

## All the World's a Stage

*Bullard TALENT K-8 School  
Fresno, California*

All the world's a stage at the Bullard TALENT Middle School! Every year, the K-8 magnet school produces and presents a middle school musical seen by more than 4,000 school children, families, and community residents. These highly anticipated productions are the result of collaborations of the visual and performing arts faculty, students, families, and the community. Without the organization, planning and hands-on participation of hundreds of volunteers, the plays would not be the tremendous success that they have become.

The excitement begins early in the school year. At Back to School Night, parents and students learn about the new production and the many opportunities for involvement. During the first week of school, students in grades 6-8 participate in a four-day Visual and Performing Arts clinic to familiarize them with the school's course offerings and to introduce them to the selected play's script, music, choreography and stagecraft.

Staff and community specialists act as judges for two sets of auditions. Shortly after the judges announce the final casting, the school holds a parent meeting to encourage parental leadership and to assign volunteering activities.

Teachers, staff, administrators and community members play many supporting roles. Teachers direct the play, while administrators take the lead on scheduling and public relations. The larger community donates goods and services and attends the performances, providing support for students. The school schedules 14 performances, many of them for school groups.

"I have been the volunteer costume designer for the past ten years," said one former parent. "My children have long since left Bullard TALENT, but I am so grateful for what it gave them and believe so strongly in what it gives all the kids, that I will continue to do what

I can as a member of the community to make it happen." This is representative of the spirit and participation that keeps the shows going on.

Planning such a huge event is not easy. Because it is a magnet school, Bullard TALENT draws its students from all over Fresno. School leaders find that it is sometimes a challenge to bring the school together for a complex, semester-long project.

Scheduling and keeping students on track are additional challenges. Teachers and parents work hard to help students stay healthy, energetic and motivated throughout the process so they do not feel overburdened.

"I have been able to use many values such as discipline, self-control, perseverance and respect. I know that with what I have learned from doing these plays, I will be even more prepared for what's to come," said an eighth-grader.

Despite the hard work and long hours from everyone involved, the productions continue to inspire pride and commitment. "This event consumes so many students, teachers, families, former students and who-knows-who, that it boggles the mind," said a first-grade teacher at Bullard. "It is with pride that I volunteer my time in this absolutely incredible event. I wouldn't miss it."

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