

Program 3: Addressing the Diverse Needs of Students **Theatre**

SEGMENT 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Stephen DiMenna **John Loonam**
27 years teaching 20 years teaching

About the School

**Bayard Rustin High School
for the Humanities**
New York, NY

Type:
Urban/Comprehensive

Grades:
9-12
Students:
2,400
Low/Middle socio-economic status

Arts Requirement:
New York has a 1-credit art or music graduation requirement (180 minutes of instruction per week for one year)

About the Residency Program

Faculty:
2 (1 teacher and 1 teaching artist)

Organization:
Theatre Development Fund's Residency Arts Project (RAP).

Funding:
The residency and the actors are paid for by the Theatre Development Fund. The school matches one third of the funding.

Institutionalization:
Since filming took place, the Creative Writing Program has expanded, with the continued participation of Stephen DiMenna. It is now a Learning Community within Bayard Rustin High School, called The Institute for Media and Writing.

About the Featured Class

Creative Writing Course:

Ninth-graders learn the fundamentals of playwriting through a yearlong residency involving 16 visits by a teaching artist per semester. Students work on writing a one-act play, which professional actors perform at the end of each semester.

Students focus on developing their creative and expressive talents and work on building their communication skills.

Preparations/Prerequisites:

For this particular class, students must achieve a 3 (proficiency level) on the New York State eighth-grade ELA exam, which tests basic reading and writing skills.

Student Motivation:

Mixed. Each student is motivated by individual concerns, but common factors include a desire to go to college, an interest in creativity, and the excitement of drama and playwriting.

Student Level:

Mixed. Most students are novices, but there are a few who are surprisingly experienced in creative writing.

In the Teacher's Words

How does the residency experience introduce the concepts of playwriting?

Stephen DiMenna: The residency uses four phases to develop students' skills as playwrights:

- 1. Unlock students' creative voices*
- 2. Teach the form of playwriting*
- 3. Teach the structure of playwriting*
- 4. Explore content for the students' plays*