. Stressful situations played the greatest role. The general structure of daycare facilities could no longer support the increasing demands that had arisen from changes in the family and social environment.

Our experiences at this conference inspired us to conduct further research on sound therapy with children and teachers. Already in our first meeting with Hella and Luis Erler, we heard about the project "Sound Break Regensburg". We sat in on classes at a Montessori School in Regensburg (Principal: Lydia Honsalek), where we had the chance to

take a closer look at sound breaks² and their practical application.

Extensive reflexive discussions on the project Sound Break Regensburg and reports to Dr. Hartl-Grötsch, the ultimate decisionmaker in all matters relating to daycare policy in Munich daycare centers, led to the sound break also being put to the test in Munich within the context of a pilot project with scientific support through the Dr. Luis Erler Institute.

Here are Hella and Luis' comments from a scientific perspective: Here, we reached a sensitive issue in the project's progression: the first coworkers who collaborated on the decision for the pilot project were at the time still novices in sound therapy for children and adults. However, they were prepared to attend training, and to dedicate their time and interest to attain more in-depth knowledge. And the Department for Daycare Centers of the City of Munich was willing to invest in the training of their employees.

² The term "Sound Break" comes from Hella and Luis Erler. It refers to regular and especially systematic application of brief sound exercises of only 2 – 5 minutes. One potential setting for the application of sound breaks is the kindergarten; i.e., here, sound exercises specifically designed for this environment are implemented.

Parallel to the project, the City of Munich approved comprehensive training, so that we were able to attend the following presentations offered by the Peter Hess® Institute (PHI) and Dr. Luis Erler Institute:

- Intensive training as Peter Hess® Sound Massage practitioner
- Workshop: Playing and learning with all the senses
- Seminar: Introduction to the sound break
- Seminar: Learning singing bowl therapy made easy
- Seminar: Inspiring children with sound and language
- Seminar: Practical application of the sound break

The sound break was implemented in Munich from November 22 to December 17, 2010 in 20 Munich daycare facilities (kindergartens, after school centers, combined facilities, and cooperative facilities) by 35 teachers with a total of 1,255 children ranging from 0 – 12 years of age. Participating teachers received respective introduction to the sound break and to the project. Teachers logged and evaluated all sound interventions on a daily basis and recorded their data on a questionnaire. Hella and Luis were responsible for evaluating the questionnaires and compiling a summarizing report. This final report titled "Sound Break Munich 2010/2011. Stress management in the framework of occupational health management" was presented to all leadership personnel of Munich daycare centers on April 5, 2011.

Based on the success of the pilot project, we had the opportunity to introduce the sound break in municipal daycare centers. At the same time, we were responsible for developing introductory training courses for sound breaks at the Institute of Education of the City of Munich, to familiarize new oncoming teachers with the sound break, and to pass on project experiences. In this process, we focused on close personal contact with teachers and students. In Munich, the general rule is that only daycare centers whose teachers have completed basic training in sound therapy for children receive the necessary materials (sound boxes³, etc.).

Training provided to teachers since project start:

- 9 introductory courses to the sound break with a total number of 155 participants
- 6 team training sessions with a total of 64 participants
- 3 informational events for district⁴ administrators with a total of 36 participants
- 2 workshops at the "KaleidoPäd" 2015 conference in Munich with a total of 100 participants

Visits to the facilities and reports from actual applications motivated us to explore the many potentials of a sound break and to develop new variations. Teachers outdid themselves in their colorful, varied, and sometimes humorous ideas for sound breaks. Apparently, working with sound was not just fun for the kids, but also the teachers. From the active exchange of discoveries and creative ideas between the teachers, an open sound group⁵ was created that is still active to this day and is now the nucleus for new developments. We ourselves (Ursula and Silvia) find that a sound break enriches the day and is something we no longer want to do without.

New course at the Academy

While I, Ursula, as District Manager continued to work in close contact with daycare facilities to expand sound therapy and to support the sound group, I, Sylvia, became Docent at the Academy for Social Education of the City of Munich upon completion of the project. As part of my instructional duties, I began to familiarize future teachers with sound therapy. This gave rise to the concept of an elective course for introduction to sound therapy titled "Harmony of the sounds – relaxation through singing bowls for children and adults," that is included in the course catalog of the academy. This course is designed support teachers with sound therapy from the very beginning and to give them the opportunity try out sound methods on children and adults in their practical sessions.

³ The sound box of the Peter Hess® Institutes (PHI) consists of a set of 3 singing bowls of HIMALAYA quality, corresponding mallets, informational literature with DVD instruction as well as storage bag and wooden box. PHI has made 20 such boxes available on loan for the Munich project free of charge.

⁴ The 400 daycare facilities of the City of Munich are organized into four municipal quarters. Each district manager is responsible for 11 – 12 daycare centers as administrative and functional supervisor.

⁵ This sound group meets at regular intervals, so members can do something good for one another and discuss new experiences in sound therapy. The number of group participants is not fixed and varies from one meeting to the next.



Sensory experience of a singing bowl and its vibrations.

The joy of educational work with sound is a steady bond between us (Silvia and Ursula). Together, we design and develop interdisciplinary sound therapies as well as therapies specifically for application in daycare centers in our respective work areas.

Path into the future: the sound group

The sound group that formed spontaneously after completion of the pilot project⁶ is now the starting point for further development of sound work in Munich. Originally, the group came into existence due to the need for teachers

⁶ "Pilot project" describes a study which aims to determine whether further, more in-depth study into a particular subject is warranted.

to share their experiences. Now, the sound group is the nucleus of a new training concept that will be offered starting the year 2017. This training will lead to basic qualification for sound work in daycare facilities through completion of the so-called "sound license". In Munich, singing bowls are only implemented in daycare facilities whose teachers have completed basic training in sound therapy.

In the sound group, the aspect of health promotion has increasingly moved to the forefront. This is because the pilot project showed that sound not only had a calming and relaxing effect on kids during play, work, and learning – the sound break was also beneficial for teachers. Teachers reported that they themselves relaxed during sound exercises. They were more relaxed at work in the daycare center as well as their other daily activities, i.e. less stressed than before.

For the future, an improved concept for one-year participation is planned and in part already initiated. The concept includes an established sound group with fixed meeting dates and binding registration for the entire block of meetings (5 units per year at 1.5 hours, plus consultation, reflection, and evaluation). This provides a constructive development process for the individual participants as well as the group as a whole.

Objectives of the sound group in terms of health promotion:

- Enabling individual sound experiences for relaxation.
- Recognizing personal and situational aspects of dealing with stress.
- Correcting one's own behavior in coping with stress.
- Expansion of method repertoire in sound applications for teaching staff and transfer to team.
- Supporting a healthy work environment by using the sound group within qualification periods.
- Active participation by sound group members in the development of solutions for stress reduction.
- Strengthening the sustainable experience of sound interventions and competence development for personal stress management.

The objectives of the sound group make it clear why sound therapy is in the area of healthcare and stress management.

Retrospective and outlook

In conclusion, we (Hella and Luis) wanted to explore the question as to which factors were the deciding ones for the remarkable expansion of sound interventions in Munich daycare facilities.

1. Factor: Three entities working together

First entity: Dr. E. Hartl-Grötsch: Responsibility and decision making authority for all daycare facilities of the state capital Munich.

Second entity: Hella and Luis Erler: concept, process planning, and support.

Third entity: Peter Hess and the Peter Hess® Institute: sound therapy materials, standardized training.

From the interplay between these three different competencies, the idea, energy for implementation, and excitement of all participants were generated.

2. Factor: Principles of project management and leadership

And there is an additional factor that we might have overlooked in the past but that now seems very important: the principles of project management and leadership, and the way in which all participants were included.

First principle: free will and personal interest

The first phase of this project did not start – as is usually the case – with an "administrative order". Instead, during a meeting of regional supervisors for quality and education in daycare facilities, it was asked who might be interested in attending the 2009 Conference of the European Association for Sound Massage Therapy in Röhn. The purpose for attending was to gather information on sound interventions in daycare centers and to evaluate if sound methods would be applicable to daycare facilities in Munich. Ursula and Silvia indicated their interest and decided to accept this assignment.

Second principle: significance of the first experiences

Ursula and Silvia reported on their impressions of the above-referenced conference. "We were able to experience sound therapy for the first time during the 2009 conference at the Rhön Academy. As a new experience, the course of the day at the symposium made a powerful impression on us. The overall mood of the conference was characterized by attentive and observant behavior among the participants. Emily Hess gave us a sound massage, which was the deciding factor in determining to work with sound in daycare facilities."

Third principle: Visible and proven success

The quantitative aspect of project progression can be ascertained from the purchase of sound materials through the daycare department of the City of Munich. Considering

there were no sound boxes in Munich daycare centers in 2009, whereas today, they are available in approx. half of municipal daycare centers – specifically 194 sound boxes and additional sound materials such as therapeutic singing bowl sets (consisting of a heart, pelvic, and universal bowl), XL bowls, and other accessories – the numbers speak for themselves.

Sound materials for the daycare facilities of the City of Munich (2009-2015):

- Start with 22 sound boxes for the pilot project
- 20 sound boxes lent for training and first practical experiences
- 194 sound boxes officially purchased through municipal procurement process
- 10 therapeutic singing bowl sets
- 4 XL bowls
- 2 gongs
- ZEN and ASSAM bowls
- Various accessories

Sound materials for the Academy of the City of Munich (2009-2015):

- Singing bowl sets
- 1 sound box
- 1 XL bowl
- ZEN and ASSAM bowls
- Various accessories

Fourth principle: Networking

Something that was originally not expected and therefore not predictable, is that as a result of the project, various Munich institutions have been linked together: the Department of Daycare Centers, the Institute for Education, and

the Academy for Social Education. These are venerable institutions that surely have collaborated on numerous projects, but never on the subject of "Stress reduction for children and adults in daycare facilities".

The sound break has secured its future through the concept of continual introduction and support by sound groups. Furthermore, it is anchored in the curriculum of the Institute of Education. When we look back on the process of expansion of the sound break, we know: the process is not finished but entering another phase in which the original participants of the early progress are now the stewards of the projects of the future.

But there is also another story to tell: the story of people who initially worked separately, got to know each other, experienced the joy and excitement of being interested in the same idea and working together to create something new. The story of many single parties and entities becoming a cohesive whole, of points that find connections and gradually form a network – points that are connected by living, pulsating, emotional energy channels, networks through which flow energy, friendship, togetherness, satisfaction, and excitement and, first and foremost, the joy everyone experiences when they can touch others as a "messenger of sound".

*We'll make
Munich ring*

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The „Munich Sound Team“



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