

March is Arts in the Schools Month and the students at Lafayette take some time on Friday afternoons to celebrate the musical accomplishments of their fellow classmates. Mrs. Porter spends January and February identifying our student performers. They do a tryout in their music class where they are the Star Performers of the Day. Those who want to play for the school are given their date and their big day arrives. In front of 400-500 students they take the stage in the Great Hall and do their best.

This year we have had some other performers, too. The first Friday in March featured a teacher choir under the direction of Mr. Hover. Last week we had parents get involved for the first time when we heard a violin, cello and piano trio. The third, fourth and fifth grade teachers brought down the house with their flash mob dance to *Call Me Maybe*. The roar of the students was so loud I think they could have heard it at the White House. We have a few more concerts to go but I'm not sure anyone will top that act.

I am incredibly proud of our student performers. It takes a lot of courage to perform in front of so many people. Many parents stop by and tell me that their child won't perform for their family but will get up before such a large crowd? Go figure. But there they are, walking up to the piano or carrying their three quarter sized violin playing everything from the first song in the John Thompson Piano Series up to selections by Bach and Mozart. If you can play it you can be a performer.

But I think I'm prouder of our student audience. We stress good audience behavior at Lafayette. Many of you I'm sure have heard my speech. "We watch with our eyes, we listen with our ears, we do not use our voices unless asked and when we want to show appreciation to our performers, we applaud using our hands." A representative from the Washington Performing Arts Society once told me that she had never been to a school that started performances like that before. I feel pretty sure that our students can go just about anywhere and demonstrate good audience behavior. But Friday's in March prove it.

You see some of the performers are true beginners. We listen to a lot of scratchy strings. Some students have gotten to the piano and completely froze. Some have had to start over not once but even three times. But the minute the performer takes center stage, the students at Lafayette give all their attention to that performer. There isn't a sound in the house. Everyone listens respectfully for the entire musical selection, even when there are take overs. And when the performer stands up to take a bow, the Great Hall fills with applause. Not once in over 10 years of these performances has there even been a single inappropriate noise or comment. Not once.

So while math and reading, science and social studies consume large amounts of our time at Lafayette, we also teach the skill of behaving as an audience member. To appreciate the hard work of others. To understand that performing in public is something to be respected. And that a performer in the Great Hall is to be treated just the same as one in the Concert Hall at the Kennedy Center. I'm so proud of our student performers but I may even be prouder of our student audience. I'm sure the many of you who have attended a Friday music afternoon know what I'm talking about. So I have a homework assignment for you. Not all of us will be performers on a big stage in the future. But we will all be in audiences of one kind or another. Your children have mastered that skill. I know our teachers can take them anywhere and make them proud. Let your children know how proud you are of them, too.