

With a parent intimately involved in the film and theater industry as writer, producer and director, Tonia grew up being at home before and behind the camera and stage. As result she has developed unique talents in researching, developing and then converting film, video and stage performance contents, into cutting edged multi media; computer based educational programs for children.

Building upon her initial musical training at the Turtle Bay Music Conservatory in Manhattan, followed by nearly twenty years of personal coaching by Master Flutist, Dr. Richard Smith (no relation), Tonia has become an accomplished musician having won several solo Flutist's gold medals from New York State (NYSMA). She acquired a Bachelor of Arts degree in music and Education from Wheaton College, a Masters in Education from New York University, and is completing her candidacy for the PhD in Educational Communications and Technology.

Since completing her Master's degree in childhood education from New York University and becoming a certified teacher, Tonia had been teaching at the Sisulu Walker Charter School of Harlem. While there, she realized a deep interest in the special education needs of children and the inadequacy of seemingly out dated teaching methods for reaching these students. Since then Tonia has been passionately involved in trying to develop new and improved ways to improve cognition and learning in these children; especially by using one of her major strengths as a trained and accomplished musician, in conjunction with other media technologies.

In her own words "technology engages students and touches upon different intelligences and therefore keeps learning interesting. Technology furthermore, increases motivation, learning, self-esteem, and even allows non-verbal students the opportunity to communicate. Many students' needs are met through incorporating multiple intelligences into interactive multi-media audio and visual programs. Their intellectual needs are met by constantly being challenged and frequently exercising their creativity. At the same time their emotional needs are met by working closely with others. They develop diverse strengths, and they understand themselves better as individuals. My goal is to build upon my years of hands on experience, personal insights, and to apply all this within formal research, aimed at developing versatile and effective computer based multimedia teaching and gaming program targeted to the cognitive and learning needs of children internationally."