



PRESS RELEASE

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Re: Young Audiences of Minnesota Announces Educators of the Year

Young Audiences of Minnesota Announces Educators of the Year for 2005

Young Audiences of Minnesota is pleased to announce that Elaine Sutton and Linda Nelson, sixth grade teachers at Monroe Community School in Saint Paul have been named Educators of the Year for 2005.

Elaine and Linda were chosen to receive this award for their dedication to their students and their participation in the Saint Paul Public School's Arts 25 project at Monroe. The Arts 25 project was a partnership between Monroe Community School, Young Audiences of Minnesota and Milkweed Editions and allowed students to explore the topic of racism in their lives.

As part of Linda's reading class, students read John Armistead's *The \$66 Summer*, a story about interracial friendship, set in a small southern town in the turbulent 1950s. Linda helped her students develop an understanding about the history, emotions, and beliefs of that time period in our nation's history. In Elaine's class, the students had workshops with Young Audiences' poet, Kelechi Jaavaid, and wrote poetry, personal narratives and interviewed adults in their lives on the topic of racism. The students then participated in a theatrical residency through Young Audiences with Youth Performance Company artist Ryan North, who helped them transform their writings into a final theatrical performance that the students performed, entitled, *The Challenge*.

Elaine and Linda guided the students through this project and worked one-on-one with many of them. From being interviewed by the students on their experiences with racism to helping students practice projecting their voices, Elaine and Linda showed their dedication to their students. The passion they bring to the classroom allows the sixth grade students at Monroe to grow not only in reading and writing skills, but also helps increase their self-esteem, their pride in being part of the sixth grade team and in finding new knowledge that everyone can make a difference. **Young Audiences of Minnesota** is in its 42nd year of providing arts-in-education programs for students, families and communities in Minnesota and western Wisconsin, and is a chapter of Young Audiences, Inc., a nationally recognized arts-education provider. **Young Audiences of Minnesota** offers performances, workshops and residencies, professional development sessions, and a unique traveling art exhibit program *Real Art + Real Kids*. Young Audiences staff and artists work with educators and community program coordinators to provide authentic arts learning experiences to meet the specific needs of their students.

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