

# Hip Hop's Music Education

*Free after school program shines bright*

BY AMY VANACORE

FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Even when it's raining outside, a bright light shines on students at Vernon Elementary School in northeast Portland.

Desmond Spann, also known as "Dlux: The Light," a local hip-hop educator, producer, poet and emcee, has been teaching Vernon 4th and 5th graders the art of creating hip-hop music since last fall.

"This is more fun than working at a bank," Spann said. "I'm an example of how hip-hop can be encouraging and positive. I want to show kids strength and beauty, encouraging positive changes, building up rather than

tearing down."

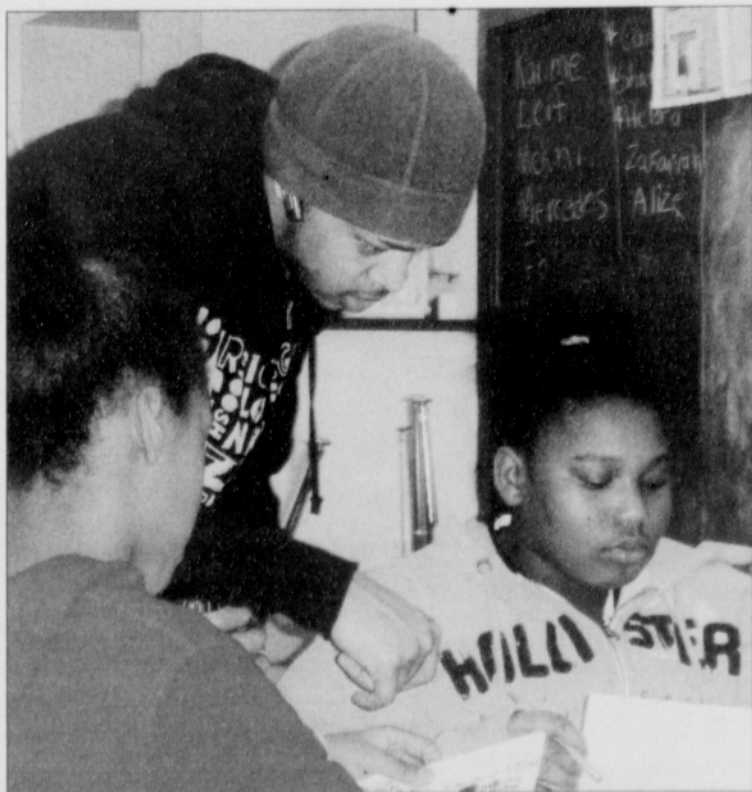
Support for the after-school program comes from the Ethos Music Center, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of music for youth in under-served communities.

Ethos is in its fourth year of providing Vernon and other north and northeast Portland schools with a broad range of after-school music classes, including piano, guitar, band, choir, African drumming and dance, rock band and hip-hop music and technology.

The classes are free thanks to funding from the Portland Children's Investment Fund, which serves 16,000 of



Latori "Rose" Wilkerson of Vernon Elementary learns about music during a free hip-hop class made possible by Ethos Music and Portland's Children's Investment Fund.



Desmond Spann, also known as the hip-hop emcee "Dlux: The Light" gives some music tips to Jade Alleyne during an after-school music program.

Portland's neediest children, at least half of whom live below the federal poverty level.

All of Ethos' classes encourage students to express themselves and the hip-hop classes have a special focus on helping students find their own voices.

Spann stands apart from many hip-hop artists in that his work is grounded in the desire for constructive and social

progress.

"I'm tired of black communities looking hopeless. I'm here to bring the hope back. To give people a reason to nod their heads, besides the beat being tight. I want the beats to be tight and lyrics to bring insight so we can go out here in the world and make a change for the better," he said

The Portland City Council

has submitted a property tax measure to renew the Children's Investment Fund in the November General Election. If it passes, Ethos and 66 other nonprofit programs that provide a variety of after-school, early childhood, mentoring, and child abuse prevention and intervention services will be able to continue reaching the kids who need it most.

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