

Megan Anderson

The Upfront Theatre Bellingham Public Schools BACKGROUND

History of The Upfront Theatre

Established by Ryan Stiles, The Upfront Theatre opened its doors August 13, 2004 and offers live improvisational comedy every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Performers from all over the northwest as well as local talent present many styles of improv comedy ranging from short form games to one act improvised plays, musicals, and competitive improv.

How The Upfront Theatre can work with Bellingham Public Schools

The Upfront Theatre offers personalized, improv-based workshops for companies and groups; custom designed to focus on specific needs. Working with youth in the Bellingham Public School District could be a very good influence.

The Upfront Theatre could create a district-wide program that involves positive performances at assemblies that get children involved. The Upfront Theatre could also provide improv classes for specific school classes or programs; for example, an improv class for the drama departments at each school could be very influential and a great learning tool for students.

Finally, there's always the option of improv classes for administration and teachers that would be a good teambuilding activity and help with communication skills.

In addition, at least one Bellingham public school (Fairhaven Middle School) has its own improv group that could be worked with on a creative project.

Who to contact

The Curriculum Director is the person to contact about programmatic and curriculum questions about artist-in-residents that are hired in the district:

- Jim Facciano
360-676-6545
jfaccian@bham.wednet.edu

For general questions or comments about Bellingham Public Schools:

- Margaret Gude
360-676-6520
mgude@bham.wednet.edu

Any media relations to the Bellingham Public School District can contact the Director of Communications and Community Relations:

- Tanya Rowe
360-676-6520
trowe@bham.wednet.edu

Contacting individual school offices and talk to the principal to see if they'd be interested is also an option. All contact information for is available online at:

- <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/schools/schoolcontacts.htm>

In addition, PTA groups often hire special events, performances and workshops for school assemblies, special nights, etc.

- **2009-10 Parent/Teacher Association Presidents:**

ALDERWOOD— PTA
676-6404
3400 Hollywood Ave 98225
Kelly Angel and Julie Lovell

BIRCHWOOD — PTA
676-6466
3200 Pinewood Ave 98225
Robin Baker

CARL COZIER— PTA
676-6410
1330 Lincoln St 98226
Diane Talbert

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Erin McEachern

GENEVA — PTA
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Lori Thompson

HAPPY VALLEY— PTA
676-6420
1041 - 24th St 98225
Tonya Lockman and Greg McCracken

LARRABEE— PTA

676-6424
1409 - 18th St 98225
Holly Studley and Laura Nelson

NORTHERN HEIGHTS — PTA
647-6820
4000 Magrath Rd 98226
Lydia Salas

PARKVIEW — PTA
676-6433
3033 Coolidge Drive 98225
Kathy Iwerson

ROOSEVELT — PTA
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2900 Yew St 98226
Debi Vasquez

SILVER BEACH— SBEA
676-6443
4101 Academy St 98226
Lori and Daryl Larkin

SUNNYLAND — PTA
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2800 James St 98225
Tom McNutt

WADE KING — PTA
647-6840

2155 Yew Street Road 98229
Teresa Werner and Regan Ryan

FAIRHAVEN— PTA

676-6450
110 Park Ridge Road 98225
Kerri Sloan and Dennis D'Amelio

KULSHAN— PTA

676-4886
1250 Kenoyer St 98226
Teri McIntyre

SHUKSAN — PTSA

676-6454
2713 Alderwood Ave 98225
Jayna and Andrew Neuman

WHATCOM — PTA

676-6460
810 Halleck St 98225
Wendy Albrecht

BELLINGHAM — PTSA

676-6575
2020 Cornwall Avenue 98225
Lea Bocek and Lisa D'Hondt

SEHOME— PTSO

676-6481
2700 Bill McDonald Pkwy 98225
Karin Saadat

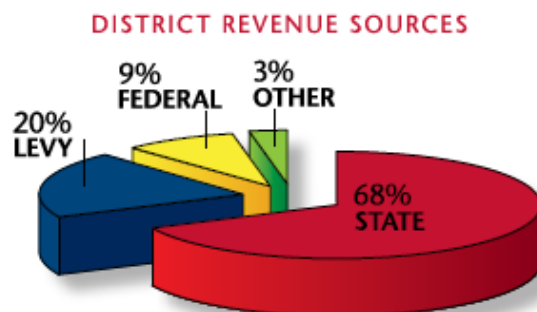
SQUALICUM — PTSA

676-6471
3773 E McLeod Rd. 98226
Kathy Dooley

Bellingham Public School budget for 2009-2010 school year

The nation, state and local community are facing many financial and service-related challenges as a result of the significant downturn in the national and international economies. Since the operating budget of the school district is fiscally dependent upon the state for the majority of the revenue it receives, any negative change in the amount of revenue the state receives usually means that the school district's revenue will be less.

Bellingham must reduce its operating budget for the 2009-10 school year due to a combination of rising costs, years of inadequate state funding, at least a \$9 billion state budget deficit, and rigid state finance law that allows little flexibility in determining how to fund students' greatest needs



About 84 percent of the school district's budget is spent on people and personnel-related costs and 16 percent on nonemployee costs such as fuel, utilities, supplies, insurance, etc. Most resources are spent on teaching and learning – 72 percent of the total operating budget, which is above the state average.

Bellingham School District currently only spends 16 percent on instructional and related support services, which is below the state average. This would be where funding came from to support a district-wide program from The Upfront Theatre.

Currently existing programs in the Bellingham School District

Bellingham public schools currently have programs established in the arts and drama, but these vary according to school. Fairhaven Middle School actively participates in the school Chalk Art Festival, the Bellingham Arts Council event, and the Bellingham Children's Art Walk; they also have an improv club with members that perform at events like school assemblies and before parent groups.

Practices that can be learned from The Upfront Theatre

Improv classes are a good resource to teach the following to all audiences:

- Creativity
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Confidence
- Adaptability
- Innovation

Through improv exercises and games, The Upfront Theatre lets individuals explore their creativity and build confidence, while teaching teambuilding and communication skills.

The Upfront Theatre already has classes available specifically for middle school and high school students. The course is designed to excite and inspire students, covering the fundamentals and introducing them to the wonderful world of improvisation. These courses could have a very positive influence if taught at a district-wide level.

In addition, The Upfront Theatre offers many business-focused classes. For example, the BizProv workshops include an hour of fun, focused, specific improv games and exercises directly related to increasing success in business. The workshops are centered around using the principles and practices of improv to increase communication skills, teamwork, creativity, confidence, adaptability, spontaneity and the ability to "think on your feet."

Classes that focus on teachers and administration can improve teamwork and communication skills, as well as give ideas to teachers for a classroom setting.

Bibliography

Gude, Margaret . Email Interview. 22 Oct. 2009.

Bellingham Public Schools. (n.d.). Retrieved October 21, 2009, from www.bham.wednet.edu

The Up Front Theatre . (n.d.). Retrieved October 21, 2009, from <http://www.theupfront.com>