



Press Release

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Lynwood Unified Elementary Students Learn About Cultural Proficiency Through Theater Series

Lynwood – More than 3,500 Lynwood Unified elementary students learned about the history of African-American culture in honor of Black History Month through a theater series presented by the Music Center of Los Angeles, which brought musical, theatrical and storytelling performances to each of the District's 12 elementary schools Feb. 3 through March 14.

"We Tell Stories: The Spirit of Black Folklore" brought students background information and connections to diverse cultures through a historical, grade-appropriate context. The performances were carried out by a trio of actors and featured works by black writers as well as anonymous tales from black folk tradition.

"Exposing our students to diversity in this manner will help them connect with the stories and each other," Lynwood Unified Superintendent Paul Gothold said. "Our District strives to create equity among all students, teachers and staff, so we are excited to bring learning opportunities like this to our schools."

The story themes explored the depth of spirit, pride in diversity and the willingness to laugh despite the odds against it. The themes played out in stories like "Akimba and the Magic Cow," a tale about friendship and greed, and "The Lion in the Well," about overcoming an oppressor.

Before and after the performances, teachers received classroom activities that enhanced students' understanding of the play's themes and connected the program messages with language arts curriculum.

"This program is unique because the stories our students learned through these performances aligned with their classroom lessons," Director of Equity Dr. Patricia Brent-Sanco said. "Students learn best through interactive, fun lessons that will engage them – these assemblies played a pivotal role in expanding their knowledge of peer equality while also engaging them on a level they understood."

Normally costing \$685 per school site, Lynwood Unified was able to cover the costs and bring the performances to students with the help of a generous \$6,350 grant from the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Monk Turner, manager of The Music Center, assisted the District in applying for the grant and scheduling the 12 performances.

"I am so excited that we were able to provide this for our third- through fifth-graders, and I hope they use what they have learned throughout the rest of their lives," Lynwood Unified Board President Alma-Delia Renteria said. "Our goal as a District is to prepare all students for their futures, and this theater series definitely adds to that goal."

We Tell Stories is a multiethnic storytelling troupe founded by Artistic Director Carl Weintraub. The company has a threefold purpose: to entertain and educate children through the literature, folklore, and mythology of all times and cultures; to expose them to the processes of language and acting as art forms; and to inspire them to reach the heights of their own creativity.

MORE

The **Lynwood Unified School District** is dedicated to offering students a world-class education to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century. Under its Achieving Greatness Initiative, the district is realigning all aspects of its organization to strengthen and expand instructional programs, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and support system for students and staff. For more information, visit www.lynwood.k12.ca.us.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

032017_LUSD_STORIES1: Wilson Elementary third- through fifth-graders watched and participated in their performance of “We Tell Stories: The Spirit of Black Folklore” on March 2, presented by The Music Center of Los Angeles. More than 3,500 Lynwood Unified elementary students learned about the history of African-American culture in honor of Black History Month through these performances, which brought musical, theatrical and storytelling performances to each of the District’s 12 elementary schools Feb. 3 through March 14.

032017_LUSD_STORIES2: Roosevelt Elementary third- through fifth-graders look on as two actors from The Music Center of Los Angeles perform a story as part of the “We Tell Stories: The Spirit of Black Folklore” theater series on March 13.

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The mission of **Lynwood Unified School District**, the cultivator of innovative thinkers, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves his or her highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to the greater society through a unique system distinguished by:

★ People of great character who inspire and lead by example ★ The instilling of courage to be creative ★ The transformative uses of