

PORTAGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Frank Gawkowski
Principal

PORTAGE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

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To Whom It May Concern;

This is a letter of testament to my experience with the Magical Rain Theater Works (Dan Runyan and Irene Vasquez). I have both worked with and observed Dan and Irene in performance in my capacity as a teacher at Portage Central High School and as part of the Education for the Arts Sculpture Class.

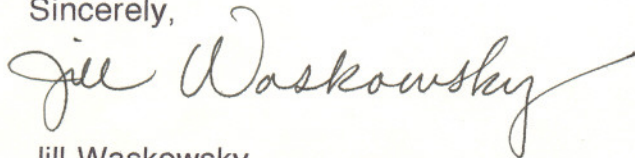
In December 1995 they were guest artists with the EFA class, working with the students on the nature and meaning of masks. Irene talked about the role masks play, the power of experience they embody and Dan worked with the students with theater games, helping them to actually experience the power of masks and theater. This brought alive an aspect of creation and meaning that sculpture students rarely experience in a normally technically oriented process. Both Irene and Dan were passionate, sensitive and involved with the students which helped warm and open them to the experience.

In 1996 I watched a delightful performance of theirs, **Uvieta's Wishes**, performed for the Artist Program at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts (a program for fifth graders). There was obvious skill in acting, expressive in its storytelling, and the sets and costumes imaginative. The students seemed to enjoy the performance immensely, engaging the actors in a brief question and answer session following the performance.

Most recently (April / May 1997), Dan and Irene were guest artists for a grant I received to teach my Creative Development class at Portage Central High School. They worked with the students on the hero's journey and how that is reflected in every humans journey in life. This included information given by Irene, performance pieces by Dan, creating story maps with the students and finally theater exercises to help students understand how to express themselves on stage. The culminating event were stories the students wrote, performed with mask and costume on stage. The students expressed how interesting and exciting it was to work with Irene and Dan: that they were passionate, knowledgeable, personable and very helpful. The students only regret was that they wanted more time with them.

I would work with Irene and Dan again in a heartbeat. They challenge my mind and expressiveness. They know how to work with people of all ages, bringing the meaning of life alive in a magical and exciting way. I strongly recommend them to anyone interested in exploring the richness of life through storytelling and theater.

Sincerely,



Jill Waskowsky
Teacher - Portage Central High School
Education for the Arts Program