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CLINTON FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS REMIX THE CURRICULUM

Fourth grade students at Clinton Elementary School in Maplewood, New Jersey have, once again, had the amazing opportunity to learn, explore, and create with a professional artist. For the past few months, Angela Kariotis, an acclaimed writer, performer, and educator, has worked closely with the children to “theatricalize” their curriculum. The result is a high-energy, innovative show, conceived and directed by Ms. Kariotis, and written by Clinton fourth-graders, called “Remixing the Curriculum: A Show in 4 Parts.” The performance will take place on Friday, March 16th at 9 am, in the Clinton School auditorium (27 Berkshire Road, Maplewood).

Clinton School has an incredibly diverse student body and it also houses the school district’s elementary-age English Language Learning program. Drawing on this diversity, as well as the fourth grade immigration curriculum, Ms. Kariotis has guided the children through weeks of arts-based exercises that have produced a remarkably moving, insightful, and dynamic work. Each fourth grade class, as well as the students in a multi-age self-contained special education class, will be performing the pieces they have written which include “I Speak American,” “Biography Monologues,” “American Revolution Remix or The Great Lunchroom Revolt Circa 2012,” and “Actually, We Are All Immigrants.” The performance will also include music created especially for the pieces by DJ Santi V, a visiting artist who spent several days at Clinton during the residency.

Made possible by a partnership between the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and a consortium made up of Arts Horizons and Young Audiences New Jersey, this artist-in-residence experience is the latest in a long line of fabulous artist residencies at Clinton School that have allowed students to experience and create poetry, jazz music, mural painting, dance, and fiber arts, among other disciplines. The grant receives strong support from Clinton faculty and administration as well as support and matching funds from the Clinton School PTA, making for a productive collaboration that celebrates the importance of arts education.

Ms. Kariotis (www.angelakariotis.com), who has performed her original pieces throughout the U.S. and overseas and will be performing in April at NJPAC, has inspired the students to tell their stories, to embrace the written word, and to explore the world of performance. “I have created a way to theatricalize the curriculum at Clinton,” says Kariotis. “My ultimate goal is not that art be part of the school day like math or language arts, but instead that arts be a vital pedagogical tool used to teach all subjects.

To enhance the residency experience, Ms. Kariotis has also documented the entire process in a blog (<http://clintonaie2012.blogspot.com/>).

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