



Teddy Bear Band and Rock 'n' Read Project Proposal

Minnesota has a crisis. 64% of students do *not* read proficiently (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2019). A substantial number of recent neuroscientific studies have revealed that singing and music-making serve a critical purpose in early childhood brain development. Music-making develops auditory processing, auditory memory, phonological awareness, and beat synchronization. Babies who are sung to become better at processing speech and learn language earlier. Toddlers who are rocked and gently bounced to a steady beat develop beat synchronization. Children who cannot keep a steady beat will likely struggle with reading. Auditory processing and beat-keeping are highly correlated with reading proficiency.

“Beat synchronization (a task necessitating precise integration of auditory perception and motor production) has offered an intriguing window into the biology of reading ability and its substrate skills. Converging lines of evidence indicate that children and adults who struggle to synchronize to a beat also struggle to read and have deficient neural encoding of sound. The preschool years constitute a sensitive period for phonological development, a time when experience with language and its internalization lay the foundation for reading acquisition.” Excerpted from “Beat Synchronization Predicts Neural Speech Encoding and Reading Readiness in Preschoolers.” Kali Woodruff Carr, Travis White-Schwoch, Adam T. Tierney, Dana L. Strait, and Nina Kraus. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA. 2014 Oct 7; 111(40): 14564.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4210020/>

Teddy B. Bear’s Musical Road to Reading (The B stands for Book)

Teddy Bear Band (TBB) <https://teddybearband.com/> and the Rock n’ Read Project (RnR) <https://www.rocknreadproject.org/> have developed a plan to present a fun music program that entertains and involves young children, teaches singing and movement activities to children, parents and early childhood teachers. The program is based on and briefly shares neuroscientific research about how music-making enables young brains for reading. It will feature musical participation activities to foster language development in young children. The presentation is built on developmentally appropriate participation through music. The music focuses on movement and promoting basic skills with rhythm and melody. It will emphasize how practicing easy-to-follow activities on a regular basis develops language acquisition, emergent literacy and early reading skills. The goal is to make music participation and basic music skills part of normal interaction between parents, care providers and children, and an educational priority for young children in Minnesota.

Teddy Bear Band (TBB)

From the start, TBB has focused on connections between music and young children's brain development. Based on his work as an early education teacher, Ron Gustafson co-founded TBB. TBB's purpose is to perform music for young children with an emphasis on developmentally appropriate participation. TBB soon became a featured presenter on topics of Early Education and Music at NAEYC Annual Conferences around the nation. TBB later became involved with Rob Reiner's "First Years" initiative, United Way's "Success by Six", The "1st Annual Brain Conference" & recorded two CDs supporting emergent early literacy.

The Rock 'n' Read Project (RnR)

With \$600,000 in grants from the Minnesota Legislature, the Minnesota 501(c)(3) nonprofit RnR implemented a singing-based software with 2500 elementary students from 2016-2021. By improving their basic music skills while singing songs, students made rapid, significant gains in reading. RnR is now focusing on early childhood learning. Co-founder Ann Kay teaches courses for early childhood teachers, has created *A Song a Day: Brain Prep for Pre-Readers*—50 lessons for 4-6-year-olds, and is creating a coalition of organizations and legislators to launch *Zap the Gap!*, a statewide initiative to enable all children to read proficiently through singing.

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