

SPRING
2010

The Elmhurst Beat



ECP Jazz Band Hitting Golden Notes Across the State

When the Elmhurst-Alliance Jazz Band rehearses for an upcoming gig – in this case, the much-anticipated Heritage Music Festival in Anaheim – the ECP auditorium becomes a very serious place. Long into the after-school hours they practice, honing their parts. To this *Elmhurst Beat* reporter's ear, the song they run through sounds great. To them, it's not quite there. Nodding at Band Director Helena Jack's remarks, they furrow their brows and take it from the top again and again, seeking that perfect take.

"We've come a long way," reflects 7th-grade drummer Gregory. "Our playing is a lot better, especially our solo in [Art Pepper's] 'Blues In, Blues Out.'"

"[Rehearsal] really brings us together as a group," agrees 8th-grade flutist Esmeralda. "It really shows you what a group of people practicing every day can accomplish. We put a lot of effort into it."

At the time of this interview, the band had recently played the OUSD Jazz Festival at Oakland Tech High School. Playing out, they say, is a chance to represent Elmhurst, Alliance, and East Oakland. "At Oakland Tech, we got to show other people what we'd been working on, and the people cheered us on," says Gregory. "We feel like

it's an opportunity, and a privilege, to show [audiences] that we can play."

7th-grade trombonist Vinky says the reception they've received on the road "make us feel proud of ourselves, and shows us we've accomplished something. [Musicians] in Jazz Band are learning this special talent, and that can inspire other people."

They also recognize it as a learning experience. "We get to see how other schools play, and compare our experiences with them," explains Esmeralda. "Now we know what's out there and we can bring that back to our school."

"Both of our teachers [Helena Jack and Marcus Stephens] have helped us a lot," she adds. "They push us, which helps us be a better band."

"I just joined the band," says 7th-grader and alto saxophonist Santos, "but I'm catching up fast. Mr. Stephens is the one who helped me catch up."

The support doesn't end with the teachers – the more veteran Jazz Band members are quick to note Santos's rapid improvement, and spent much of this interview praising each other. "He's really a good drummer,"

Esmeralda says of Gregory.

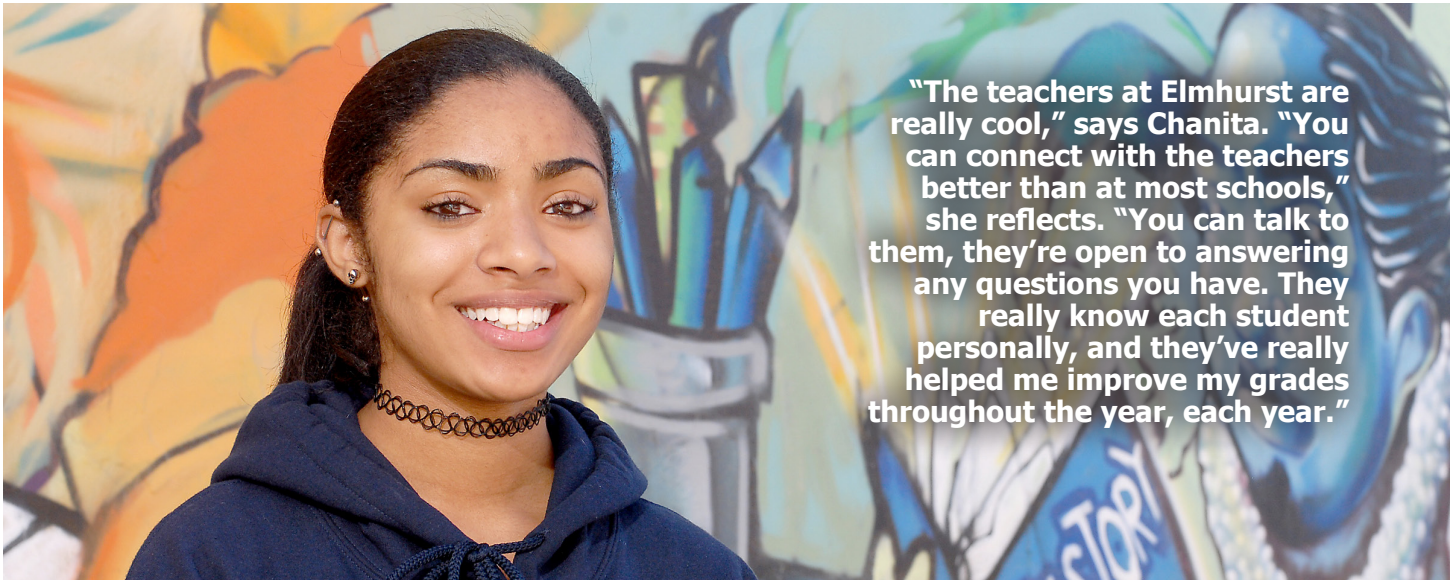
As their attention to detail during rehearsal suggests, the musicians show a nuanced level of understanding when they talk of what they're working toward. "Like Ms. Jack tells us, we need to pay attention to the *music*," says Esmeralda. "It's not just playing the notes, we need to play the music."

"There's still practice we need to do in dynamics," adds Gregory. "We still need to practice the *tone* of the music."

Apparently, they hit the right tone in Southern California. At press time, the group had just finished playing the Heritage Festival in Anaheim, taking home the "Gold" for placing first among the bands that performed! Congratulations to ECP's young virtuosos!

ACADEMIC STRIDES

Based on our quarterly benchmark tests, Elmhurst Community Prep scholars are taking big steps toward higher achievement – particularly our 6th-graders. This bodes well for our Academic Performance Index (API) score, which we look forward to sharing in the fall!



“The teachers at Elmhurst are really cool,” says Chanita. “You can connect with the teachers better than at most schools,” she reflects. “You can talk to them, they’re open to answering any questions you have. They really know each student personally, and they’ve really helped me improve my grades throughout the year, each year.”

Standout Student Sets Sights on Summer Travel

During the final weeks of a school year, some teens look forward to the simple promise of a stretch of summer days without homework, to mornings free of buses and alarm clocks. But Elmhurst Community Prep 8th-grader Chanita has been busy making plans, plans that reach far beyond her home, Oakland, and the country.

Earlier this semester, ECP teachers Jeremy Packman and Olabay Allen-Taylor connected Chanita with an opportunity through Global Leadership Adventures, an organization that sends students on community service-based trips to other countries like Costa Rica, Vietnam, and Chanita’s choice, China. “My teachers really helped me with the application and with choosing where I wanted to go,” she says.

In the end, Chanita’s application was strong enough to earn her a spot on a two-week educational journey through China at the end of July!

“It is rare to come across a student like Chanita, who has maintained a 4.0 grade point average throughout her three years at Elmhurst and still manages to give back and help others,” says Allen-Taylor. “She is an amazing individual and having the opportunity to travel

to China to assist with community service projects for local low-income families is a life-changing experience.”

“I’ve never been outside the country, or even outside of California much,” Chanita explains. “I want to learn more about different places, instead of being in the same area all the time. If you don’t, then this is all you know – you’ll think the whole world is like Oakland. I want to explore other places. I know there’s so much more out there for me to know: all the different cultures and their similarities and differences.”

“Global Leadership Adventures will provide a first hand look into the culture and lifestyle of the Beijing residents unmatched by what can be read in the history books or taught in the classroom,” says Allen-Taylor. “At Elmhurst we support and encourage our students to Dream, Prepare, and Achieve, and Chanita is doing just that.”

Chanita is also looking forward to learning from the diversity of her traveling group. “You get to be with a group of people from all different parts of the world.”

Next year, Chanita will move on to MetWest for high school, another small school with a focus on expanding students’ horizons through programs like Global Leadership Adventures. She hopes China will be just the beginning of a lifetime of travel. High on her list of next adventures: She’d like to spend time in Costa Rica and be immersed in the Spanish language, which she’d really like to learn.

SUPPORT ELMHURST COMMUNITY PREP!

While Chanita has earned a 30-percent scholarship for her two weeks in China, she must come up with the rest on her own. To continue offering these types of experiences to ECP students, we ask for your help!

To support this and other horizon-expanding trips (both locally and abroad) this summer and next school year, we have a goal of raising \$10,000 by July 30.

You can contribute at www.elmhurstcommunityprep.org/donate

or by sending a check to “OSF/ECP,” P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620.

Thank you for your support!

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