

Jamming with toddlers trumps hitting the books

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Playing music with toddlers could benefit their development even more than shared reading, according to University of Queensland research.

A UQ-led study has shown that music participation at home improves numeracy, prosocial skills and attention over and above the effects of shared book reading.

One of the study leaders and Head of UQ's School of Music Professor Margaret Barrett said parents were asked to report on shared music activities when their child was two to three years old and a range of social, emotional and cognitive outcomes were measured two years later, when the child was four or five.

"Children who experienced more frequent parent-child music activity at two to three years showed stronger vocabulary and numeracy skills, more prosocial skills and stronger abilities to regulate their own attention and emotion at four to five years old," Professor Barrett said.

"The study highlights that informal music education in early childhood is a vital tool for supporting the cognitive and social development of children."

This study is part of an Australian Research Council funded study 'Being and becoming musical: towards a cultural ecological model of early musical development' led by Professor Barrett and Professor Graham Welch from University College London with team members Ms Vicky Abad, Dr Mary Broughton and Dr Kate Williams.

The study aims to provide a comprehensive account of how Australian families use music in their parenting practices and make recommendations for policy and practice in childcare and early learning and development.

In an analysis of data generated from studying more than 3,000 children, the UQ team investigated the associations between informal home music education for very young children and later cognitive and social-

emotional outcomes.

The Music Trust, which works to actively promote music education in Australia, has awarded the research team the inaugural Music Trust Award for Research into the Benefits of Music Education.

Lead author on the publication Dr Kate Williams will accept the award on behalf of the team at a ceremony in Melbourne on 25 September.

Music Trust director Richard Letts said the study clearly demonstrated the advantages of musical education.

"Abundant research over past decades has accumulated evidence of the effectiveness of music education in accelerating development in IQ, academic and social skills, empathy and self-discipline," Mr Letts said.

"These are very important findings but little of this research has taken place in Australia.

"By creating this award, the Music Trust is encouraging such research in Australia and drawing attention to the opportunities offered by [music education](#) for children."

Provided by University of Queensland

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