

Are the Performing Arts Right for Your Child?

MANCHESTER, CT, Oct. 14, 2019 - Whether your child is the next Bradley Cooper or is simply interested in trying something new, taking part in the performing arts will change them for the better. That's the advice from Jillian Quackenbush, Director of the Drama and Dance Department at East Catholic High School.

"High school students gain confidence and self-awareness by participating in the performing arts," she says. "Aspects of the performing arts, especially improvisation, help students learn how to evaluate situations, think outside the box and be more confident when entering unfamiliar situations. The skills they develop apply not just to school and career but, more importantly, to life."

Students who participate in the performing arts in high school also learn the benefit of being part of a team. "The experience of being a member of this community helps students develop the ability to collaborate," she says. "Being a member of a team and working well with others are necessary skills for any career. It also helps them develop everyday social skills, like being able to carry on a conversation in person, making eye contact and confidently speak in public."

For those students who are particularly talented in this arena, the benefits go beyond learning teamwork and social skills. For them, performing during their high school years can inspire a career. "These students thrive on stage, in the rehearsal space and are usually the leaders of the community," she says. "In addition, like students who are gifted athletically, they learn how to become part of a special unit. Other students, especially the younger ones, look up to them as mentors. Learning how to stay humble and be team players are valuable lessons they will use if they do pursue professional acting careers."

But what if your child isn't particularly ready to be on stage? Are there still benefits for them? Quackenbush says yes. "Regardless of a student's talent, this is something that will help them navigate through the world we live in. Students who get involved find an open and accepting community that supports and encourages everyone's talents. Acting is about being human. Everyone has basic human emotions and experience regardless of their given talents. The performing arts community helps hone these skills."

For parents whose children are undecided about participating in a drama program, Quackenbush suggests they give it a try. "There are so many ways they can be part of this community," she says. "For those who don't want to get up on stage, parents could suggest they join the backstage crew. Or try their hand at set design, sound production or lighting. Perhaps they want to be a front of the house manager, a costume designer or a dance captain. All these parts of a production help students develop the same life skills as the performers. They learn teamwork and experience the same sense of community. The theater is a place of fun, and the experience is like no other."

She summarizes the pluses for students who get involved in the performing arts this way: "These students develop more self-confidence, imagination, empathy, cooperation, concentration and communication skills. They have a 'family' bond like no other school community and the members of that group look out for each other. Being a member of this community is a great experience and provides them with a place that will help them feel depended upon, important and accepted. It is also fun. Not all kids have strong emotional outlets these days and being a part of the performing arts is a healthy emotion outlet. We also find these students grown into accepting, compassionate, assertive and happy human beings. The confidence that these students develop is life changing and gives them life lessons they will use forever."

East Catholics Stage East drama club will present; Noises Off in the East Catholic auditorium on Friday, October 18 and Saturday, October 19, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. Tickets will be available at the door.

About East Catholic High School

East Catholic High School is a regional college-preparatory school of the Archdiocese of Hartford in Manchester, CT. Students come from more than 35 towns in the Greater Hartford area and eastern Connecticut. East Catholic is a place where students discover who they are meant to be. The school has been awarded the Blue-Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the state of Connecticut. East Catholic students are challenged to build their own strong moral character while pursuing academic excellence, responsible citizenship, active participation in community service, sportsmanship, and an appreciation for the fine arts. An overwhelming number of East Catholic students (97 percent) go on to attend four- and two-year colleges. For more information go to www.ECHS.com.

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