

I AM U AND YOU ARE ME



Hearts and minds were thrumming during the campus-wide event, I Am U, in late February.

Standing for “Identity, Arts, Unity,” the innovative and unique I AM U event proved to be an absolutely engaging, thought-provoking, and community-building experience for all of Lab’s students, faculty, and staff. The brainchild of Lab Social Worker **Aaron Boose**, the event celebrated the many identities here at Lab and unified them through the arts. There were visual arts displays, spoken word and poetry, theater improv, a fashion show, and a variety of other activities and performances across all divisions. The power of the event was underscored by visiting performers Founder and Director of the Drumming Up From Poverty Project **Kweku Owusu**, a master drummer from Ghana, and **Porche’ “Queen P” Anthony**, a choreographer/judge/host and former member of the legendary Dance Crew “Beat Ya Feet Kings.”

“I am lucky in my position as a social worker at Lab because I work with all four divisions

and have the opportunity to be a witness and a participant to the growth of students at all levels of their development,” says Mr. Boose. “I wanted to share my enviable position with our whole community. Everyone is so busy and committed at Lab but I believe that it’s important to take the time to share with each other—in a deep way—what we are doing in and beyond the classroom; that sharing expands us as individuals and as a community.

“The goals of the event were twofold: to unify students and staff among all divisions, providing the opportunity to interact, share, and learn with and from one another in a non-judgmental way; and to provide a platform for students and staff to use the arts to collectively explore, experience, and discuss identity,” explains Mr. Boose.

The event itself was a culminating celebration of weeks and months of workshops, projects, and classes that homed in on the themes of identity, art, and unity. Division heads worked with their staff to include work around these themes in their curricula be that poetry, history,

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—MR. BOOSE



world music, or simply conversations around identity and unity. “We are all made up of different ingredients better known as identifiers such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, sexual orientation, and many others,” says Mr. Boose. “Working on a rap together, writing stories from another person’s point of view, watching and discussing a movie like ‘Hair Love,’ singing the Black National Anthem, or learning the basics of traditional Ghana drumming go a long way in helping individuals feel free to explore who they are and revel in the individuality of their classmates and teachers.”

“I Am U brought the entire Lab community together. We need to do this more often where teachers and students of all levels are learning together. This event was created with the intention of celebrating each other’s differences and learning about our backgrounds, our identities, and what makes each of us who we are. It was

a rich opportunity to learn about colleagues in a different way and to see students getting to know each other and conversing on another level,” says Director of Visual Arts, Grades 1-8, Academic Club Teacher, Teaching Artist **Sara Hawkins**. “And a big part of coming together and sharing perspectives is the sharing of art and music, which speak a language that we all can understand regardless of where we’re from, our religion, race, gender, etc. The arts are the universal language.”

“Seeing students of different ages work together, open up to each other, and get creative was one of my favorite moments at Lab so far!” says Academic Club Teacher, Teaching Artist **Liora Valero**. “I can’t wait to continue this tradition in the years to come and am so grateful to Aaron for his tenacity to bring all these ideas to fruition.”

Head of Junior High **Jessica Lux** adds, “It was gratifying to see so many students coming together to further explore who they are and learn from one another. The workshops, projects, and conversations were clearly incredibly meaningful for our students and our whole community.”

Here’s to hoping that I Am U becomes a treasured annual tradition at The Lab School of Washington. There was no denying the open hearts and sizzling energy that rocked our campus.

