

Warrenton-Hammond School District

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Warrenton High School
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Warrenton Grade School
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To whom it may concern,

A very valuable assembly was held at Warrenton Grade School earlier this school year when the Harlem Ambassadors spoke to our students and performed their fast-paced, entertaining basketball routines. As a teacher at Warrenton, I am critical of the class time we give up when we attend assemblies. An assembly must meet stringent criteria in my opinion, to be worthy of taking valuable teaching time away from the classroom. The Harlem Ambassadors were a group that met my criteria. The time spent watching their performance and listening to their testimonials left a positive and lasting impact on my students.

The Harlem Ambassadors presented a message that strongly encouraged the students to set goals. They encouraged the kids to stay in school and stay away from drugs and alcohol. Their messages motivated students to want to do well, choose friends who would be supportive of their goals, and make themselves and their families proud. The personal stories each member of the Harlem Ambassadors told held the students attention in awe as they heard firsthand about lives that could have easily gone in other directions, disappointing not only the Harlem Ambassador members themselves, but their families, friends, teachers and community. The Ambassadors were forthcoming about their problems, temptations and mistakes. More importantly, they emphasized the changes and decisions they made to overcome these potential roadblocks to success. The Harlem Ambassadors let our students know that it was up to each one of them to decide what they want in life, set goals, choose friends wisely, work hard and not give up.

Role models and real heroes are what I would call the members of the Harlem Ambassadors. So many of our students love sports, so the basketball routines worked wonderfully as a visual and active way to motivate the students' interest. The Harlem Ambassadors did a terrific job of inviting students down out of the audience to join them on the floor and become part of the show. This made the members of the group become more "real" to the students. My students left the assembly excited not only to play basketball and work on fun routines, but to live lives and make decisions that would make them worthy and eligible to join a group like the Harlem Ambassadors in their futures. The students were able to see in a tangible way that the decisions they make today and in the next few years really will have a lasting impact on their lives.

I was pleased that at the end of the program the Harlem Ambassadors recapped their main message by calling on students to answer questions, holding students accountable for actively listening. Students were then invited to bring their families and attend a performance in the evening, which every student in my room was eager to do. This evening performance extended the message of the Harlem Ambassadors out into the community and allowed those students attending to hear the message a second time, further ingraining the importance of good decision making.

When my students and I talk about the highlights of the school year, the Harlem Ambassadors assembly is always mentioned. The students looked to the members of the group as role models and sports heroes. They realize that someday, they too, could travel around, and have fun with a team, doing something they love to do, like playing basketball with a group of great, supportive friends and encouraging others to succeed!

The Harlem Ambassadors would be well worth bringing back to perform again in the future. The message they present, and the format they present it in, is something our students need to be exposed to over and over.

Sincerely,

Shellie O'Connor

5th grade teacher, Warrenton Grade School, Warrenton, OR