



Poetry Performance a Huge Success!

On Friday, February 18th, Clinton 4th grade students as well as Ms. Rebecca Antunes' special education class had the opportunity to perform their original poems, raps, and rhythms to fellow students, parents, friends, a Board of Education member, and local media.

The event received some great local press coverage:

<http://www.maplewoodnavigator.com/profiles/blogs/in-case-you-missed-it-clinton>

and

<http://maplewood.patch.com/articles/clinton-school-slams-on-the-poetry>

The Poetry Jam was the result of an amazing artist-in-residence program Clinton School was awarded this year. Through the program, Clinton 4th graders had the opportunity to work with Lamont Dixon, a poet, performance artist, and this year's artist-in-residence at Clinton School.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Artists-in-Education Consortium, which includes the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Arts Horizons, and Young Audiences New Jersey, Clinton fourth graders had the wonderful opportunity to explore poetry with Mr. Dixon, aka Napalm Da Bomb, a Philadelphian who has been a prominent presence on the jazz- poetry scene for many years. His poetry has been published in numerous magazines including Essence and African Voices, and he recently published a book of poetry called Come Ride My Poems.

Students also had the pleasure of working with percussionist Josh Robinson.

Mr. Dixon employed basic theater games and exercises designed to develop and enhance the students' stage presence and voice projection as well as to help the students attain proper diction and help them emit emotion through body language. Under his guidance, the students created their own haikus, free verse, acrostics, and tongue-twisters, and they also learned about odes, limericks, and nonsensical poems.

Music was also an important focus. "Rhythm, cadence, beats, and sound are major components of poetry," explains Mr. Dixon. In fact, the residency is also funding a guest artist, percussionist Josh Robinson, who will teach students how to use "found objects" for percussive effect.

At the February 18th performance our amazingly creative students played percussive instruments to accompany each other's poems and they performed their written pieces. The result was incredibly inspiring.

Clinton School has been fortunate enough to receive arts education grants for the last several years. Making this happen requires tremendous partnership between school administrators, faculty, and our PTA, who all believe strongly in the power of arts education.



POETRY IN MOTION

Last weekend my daughter, Isabelle, surprised and thrilled her grandparents with a special gift of a poem. It also surprised me until she reminded me that she and her fourth grade classmates have been studying poetry with Lamont Dixon, a poet, performance artist, and this year's artist-in-residence at Clinton School.

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Music is also an important focus. "Rhythm, cadence, beats, and sound are major components of poetry," explains Mr. Dixon. In fact, the residency is also funding a guest artist, percussionist Josh Robinson, who will teach students how to use "found objects" for percussive effect. "The students will create 'music' and play basic percussive instruments to accompany each other's poems," adds Mr. Dixon whose own band, the *Jazzpoetics*, will be joining the students for a culminating performance, tentatively scheduled for February 18th.

Mr Dixon's teaching philosophy is to demonstrate a love of art in general and of performance poetry in particular. "If I show passion and truth about living and being a professional poet, it shows through in my teaching and in my performances," says Mr. Dixon. Asked what advice he would have for aspiring poets, Mr. Dixon replied, "Write poetry, read poetry aloud, and listen to poetry!"

—Liz Herring