

Southwest elementary school students get increased arts funding, more classes

ARTS EDUCATION

By Melinda Hasting
Special to The Southwest Portland Post

Opportunities for arts instruction for students in Southwest Portland increased in each public elementary school in the Portland Public Schools (PPS) system this fall.

The controversial Portland Arts Tax passed by voters last November has survived legal challenges, thus allowing the distribution of approximately \$4.5 million for PPS to hire arts teachers this year.

Local elementary schools were informed of the new funding just before the onset of fall classes. All elementary schools were to be impacted, according to PPS.

The \$35 per person tax generated between \$9.9 and \$10.8 million in collected revenue by the City, according to Mayor Charlie Hales' office, an amount that was over \$1 million less than officials had projected.

The Portland City Council agreed to disburse the originally budgeted funds for the Art Education Access Fund to local school districts. PPS, the largest school district in the Pacific Northwest, will receive the bulk of the revenue.

Here in Southwest, Maplewood Elementary School received funding to hire one half-time music teacher to teach students in grades K-5. The teacher hired by Maplewood Elementary also teaches half time in Southeast Portland's Kelly

Elementary.

Maplewood Principal Annie Tabshy said she is grateful. "We feel blessed to provide all 330 of our students with the opportunity for music instruction twice a week," she said.

Other neighborhood elementary schools, Stephenson and Capitol Hill, both received additional funding for arts teachers from the Fund. Stephenson has a music teacher and also offers orchestra and choir; Capitol Hill now has a full-time art teacher.

Southwest is also home to the high-performing Jackson Middle School, whose focus on arts and music through the implementation of The Bernstein Artful Method of Learning is highly regarded.

Though middle schools will not receive additional funding from the arts tax, elementary schools like Maplewood will now have opportunities to instill passion for the arts in the primary grades.

Markham Elementary School received funding to hire music instructor David Erickson full time.

In addition, the school will partner with local puppet theater, Tears of Joy Theatre Company, to provide kindergarten through second graders with puppet making and performance instruction. Older students will participate in a ten-day intensive performance residency.

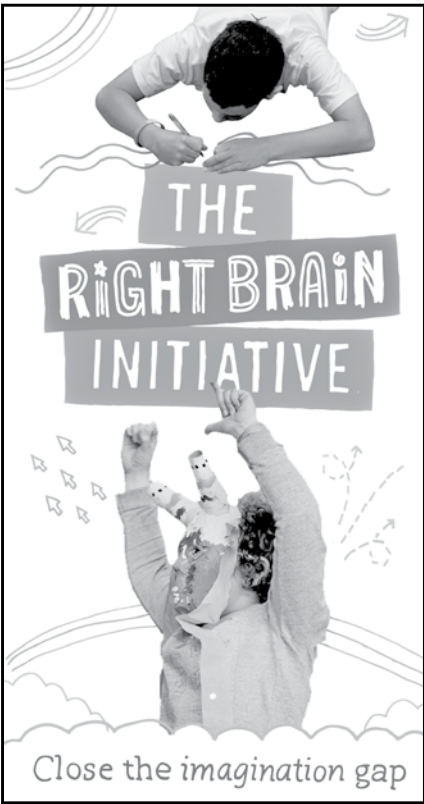
Markham School is a participant in The Right Brain Initiative, a program launched in 2008 in response to arts funding cuts in local public schools. The initiative incorporates

the arts into children's daily learning processes through the core curricular subjects.

Both Markham and Jackson schools' programs seek to improve students' performance in the STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and math) by weaving arts activities into the hard sciences (STEAM).

The idea is gaining ground throughout the country as private sector employers claim shortages in American STEM job candidates.

The National Science Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts, along with members of Congress, have expressed support for the concepts of ingenuity and creativity as important components for the future economy.



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Wilson Cross Country Spaghetti Feed

Local residents Stu and Judy Ellis hosted Wilson High School Cross Country Team's first spaghetti feed on September 9. Over 100 carbohydrate-eating youth attended and came in second at the invitational meet held the next day in Hood River. "They were all very well behaved and hungry! We cooked over 16 pounds of spaghetti and over 300 meatballs," said Stu Ellis. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)