

Dr. Flores,

I would like to let you know that the Storyteller Project with Mr. Giordano and three talented associates was a huge success at Camp Wilmont Sweeney.

The young men came in with their usual skeptical attitude (most have attended many "well-intentioned" presentations during their young lives) and within 15 minutes were captivated. This was a totally engaging workshop, each student had his very own variety of musical instruments to play, was taught some basic beats and was playing with the group in the first hour! It was a site to behold.

Somewhere near the beginning of the program, routine ground rules about respect, etc. were laid down, but it was done in such a manner that there were absolutely no behavior problems during the entire two days. The presenters treated the students as budding musicians, shared their own paths to professional music/acting/teaching careers (along with "other" side of the industry), provided positive feedback on the individual stories that the students read while backing their presentations with music . . . I could go on and on. Some particular examples I would like to note: (remember these are young men aged 15-18)

- Not one student was reprimanded or asked to leave by probation staff or teachers due to behavior during the two-day workshop.
- I observed one particular student (who has had a very hard life & is therefore difficult to engage in class) with his head down, eyes closed and so deep into "telling his story without words" on the drum he had that he was totally oblivious to all around him.
- A student stood up to read his personal rap the second day and upon completion had tears rolling down, turned on his heel and walked out the door. There was a moment of silence, not one remark from students, and when he returned a little later, he was met with a "high five". Now that's what I call trust-building!
- Upon completion of the workshop, there were way too many willing to help load equipment. They just wanted to spend more time with presenters.
- Teaching the day after the workshop was a true joy, as students attacked their lessons in my class with a vengeance--something about seeking knowledge, learning new things each day, taking control of one's life, it's never too late, etc. evidently hit the mark!

I realize that this is a rather lengthy treatise on a two-day seminar for students, but I thought you should know "from the trenches" what a powerful, well-done event this was. I was not the only adult there who saw this!

Please feel free to ask any further questions or speak to students about this experience.

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