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## Educational grants bring the arts to the Caroline classroom

By Will Mathewson •Correspondent • April 27, 2010, 7:30 pm

CAROLINE -- Through educational grants and artist residencies, faculty and administrators at Caroline Elementary integrate the arts into the school curriculum. Since the new year, Caroline students of all grades have had the opportunity to visit with several different artists.

"Being a rural school, these residencies are really important opportunities for our students, who are less likely to attend performances than students at schools closer to downtown," said Caroline principal Alaine Troisi.

Caroline's artist residencies are funded by the Ithaca Public Education Initiative and the Caroline PTA. IPEI funds projects that bring community resources, like these local artists, into the classrooms. The Caroline PTA helps fund various projects at the school, including a Hangar Theatre production for the whole school and a performance by musician John Simon for curriculum nights.

Earlier this year, the pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first- and second-grade classes were visited by Mrs. McPuppet, an artist and performer who uses song and puppetry to educate children on the importance of caring and cooperation. First-grade teacher Judy Steele wrote the IPEI grant that paid for Mrs. McPuppet's performances.

Caroline third-graders worked for three weeks with the Beauty and the Beast Storytellers, who taught students the art of storytelling. Students practiced their public speaking by memorizing folk tales, which they recited in an evening performance before family and friends. Sharon Nelson, a third-grade teacher at Caroline, wrote the IPEI grant request that paid for the residency.

In the past, Nelson has used IPEI funding for a writing workshop with the comic book author Roger Stern; a performance by Samite, a musician and songwriter from Uganda; and for money to purchase digital cameras for student use.

"Without IPEI, I could not have done these arts programs," Nelson said. "IPEI allows me to enhance my curriculum with the arts, to make a better experience for the students where they can learn something not just flat -- through books or writing about it -- but through a higher level of involvement."

IPEI also funded a March performance of Writing Magic by David Moreland, otherwise known as Moreland the Magician. Moreland taught Caroline students story structure and tricks to improve their writing. Fourth-grade teacher Courtney Coffey requested the grant.

Nelson stressed that she and other faculty members choose artists whose performance or residency enhances the school's regular curriculum and student learning.

"We make sure the artist's involvement in the classroom is curriculum-based and the artists we invite are particular selections that we believe will fit well with what we are already learning," she said.

Nelson said Caroline's teachers are passionate about integrating arts into their curriculum and applying for grants like those from IPEI.

"We work as a community out here with a common vision," Troisi said. "We all feel that our students need the arts to make them well rounded. The staff asks me if they can apply for grants and I wholeheartedly support them in this endeavor."

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**Will Mathewson is an Ithaca College Park Scholar whose community service component includes communications projects for the Ithaca City School District.**



Moreland the Magician makes writing a story fun during a performance at Caroline Elementary School. (Provided photo)

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