



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 17, 2017 CONTACT: William Diepenbrock PHONE: 909-206-5304

Margaret Heath Elementary Poetry Festival Celebrates the Spoken Word

Students bring their favorite literature to life in English and Spanish

BALDWIN PARK – Dressed in their most whimsical costumes, Margaret Heath Elementary School students will transform the written word into theatrical performances as they celebrate literacy at the school's annual Poetry Festival at 8:15 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 23.

Three students from each grade will recite a poem of their choosing before classmates, staff, teachers and community members. Students were selected based on evaluation of their memorization, clarity, expression and originality.

Now a 20-year institution at Margaret Heath Elementary, the poetry festival began as a way to introduce students to a variety of authors and poems in English and Spanish.

"The vocabulary we see in a poem is often different from the language we use in every day speech," said Adriana Ortiz, who teaches first grade at Margaret Heath Elementary and co-organized this year's event. "This event provides an excellent opportunity to expose our students, both native and non-native English speakers, to experience language in different forms."

Teresa Mott, a second-grade teacher who coordinated the event with Adriana Ortiz and first-grade teacher Hilda Cortez Ortiz, said it also meets California Standards that stress the importance of presentation skills such as eye contact, enunciation and expression.

"This a wonderful tradition that highlights student achievement and celebrates the diversity of our District," Baldwin Park Unified Superintendent Froilan N. Mendoza said. "I commend our talented educators for finding fun and engaging methods of challenging our students to do their best."

The poetry festival also celebrates student creativity through the poetry selections and the use of costumes and props. Fifth- and sixth-graders have an additional opportunity to express their individuality: they can write and recite their own poems, a challenge that many students embrace.

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“It is always fun to see what the children have chosen to recite,” Mott said. “Will it be in English, or Spanish? Will it be whimsical, or serious? The selection always depends on where and how students do their research.”

In the past, the works of Shel Silverstein and Christina Rossetti were popular selections, though some ambitious students opted for Shakespeare. Spanish recitations of Cuban-American author Alma Flor Ada are also popular every year.

“Even though we see many of the same authors and poems every year, the presentation of them is always different,” Ortiz said. “We are always excited to watch these poems come to life through the eyes of our students and see their creativity at work.”

PHOTOS

021717_BPUSD_POETRY1: Margaret Health Elementary School students await their turns to recite their favorite poems during classroom performances before the school’s annual poetry festival. Three finalists from each grade will recite a poem in English or Spanish for the school and community during an assembly on Feb. 23.

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