

# Kinsella Courant

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## R.J. Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts

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#### Dear Kinsella Families:

The Staff and administration of R.J. Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts want to wish you and your families a safe and joyous holiday season. Enjoy spending time together as a family. We will be thrilled to see all of our parents & families during Parent-Teacher conferences Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

First trimester has ended and we are anxious to share your child's results.

Please be informed that students return from the Winter Recess on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008. Also, the Extended Day Program and PEAC program will resume on January 2<sup>nd</sup> as follows:  
Grades K-8: Mon-Thurs 2:45-4:30.  
PEAC Program will be Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 2:45-4:15.

Please make sure that all of our students are reading nightly and working towards making the 25 books challenge goal.

Thank you for making your child an active member of the R.J. Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts.

Sincerely, Pamela Totten-Alvarado  
Principal  
R.J. Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts



Interview with Ms. Jones

#### 1. How did you become a musician?

I started taking piano lessons in nursery school when I was 2 and switched to the violin at age 5. I fell in love with the violin!

#### 2. Did music help you in school?

Yes, it kept me focused, motivated, and excited. Music gave me a way to express myself. Playing the violin also gave me opportunities such as performing in front of mayors, governors, even the President of the United States. I've had the opportunity to travel to other countries like Germany, Austria, and France. I also received a twenty thousand dollar scholarship to attend college. And being immersed in music taught me the values of persistence, hard work, and courage.

#### 3. Why did it take courage to be a successful performing artist?

I was afraid of missing out on typical Saturday activities (soccer, swimming, dancing) with friends. While many of my friends were playing outside on Saturday mornings, I was taking lessons and practicing from 9-1. It takes courage to never give up on an instrument as difficult as the violin.

What I realized though was that while I did miss out on some things, it was worth it. I found out who my real friends were and they continued to be my friends and I also made many new friends by participating in music festivals, competitions, and for 13 years, I was in the D.C Youth Orchestra. I also realized that life is about making the most of your opportunities and I did that. Some of my friends had natural talent as dancers, singers, artists, and musicians, but they were not very serious or dedicated and did not take advantage of their opportunities to become truly superb.

#### 4. Did your parents support your involvement?

Yes, they were **ALWAYS** there for me. They never missed a performance. They always made sure that I was able to attend my rehearsals, lessons, and performances. Their involvement made a huge difference. My parents were the backbone of my moral values and how I acted as a person. They made sure I was taking violin seriously while still having fun. I would not have been as successful if it were not for their support and involvement.

My parents made great commitments and sacrifices to help me. When I was younger, my parents had to wait in line to try and get a spot in the Performing Arts school they wanted me to attend.

My father waited 3 days in line and slept in his car for 3 nights in the cold to make sure I would be able to create, perform, and respond. I am so grateful to him and my mother. Attending a Performing Arts school was the best opportunity I could have ever had.

## News From The PTO and the Classrooms

### PTO

**Mrs. Rivera, the PTO and Family Resource Aide, reports that** during October and November, we had the Halloween party for 100 parents and children. We passed out certificates for best and scary costumes. 8 parents received prizes for best costume and played Name That Movie-by playing the instrumental background music of a thriller movie. All children received snacks and candy bags. Special thanks to all the parents that donated and assisted that evening!

We also provided free workshops for parents. Trust House informed us about the HUD's in the community, GED classes & more. The Fire Department explained about fire prevention and having a safety plan.

The Hartford Stage awarded 100 parents with free tickets to see the Christmas Carol- a ghost story of Mr. Scrooge by Charles Dickens. Parents enjoyed the play and students were each given a Christmas gift. Thank you Mr. Duran for making this event possible.

### PreK

**Mrs. Baker reports that** in November, the class learned about the world around us. We learned about our homes, cities, and our pets. In December, we are learning about the four seasons and hibernation.

### Kindergarten

**Mrs. Grimaldi reports that** in November, the class continued to work hard in our reading groups. We also worked on a turkey feather estimation contest. The winner received a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. We also worked on patterns, incorporating them in all aspects of our work which includes numbers, letters, and social studies where we designed Indian headbands. In December, our class will have a Christmas ornament estimation contest.

**Mrs. Duchon reports that** in November, the class read books about Thanksgiving. We also learned how to blend sounds with words. In December, we are learning how to point to words when we read books. We also enjoyed our pizza party from the can drive.

**Mrs. Saperstein reports that** in November, the class has been busy learning all of our letters. The children love to "Shake Their Sillys out" before we begin reading! During reading, the children are gaining so many skills their small guided groups. December will bring experience with numbers, using a scale, and probability. We hope everyone is staying warm this season and has a restful holiday break. Remember to read everyday!!!

### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

**Ms. Stamos reports that** in November, the class finished our study of weather working hard to become "members" of the 100 club (children who know over 100 sight words), learning about various ways to retell a story and writing number and word problems, using addition. We also made butter and corn bread to finish our unit in Thanksgiving and the Pilgrims and the Indians. In December, we are learning about different winter holidays and customs as well as learning about the story of the Nutcracker Ballet.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

**Mrs. Bernabucci and Mrs. Hickey report that** in November, students studied Native Americans and the first Thanksgiving. We compared their lives to our lives and talked about our family traditions. In December, our class is studying different holidays celebrated around the world. We are also discussing our family traditions along with continuing MONDO and Everyday Mathematics. We are having Parent-Teacher conferences on December 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Ms. Opton reports that** in November, the class finished unit 2 and continued on unit 3 in Everyday math. We also wrote descriptive paragraphs about a place in nature after hearing a story by Mr. Lee. In December, our class is continuing to strengthen our writing skills. We are finishing unit 3 and moving onto unit 4 in Everyday math. We are also enjoying our author study on Chris Van Allsburg!

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

**Ms. Hurteau reports that** in November, the class built a replica of a Native American village after studying the northeast Indians. In December, our class is studying Colonial America and going on a field trip to see the Nutcracker Ballet.

**Mrs. Rivera (3/4) reports that** in November, we worked on math CMT strand order, magnitude, and rounding of numbers. in reading, the class worked on cause and effect, oral language development and CMT vocabulary (academic English). We also had a party to celebrate students who had birthdays in November. In December, students are continuing working on language development, math, and reading strands, including developing an interpretation. Students will also have a party to celebrate holidays and birthdays in December.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Mrs. Dimattio reports that** in November, the class worked on multiplication facts and division facts to master strands 5 a/b, 6 a/b, 7a, and 8a. We practiced non-fiction answers to open-ended CMT questions on strands A & B. and read Number the Stars about the Holocaust.

We also performed monologues with Hartford Stage, performed in the Hispanic Heritage performance dancing to Meringue. In December, We are continuing working in Literature Circles. We are also concentrating on adding detail to our writings that we have been working on.

### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Mrs. Noonan reports that** in November, the class participated in the Connections program from Hartford Stage. We did tableaus, dialogue, acting, and predicting as we learned about Number the Stars by Lois Lowry. In December, we will continue journal entries from our characters point of view. We will eventually perform a skit portraying our character from the book.

**Mr. Geer reports that** in November, we finished working with Nina from Hartford Stage. She involved the class with different acting styles to better comprehend the story. In December, our class has begun having arts infused lessons on Fridays. This will include acting (monologues, tableaus, writing, scripts, etc.) and crafting, (painting scenes).

**Mrs. Hayes reports that** in November, the class learned about sound. Students learned that dolphins, whales, and bats use echolocation to find food and objects. In December, the class is learning about light. We are looking forward to comparing how light and sound travel.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Mrs. Hassell reports that** in November, the class worked on PowerPoint projects about the solar system. Students presented their projects to the class using the Smart Board. In December, the class is working on math projects. We will create magic squares with Algebraic Equations. We are also participating in a Hartford Stage Program based on the book Monster.

**Mrs. Shimkus reports that** in November, the class made beautiful pastel drawings of the sun and its parts. We were reading, reading, reading, to see who could finish the most books. In December, We will work on our math facts, and we are continuing to read. Our Literacy Circles may change because everyone is doing such a great job!

## 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies

**Mrs. Piotrowski reports that** in November, the class visited the Noah Webster house for a hands-on experience. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade participated in a human-rights role play and had to role play throughout the house in colonial times. In December, the class will complete a performance assessment that involves a mini colonial fair.

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts

**Mr. Stohl reports that** in November, the class started their "Change the World" projects. 49 seventh graders are beginning ambitious attempts to change the world. Some will be recycling, others are starting after-school clubs and charity projects. In December, the class is completing memoir books and designing lesson plans to tutor younger students.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts

**Mrs. Tocionis reports that** in November, 8<sup>th</sup> graders worked with the Hartford Stage exploring emotions dealing with characterization. We used visual art, tableaux, created poetry that mirrored emotion and put the poetry to a beat as students recited it. We also went to a play of Our Town working with Hartford Stage's InterAct program. In December, the class is putting the finishing touches on our persuasive letters to the superintendent and mayor concerning the quality and quantity of our school lunches. We begin Touching Spirit Bear while exploring the theme of bullying. We are also going to see A Christmas Carol. Students will also write weblogs involving the themes of their books.

## Performing Arts faculty

### Vocal

**Mr. Jimenez reports that in November**, students learned the five notes of the C scale-C-D-E-F-G-using quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes as well as the concepts of melody and rhythm. We applied these to a November song "For Health and Strength," in which students clapped the rhythm, sang and played on instruments. In December, the class will do the same as above applied to a December song-"Jingle Bells"

### Band

**Mrs. Kroqi reports that** in November, the band performed at the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration. Congratulations to all the band members for their great performance! In December, we are preparing for coming concerts in January.

### Instrumental

**Ms. Hanjian reports that** In November, advanced instrumentalists performed in the Hispanic Heritage

program at Bulkeley High School. Our Third and Fourth Grade Recorders also performed an original piece in the program. We have now begun work on new music for our

January 23 winter concert.

### Violin

**Ms. Jones reports that** in November, the Prek began using the real bow and real violin; Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade learned the rest position song. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade has also learned the 1<sup>st</sup> part of an A major scale. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade has also learned "The Monkey Song." Selected students from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade have been working out of the Strictly Strings Method book. In December, students will continue becoming comfortable with the violin and bow. Some students will begin working on finger placement on the strings as well as identifying the strings and the names of the notes for the strings. All students will continue memorizing the names of the parts of the violin and bow through the "Name Song."

### Drama

In November, our pre-kindergarten drama students worked on imitating simple gestures, poses and sound to create animals and objects from the stories, The Greedy Python, Flap your Wings and the non-fiction book, Houses and Homes. In Kindergarten through second grade students acted out familiar fairy tales and not so familiar Native American stories, as a means to explore vocal variations and to develop character through voice and movement. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders have been honing their improvisation skills, creating tableaux and planning and rehearsing scenes from well known fairy tales. Students in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades have been creating and performing simple Japanese haikus and the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders have been developing their monologues of famous Hispanic figures for informal presentation.

In December, the upper grades will be working on monologues and scenes for a showcase to be performed in January. There will also be open auditions for the play "Amazing Grace" by Shay Youngblood on December 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the drama room, from 3-5 p.m.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders will be learning about masks and beginning mask work, while students in Pre-Kindergarten through second grade will begin working with puppets and continue to develop the skill of using their bodies and voices to create characters and to tell stories.

### Dance

In November, dance 2 classes with Miss Howe prepared and performed our Meringue dance at Buckeley High School for Hispanic Heritage month.

While the "big kids" were getting ready to perform, students in Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten worked on the elements of dance by moving like animals. Ms. Duchon's class was our first class of dancers to win a free dance day where they could choose the type of dancing they wanted to do for a day. First and second graders learned many different shapes and levels that their bodies could make by dancing like fireworks. Students got to use our new colorful scarves for their fireworks dance. Third and fourth graders have been working very hard on learning levels, pathways, shapes, stationary and traveling movement.

In December, dance 2 classes with Miss Howe will be starting to get ready for our winter dance concert on February 28, 2008. Grades five through eight will be learning parts of the Highlife Juju dance from Ghana, Africa. Students will then get to choreograph with a partner their own part of the dance. Students will also learn about our new dancer of the month for December, who do you think it will be?

## Identifying Our Similarities and Celebrating Our Differences

The morning of November 7, 2007 was no ordinary day for the students at Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts. Students rehearsed for weeks on the school's first major performance, *The Hispanic Heritage Celebration*. All areas of the performing arts were represented in the show as well as all grade levels.

Shortly after morning announcements, the entire student body was called down to board buses headed for Bulkeley High School. Performance nerves and stomach butterflies created bursting anticipation for the first big show of the year. With a smooth transition from Kinsella to Bulkeley, the lights faded to dark and the show began. Music filled the air. A slide show of students rehearsing flashed across the auditorium wall followed by a simple question in big letters; What does Hispanic heritage mean to you?

The stage was set and the question had been asked. What does Hispanic Heritage mean to you? Between all the performance pieces a video slide show highlighted students and faculty answering and sharing their perspectives on what Hispanic heritage meant to them. The curtain rose to expose a colorful scene of tropical trees, flowers and insects. Like an explosion of culture, drum students ignited the celebration with a thunderous harmony of sound accompanied by dancers in exotic masks. Various grade level chorus' sang children's songs such as the *Los Pollitos Dicen*, *El Coqui* and *Salve el Sol* harmonized with violins, recorders, and flutes. Dance students featured a Merengue piece from the Dominican Republic and a Punta piece from Central America. Drama students presented monologues as famous Hispanic figures. Characters included Mayor Eddie Perez, Salvador Dali, Judith Baca, Pablo Casals, Diego Velázquez and Jamie Escalante. The band closed the show with *Seniorita Fajita*, and the ever popular, *A Little Bit of Latin*.

After all the applause swelled and the frenetic energy subsided, all that was left was a deeper appreciation for Hispanic heritage. The flavor of music and dance still lingered as students exited the building humming the songs they heard and recalling parts they enjoyed most. The performance celebration debuted our robust performance schedule and epitomized the potential of what is possible with a vision, discipline, and lots of rehearsals! The Spanish philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset said, "Life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not the sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be." With that in mind, all the students, faculty, and parents at the R.J. Kinsella Magnet School of the Performing Arts look forward to a great year of Arts performances.



### 8<sup>th</sup> Graders Making a Difference!



Recently, six Kinsella eighth graders and one former Kinsella student visited Drumlin Farms in Lincoln, Massachusetts for a Roots& Shoots Youth Leadership weekend. While there, the students participated in many workshops involving the global community, the environment and the care for animals. The hope is that the students who attended will share their experiences and knowledge of these issues and motivate other students to become involved. Samantha Baker was deeply moved by a presentation involving cruelty to bears in India. She reports:

#### **"Dancing Bears"** By Samantha Baker

During the Roots& Shoots gathering we attended many workshops. One workshop that really moved me was one called Dancing Bears. In this workshop, I learned many things that I wasn't aware of before. I learned that in India, bears are used to make money and are treated horribly. When I first saw this video, I was devastated. It is a very cruel way that they get the bears to dance. The people of India take out the bear's teeth and claws. When this happens, the bears are in so much pain, it was hard to watch. The Indian people who are less fortunate use the bears to survive in life. I believe that they feel bad for the bears but using the bears for shows, is the only way they can feed their families. Now there is a Humane Society for the dancing bears that rescues these bears from India. They hope to get all of the mistreated bears off the streets and to a safer place.

For more information go to:

India Bear Rescue <http://www.wildlifesos.com/IBR/Dbears/bdancebody.htm>

