



Press Release

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Lynwood Elementary Students Share Stories of Struggle, Hope at BRIDGE Performance

Lynwood – Thurgood Marshall Elementary School fourth- and fifth-grade students shared stories of struggle, hope and triumph during two emotionally charged dramatic performances staged Nov. 15 as part of Lynwood Unified’s Building Relationships and Inspiring Dialogue through Global Exchange (BRIDGE) Theatre Project.

The two student-written plays – “Career Day” and “Lemonade Powder” – were received with ovations by parents and fellow students. The plays were followed by a community dance performance that celebrated multiculturalism.

“Every day we see Latinos being treated with disrespect and told to go home and it’s not right,” Marshall fifth-grader Giselle Lopez said. “This is America. We should all be welcomed here. Why can’t we all be welcomed?”

Both plays explored themes of anxiety and displacement, as well as hope and reconciliation.

In “Career Day” an elementary school student is forced to confront an ICE agent the day after watching her father get arrested and deported. A bitter argument erupts between students and parents with differing political viewpoints, but is settled after the quarrelers pledge to be more tolerant and respectful to opposing views.

In “Lemonade Powder” a single-parent family of three is evicted from their home and must relocate to a motel where the two young siblings despair over having nothing to eat except a box of lemonade powder. A genie transforms the powder into a lucrative business, allowing the family to move back home. In the end, the genie reveals that it was the family’s own belief and determination, not magic, that propelled them to success.

“We teach the students to bring subjects to the stage that resonate in their world,” BRIDGE Theatre Project teaching artist Emi Torres said. “BRIDGE empowers the students and gives them a voice. It does so much for their confidence to speak for what they believe in and say, ‘I can do this.’ ”

Through BRIDGE Theatre Project, Lynwood Unified students in grades four through eight learn to write and perform short plays and study other cultures. The program provides 19 workshops for nearly 500 District students over eight weeks to teach students the basics of improvisation, character creation, writing conflict and dialogue.

During a six-year partnership with Lynwood Unified, the BRIDGE Project has produced more than 125 student-written plays.

“The District partnership with the BRIDGE Project continues to pay huge dividends within the Lynwood community, opening doors to communication and bringing diverse groups together,” Lynwood Superintendent Gudiel R. Crosthwaite said. “BRIDGE shows how much we have in common with each other, if we only stop to listen and learn.”

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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:

112519_LUSD_BRIDGE1: Thurgood Marshall Elementary School students perform “Lemonade Powder” on Nov. 15, as part of the BRIDGE Theatre Project.

112519_LUSD_BRIDGE2: Thurgood Marshall Elementary School BRIDGE Theatre Project fourth- and fifth-grade actors and writers celebrate after performing two student-written plays on Nov. 15.

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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