

For Immediate Release

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Washington Technology Students Explore Culture

Washington Technology Middle School has been named one of nine Saint Paul Public Schools' **Arts for All – Arts 25** program sites for 2006-2007. This award provides Washington Middle School \$5000 to partner with Young Audiences of Minnesota to explore art and culture. Principal, Dr. Mike McCollor, commented on the award, "We are very excited to have these opportunities for our students. As a school with many disadvantaged students, our families do not always have access to the arts. These programs look at the arts through the lens of various cultures and show us how we are alike as humans even though our backgrounds may be different."

This Arts 25 project is designed to examine what culture means at Washington Technology Middle School. By introducing several different cultures through a variety of artistic disciplines, students expand their understanding of the world outside of their classrooms, and appreciate the diversity that lives within their community. This program recognizes the value of the arts as a part of academic curriculum and encourages students to explore ideas of identity and culture through school performances, classroom workshops, and a visual art exhibit. In addition, the project will provide professional development for several Washington Technology educators.

The program kicks-off with performances by Indonesian Performing Arts Association of Minnesota (IPAAM) on February 28, at 9 AM and again at 10:20 AM. IPAAM is directed by Joko and Tri Sutrisno who are master performers from the Indonesian island of Java. The performance introduces students to traditional Indonesian music played on the fascinating instruments of the Gamelan.

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In March, seventh grade poetry students will learn storytelling and theater techniques from an artist in residence, Carla Vogel. Through storytelling, writing and theater activities, Carla shares her Eastern European Yiddish heritage with students and explores issues of identity, history, culture and community.

During April, Washington Technology Middle School students will have several opportunities to experience cultural activities. On April 12 and 13, the exhibit "Art from the Asmat Rainforest" will be installed at the school. This exhibit is one of Young Audiences' Real Art + Real Kids[®] exhibits which encourage peer to peer education, cultural awareness and art appreciation. Young Audiences has partnered with the American Museum of Asmat Art in Shoreview, MN, to create this traveling exhibit for schools throughout Minnesota. Drama students at Washington will be taught how to be docents (tour guides), and will then lead their classmates through tours of this art exhibit. The students will learn about the Asmat people and culture, but will also learn skills to talk about art with their peers.

Leo and Kathy Lara round out the month of April with two performances on April 20, at 9 AM and 10:20 AM. The Laras perform and tell the stories of the people of Latin America, which is a diverse and unique blend of indigenous, European and African traditions. Students will hear legends and songs during this exploration of Latin American music and culture.

Nirmala Rajasekar will bring yet another cultural art form to students when she comes to Washington Middle School on May 2 and 4. Two music classes will be introduced to the musical concepts, as well as the history and cultural context of "Carnatic" music. Carnatic music is the classical music of South India. During her workshops, students will learn about Indian history, geography, and cultural differences and similarities through this artform.

Please join us for any of these programs and help Washington Technology Middle School celebrate and investigate ideas of culture and community throughout the school year. For more information about Young Audiences or any of these programs, please contact Kate Bennet at 651-292-3399 or email kateb@youngaudiencesofmn.org.

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