



L A F A Y E T T E S C H O O L D I S T R I C T

Stanley Middle School

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October 18, 2004

Re: the "earPlay Jazzquintet" presentations at Stanley Middle School

To Whom It May Concern:

For the second year, Michael Smolens brought a *FABULOUS* jazz and world music program to Stanley Middle School. The musicians in his "earPlay Jazzquintet" were able to keep the attention of over 400 students (not an easy task!) by tuning into the needs of our students- answering their questions, describing many of the two dozen instruments they play, and introducing the various styles in which the music was composed.

The music that they played, plus the history that they shared, not only connected with the audience, but also directed everyone to cultures with whom we were not particularly familiar. These cultures - West African, Brazilian, Egyptian, and North Indian - were highlighted musically along with the contributions of mainstream jazz and contemporary classical styles. A standout moment was when a guest artist recited a suite of beautiful 15th century Middle Eastern poetry while performing stage magic, all to a wonderfully imaginative musical score.

As the world gets increasingly smaller from a cultural standpoint, the "earPlay Jazzquintet" is helping to foster greater understanding while heightening students' aesthetic awareness and creativity. I would highly recommend Michael Smolens and the "earPlay Jazzquintet" to any school who wants to enrich their students' (and faculty's) lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Athayde".

Bob Athayde
Director of Music Education
Stanley Middle School
Lafayette, CA 94549