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**ARTS COMMISSION**

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***Literary Arts Workshop Series at College Place Middle School***

This past spring, the City of Edmonds Arts Commission and the Friends of the Edmonds Library co-sponsored a *Literary Arts Workshop Series* at College Place Middle School, taught by Tikka Sears from Arts Corps in Seattle. Study after study shows that arts education teaches creative problem-solving and cultural awareness; offers multiple pathways to understanding for different learners; and increases connections and engagement between teachers, students, and the connected community that surrounds them. With “creativity” and “innovation” the new watchwords in almost every career field, these are the skills that are needed to prepare our young people for life in the 21st-century. Arts Corps is a leading non-profit arts education organization dedicated to developing creativity in the minds of young people. Arts Corps brings hands-on arts classes to youth across the Pacific Northwest with limited access to arts learning opportunities.

Sears worked in partnership with the classroom teacher, Carolyn Althausen, in teaching College Place 7<sup>th</sup> graders in a series of five class sessions. Each session consisted of a variety of activities and provided students time for both independent and group learning. The lesson plans focused on expanding learning in the arts by teaching the students the power of storytelling through themes such as: Conflict and Resolution, Power and Powerless, and Change and Hope. The students were introduced to theater, movement and writing exercises that explored community, personal stories and world events. The participants wrote short personal stories and used their written work to create short performances using new tools to communicate engaging stories using words, expressions and body language. The students worked together to create their own community agreement to follow throughout the sessions, including making sure everyone felt comfortable sharing in the group.

One objective of the workshops was to teach students how story telling and interpretation of those stories can be multilayered and complex, and how many different ways there are to effectively convey and express a powerful story. Lesson plans were taught within the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRS) Washington State Standard.

This is the third year the Edmonds Arts Commission and the Friends of the Edmonds Library have co-sponsored the *Literary Arts Workshops Series* at College Place Middle School and there are plans to continue the program next year.

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