

RAYMOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

434 Webb's Mills Road • Raymond, ME 04071 • Tel 207-655-8672 • Fax 207-655-8664

Norma Richard, Principal

Mindy McKinney, Office Manager
Deb Hutchinson, Guidance Counselor
Kristina Truesdale, School Nurse

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Energy. Focus. Participation. Collaboration. Creativity. Movement. Challenge. Confidence. Pride. These were themes that I observed during a weeklong dance residency taught by the extraordinary Karen Montanaro this past June. When we learned of Karen's availability to share her passion and skills in dance with Raymond Elementary School fourth graders, I jumped at the chance. Karen had been a guest artist at our school in the past, and even I had gained the confidence to perform on stage with her during her prior visit. Teachers and I were very excited about the opportunity for her to work again with our students.

The dance residency that she directed with our students during that last week of school was powerful and exciting. Three very diverse classes of fourth graders began their lessons with Karen on Monday. Working daily with each class, she taught them fundamentals of movement and dance. Throughout the week the children learned that dance has a language and a specific vocabulary. They applied that knowledge as each class was introduced to a specific dance style. Through a tremendous amount of hard work and focus, each class learned their dance, and each student also mastered an opening and closing number. By the end of the week they were ready to share their new skills with our entire school community. The dance assembly that Friday afternoon was amazing!

Dance education is not a part of the elementary curriculum in Raymond. However, after observing Karen's instruction throughout the week, I have a new understanding of the importance of dance and other movement instruction in our schools. I saw our students gaining a different kinesthetic awareness of their bodies as they explored a variety of dance skills and movements. I observed Karen's skill in taking a diverse class of children in five days to a performance where they demonstrated confidence and pride through dance.

Words cannot convey the amount of respect that I have for Karen Montanaro's work in schools. Her passion for movement and dance instruction is compelling; her instruction and communications with the students are clear and direct; and failure is not part of her vocabulary. Dance is a part of our culture, and I believe that providing students with dance instruction can lead to life-long skills and increased physical activity.

Karen Montanaro's dance residency has my highest endorsement, and I encourage you to consider this program for your school.

Cordially,



Norma Richard, Principal