

# Northeaster

Vol. 33, No. 5 • March 9, 2011

Northeast Minneapolis • St. Anthony • Columbia Heights • Hilltop

nenorthnews.com

## Because "every kid deserves to rock," teachers learn

by Margo Ashmore

Attention, teen-age would-be rock stars. This is to be sung to the tune of *That'll be the Day*, a Buddy Holly song.

*This'll be the way that we teach guitar,  
This'll be the way that kids can be stars  
We'll go back to school  
and teach them 12 bars  
And this'll be the way-ay-ay that it's ours.*

Getting ready to help unleash students' energy, 23 rockin' music teachers did parodies or composed original lyrics, melodies and beats, on March 4.

In a few weeks, Minneapolis Public Schools will be getting \$150,000 worth of free musical instruments and resources. Edison High School, Northeast Middle School, and City View elementary school were among the schools represented at the two-day workshop at the Webster school building in Northeast, introducing the Little Kids Rock method.

Little Kids Rock (LKR) uses music kids are familiar with (rock, pop, hip-hop), and encourages them to write their own songs. They say kids who play an instrument are 52 percent more likely to go to college than those who don't.

LKR was founded in 2002 by elementary school teacher David Wish, who was frustrated with the lack of music education funding at his school. LKR has served more than 110,000 students at over 1,200 schools in 25 cities nationwide, according to their news release. The ten most recent cities include Minneapolis, and in the previous week, New Orleans, thanks to the Dr. Phil Foundation.

"Okay, you had 45 minutes to write and practice your work," Greg Pavliv, LKR Program Ambassador, said, above a hubbub similar to a high school classroom settling in. "Why did we do that? The length of a typical class, yes. What did you observe?"

The teacher/students shouted out answers and Pavliv repeated: "Not expect perfection. Have to make decisions. It would be awesome to have a month to work on the perfect piece," but don't think you can't accomplish something in a short time.

The 45 minutes also included deciding what to do for lunch, getting lunch, and eating lunch while composing. "Multi-tasking. You just did it, instead of assigning steps." He quickly went through telling them about the Garage Band program available on Macintosh computers, and a recommended microphone "that you can use for anything. And what budget do you request it from?"

"Facilities," they spoke in unison, "or technology" one called out. The subject's obviously come up before. Pavliv talked about the financial and promotional practicalities involved in being a Little Kids Rock teacher, and the chance to become an Ambassador, "the most illustrious of the unpaid—the go-to"



Teachers from several schools in Minneapolis performed songs that they wrote over lunch and recorded them, preparing to throw their students into similar challenges. At right, the chair drummer explained how they adapted Twinkle Twinkle Little Star while Greg Pavliv fiddled with sound levels. Below, City View school was represented. (Photos by Margo Ashmore)



person for the area when there are events. You're part of the brand.

Out in the hall, Miranda Altman, Little Kids Rock Program Manager, gave an interview to Fox9 News. "We have wonderful stories," she told the camera man. "The kids are showing up after school, you can see the change in their academics." She paraphrased the television personality Dr. Phil McGraw, saying he'd rather see them in a band than in a gang.

The majority of teachers present March 3-4 are in music departments, "but sometimes we have other classroom teachers. Like science. The curriculum is adaptable to all age groups," Altman said. About 700 teachers are already trained throughout the country, she added.

On the organization website, [www.littlekidsrock.org](http://www.littlekidsrock.org), free lessons are available to help people in cities and schools that don't have



formal programs.

How did Minneapolis get chosen? It was one of the last two targeted by the Dr. Phil Foundation, which identified 10 public school districts in the nation in need. "We reached out to Minneapolis," Altman said, "and LeAnn Dow really ran with it."

Dow is the Minneapolis districts support

services coordinator in the curriculum and instruction department. At the teacher training, she was decked out in a Little Kids Rock t-shirt, beaming at the back of the class.

*Editor's Note: We hope to follow up and report when it's the kids who are beaming, playing some of those new guitars.*