

RAIN

LOCAL - EDUCATION

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State standards are rockin' for Newman students

By Nan Austin - naustin@modbee.com

Tim Bedley and friends perform with purpose. Their rockin' version of B-I-N-G-O helps kids learn obtuse and acute angles — "O!" (clap hands over your head here).

Rockin' the Standards' other songs teach about quadrilaterals, multiplication tables and measurement.

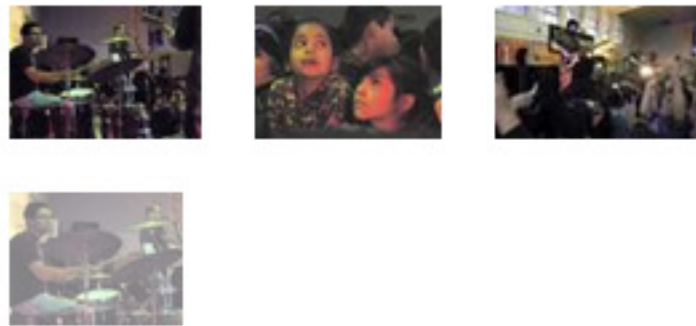
Their biggest hit explains decimal points to a solid beat, and their newest album — to be released Tuesday — teaches prefixes, spelling and story parts.

Story continues below video.



(NAN AUSTIN/naustin@modbee.com) - Rockin' The Standards band performs at Von Renner Elementary in Newman Tuesday morning 11-23-2010. Seen are Tim Bedley on drums and Ben

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- **ROCKIN' THE STANDARDS:** Video links and information at www.rockinthestandards.com.
- **THE ACTUARIAL FOUNDATION: Free materials are available by download or in print:**
 - **Basic math:** Access a variety of math topics at www.actuarialfoundation.org/programs/for_1
 - **Finances:** Course materials on getting loans, managing a checking account and basic investing are available at www.actuarialfoundation.org/programs/yout
- **GENERAL MATH HELP:** There are dozens of free math and math games sites, one of the coolest is www.coolmath.com.
- **TEXT HELP:** Many textbooks now come bundled with an online homework help site that walks students through problems in the book step by step. Teachers have access information for students if the district has purchased it.

This isn't music that will make it big on the wedding circuit or at dance clubs, but teachers nationwide are tuning in.

"What we've done is set the (state academic) standards to a real rock beat," Bedley said while setting up for his first performance in Newman, at Von Renner Elementary. " 'Schoolhouse Rock' was good when I was a kid, but it's pretty old fogey now."

The idea to reinvent the old classic came when trying to help a student, Bedley said.

"He was really struggling in school. ... But he could skip count — you know, 8-16-24-32," Bedley said. The student learned quickly through songs and rhythm, Bedley found, so he put more lessons to music.

"I started with old, noncopyrighted children's songs and putting words to it. So I'd have things I wanted my kids to remember (as songs)."

Rockin' the Standards plays to a need, providing a fresh way to help kids learn when textbooks and lectures just aren't getting through, said Shawnessy Payne.

Payne, a third-grade teacher at Hunt Elementary in Newman, arranged for the Southern California band to play at Hunt and Von Renner on Tuesday.

"I found them last year. I was looking for other ways for my students to learn their multiplication tables," Payne said. She downloaded a YouTube video and within a couple of playings found that even struggling students did better.

"This year I started it right in the beginning," Payne said. She knows it's working because she sees parts of verses scribbled on tests right next to the correct answers.

'Not doing it for money'

That's exactly what Bedley hopes will happen. He teaches a combined fourth- and fifth-grade class at Wildomar Elementary in the Lake Elsinore Unified School District in Riverside County.

"We're really not doing it for money. We feel that we have this gold we have to share, this great teaching tool," Bedley said Tuesday. He said the group makes little more than enough to cover expenses, despite making it big in education circles.

The band's "Place Value Rap" hit No. 1 on Amazon's list of educational songs, Bedley said, and has been as high as No. 36 on iTunes' list of children's songs — that's competing against Disney and Hannah Montana, he added.

Bedley, the group's drummer, writes all the song lyrics. His childhood buddy Ben Jacobs, who lives in Virginia, then puts it to music and records the song digitally with help of a musical friend in Texas. Jacobs works as a Web designer for the Department of Defense, working mainly on the U.S. Marine Corps Web site.

Jacobs is the lead vocalist and guitar player for the band. Ryan Shultz, a construction supervisor in the Lake Elsinore area, is the bassist. Third-grade teacher Mike Anderson is the band manager.

Their concerts are high-energy affairs with kids standing all the way through.

"They were great! They were awesome!" Payne said after the Hunt concert.

The Hunt after-school program picked up the tab with money saved from last year's budget, she said. Payne also arranged to buy CDs for every second- through fifth-grade teacher at Hunt, Von Renner and Bonita Elementary in Crows Landing and had 20 left over.

Nineteen were given to students in a lottery only open to the 91 Hunt students with perfect attendance this year, Payne said. The last CD went to the Hunt student who scored perfect 600s in math and language arts on last year's state tests. Fifth-grader Olivia Bazar also got to grab a cardboard guitar and rock out on stage with the band for one song.

The performances were a dream come true for Payne, who worked more than a year to make it happen, said Hunt Principal Justin Pruett.

"They know what our kids need," Payne said.

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