

Learning Territory

Learning Without Limits College Preparatory Elementary School Newsletter



Expanded Drum Team Sets a Rousing Tone on Campus



Drums on Tour

LWL's drum troupe recently took their skills on the road, a goal they'd been working toward all year! By all accounts, their appearance at Edna Brewer Middle School was a rousing success. Drum leaders, 5th-grader Malik and 4th-grader Oneal, were not surprised. "We've been practicing for so long," says Oneal, "so we were ready for this."

Malik agrees, saying the drummers have learned how to bring the right mindset to their performances. "If you focus and put your mind to it, you can play really well," he says.

Early each morning before daytime classes begin, E.W. Wainwright's music room sits quiet and empty, its rows of drums awaiting their players. One by one, Learning Without Limits' ever-growing team of drummers files into the room, picking up sticks and planting their feet in front of their drums.

From the back row a student counts off 1-2-3-4 and the sticks become a rhythmic blur. Latecomers, eager to pick up the beat, watch the others and add their parts to the propulsive, building sound.

Wainwright says the kids are becoming more and more confident, and developing into "self-starters

who are learning to take more responsibility" in leading the class. Only when the group has kept the groove for several minutes does he pick up his own sticks and lead them into other rhythms.

If it's Friday, this is a warm-up for the main event: a performance in the courtyard for the entire school. Glancing around, absorbing energy from the gathering crowd of students and teachers, Mr. Wainwright exclaims, "Yes yes yes, GOOD MORNING LWL!" and leads the school in the LWL Vision Statement, with everyone chiming in:

"We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us as we grow into leaders..."

Affirmation shared, the drummers bang

out the opening notes. The other students are rapt, some stomping their feet and patting their chests in time with the beat, possibly considering joining the drum crew. The morning drum group, which numbered nine last year, has grown to 21 members spanning grades K-5.

The performance winds down and the drummers hold a slow rolling beat as the other students head off to their classrooms for a new day, an extra bounce in their steps on this Friday morning. Those of us returning to the four walls of an office, like this *Learning Territory* reporter, leave the courtyard wondering how to convince Wainwright and his drummers to drop by and set the tone for one of our Fridays...

Fall 2010

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"I Live for Art"

LWL art students charting ambitious course



When Learning Without Limits Art Teacher Debra Stuckgold talks about students seeing themselves as artists, she refers to kids like 4th-grader Danny. In the meticulous manner of a professional artist, Danny has archived three years of his LWL artwork, and keeps it under lock and key.

"I have my art collection in storage," explains Danny. "I put each piece in order, all the way back to 1st grade."

Clearly, he is serious about his art, and he's not alone.

"Recently Beyda, a 1st-grader, looked at me and said, 'I live for art,'" says Stuckgold. "I've had at least half the kids in the school tell me they want to be artists, and they say Art is their favorite part of the week."

Stuckgold says the explorative nature of art plays a big part in the kids' deep connection to their creations. "It's not teaching to create by rote," she says. "It's teaching you to expand your horizons by not giving you a set answer. You have to create that answer along the way."

Integrating art projects with other class work also adds a layer of investment and meaning to the creative process.

"We do a lot of integration," says Stuckgold, describing the 3rd-graders' papier-mâché models of planets which supports their solar system studies. Using a paint-and-collage technique inspired by the children's author Eric Carle, another class

recreated habitats they were studying, and the 4th-graders recently used beets and cabbage from the school's new Farmers Market to make dyes for a wool-weaving project.

Like Danny, fellow 4th-grader Ananda is deeply proud of her finished pieces. "I made a planet [Saturn], and I hung it in my window at home so I can see it," she says. "It feels good to see it in my house."

Both Stuckgold and drum instructor E.W. Wainwright were artists before they came to teach, which she sees as a unique plus.

"I'm really in favor of having teaching artists as art educators," she explains. "We're both practicing artists, and that gives [our instruction] a different flavor. No one can do what Wainwright does, it's not the same. When you see his performance, you can feel the passion and commitment right away."

The kids are developing the diligent habits of working artists as well. "I used to make paintings when I was younger, and the other kids were better," reflects Danny. "But then I started painting and practicing at home, and improved. [In the future,] I want to do painting in the wild: tigers, birds, snakes, and bunnies."

Ananda would also like to paint wildlife, but she favors "dragons, raccoons, rattlesnakes, and cheetahs."

COMING SOON: A New Space for Creativity



Learning Without Limits' new building is already under construction, and in Fall 2011 our visual artists and musicians will be creating and performing on a completely modernized campus! (Visit www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org/lwl to see an architect's rendering.)

If you're a parent interested in enrolling your student at LWL, you can "get in on the ground floor" for the new building by enrolling for Fall 2011. There may also still be openings for *this* year.

Please call 510-879-1282 to set up a visit and discuss enrolling your child at LWL!

SUPPORT LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS!

Facing unprecedented budget cuts heading into 2010-11, we must fundraise aggressively to continue supporting LWL's budding musicians and artists. Art materials, music supplies, and inspiring field trips to museums and concerts fall outside our shrinking budget as a California public school.

YOU CAN HELP!

Consider supporting our arts programs with a one-time or recurring tax-deductible donation.

Visit www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org (designating "Learning Without Limits") or send a check to "OSF/LWL," P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620.

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www.lwlelementary.org

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