

## Many Stars Are Born

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*Machen Elementary School  
Hampton, Virginia*

When Machen Elementary School decided to put on a play, it truly was a production. More than 100 students auditioned, and everyone got a role. The rest of the students also played parts—backstage and in other preparations, such as making programs and ushering for performances.

The play was “Clowns,” which featured tumblers, singers, and dancers, as well as the actors. The play carries many positive messages, among them “be true to yourself” and “respect others.” It also emphasizes that while everyone is different, people have many common traits and needs.

Because Machen has more than 500 students, getting all of them involved in the production proved challenging, but parents and staff found something for everyone to do. Students rehearsed three times a week from February to April. To be involved, they had to have parental permission and transportation after each rehearsal. This support and cooperation from parents was crucial to the success of the play.

The resource staff and parent volunteers coordinated the event, which was funded by Title I Parent Involvement funds, along with monetary and in-kind donations from the staff and community. The school’s food service donated after-school snacks to every child who attended the rehearsals. Many parents offered to make costumes, design the set, monitor children, and direct. A local theater company volunteered to oversee and guide the produc-

tion. Another theater group and a dance studio donated costumes. Parents, community organizations, and staff donated various props.

“Clowns” was the school’s first joint venture, bringing together students, staff, parents, and community members. With a lot of cooperation and hard work, it proved very successful. In fact, “Clowns” was so popular that the school ended up using the larger auditorium at a neighboring middle school.

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