

COVERT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

35323 M-140 HIGHWAY
COVERT, MICHIGAN 49043

FAX (269) 764-8598
CENTRAL OFFICE (269) 764-3700
Dr. Stephanie Burrage, Superintendent
HIGH SCHOOL (269) 764-3730
Leadriane Roby, Principal
ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT (269) 764-3734
Joe Eberhart, Athletic Director
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (269) 764-3720
Craig LeSuer, Principal



DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Covert Public Schools is a community-minded organization dedicated to the education of students from early childhood to adulthood. We will: (1) Provide educational leadership through quality instruction. (2) Implement an academically sound, standards-based curriculum. (3) Support students in meeting grade level benchmarks for the district and state standards

December 6, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

Dr. Irene S. Vasquez and Mr. Dan Runyan, of Magical Rain Theaterworks, have worked with students in Covert Public Schools for the last seven years. Covert is a unique community in that it is rural, poor and largely minority. The school is predominantly African American with an ever increasing population (currently over 30%) of Mexican and Mexican American families.

Over the years both Ike and Dan have developed strong relationships with many students, overcoming the effects of the strong negative culture of disaffected middle and high students. This year's projects are extensive in scope. Through an arts and humanities residency from November 2002 through May 2003, Dr. Vasquez and Mr. Runyan are working with specific classes as well as with an after school team of volunteers exploring the students' diverse cultural and personal roots. The final product will be student created ensemble theater pieces and a multimedia installation.

The genius of Ike and Dan is in their ability to work with difficult students on many levels. Obviously there is the performance level. However, rather than simply providing scripted, canned projects, Ike and Dan gently guide students to generate ideas, movements, dialogue. Underlying the students' freedom is a complex web of support for both content and theater skills.

Ike works predominantly with the content, incorporating her vast knowledge of philosophy, culture, religion so as to draw understanding and insight from deep wells deep in the students' psyches. The importance of developing emotional intelligence, particularly in students alienated from the mainstream culture, cannot be overstated. Ike empowers students by sharing intellectual knowledge of their own cultures and leading them to an understanding of their potential strengths.

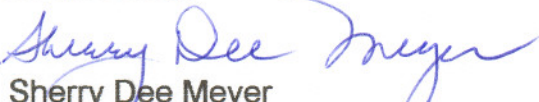
Dan's talents lie in theater. While on the surface his work may appear random and disordered, viewing the final productions proves the value of chaos theory in the ordering of the universe. Barriers fall, students cooperate seamlessly, through the conscious, comprehensive planning underpinning all of Dan's work.

These two partners in Magical Rain Theaterworks have a natural ebb and flow to their presentations and interactions with students. However, there is no question that they spend many hours in preparation, brainstorming, trouble shooting, exploring possible approaches and ideas, before, during and after each project which they undertake.

An added bonus to their team is their son, Benito Vasquez Runyan. Because they are home schooling Benito, he is free to apprentice with them. A valuable member of the team, Benito shares his many theatrical, dance, and expressive talents with the students. His enthusiasm passes to middle and high students.

With great enthusiasm and enormous respect, I endorse Dr. Vasquez and Mr. Runyan of Magical Rain Theaterworks as teaching and performing artists.

Respectfully,



Sherry Dee Meyer
Migrant/Bilingual Resource Teacher