

Dear Roots Of Rhythm,

ROR was a wonderful part of the year for my 5th and 6th graders. To begin with, let me tell you a little about our school. Granby Elementary is a 20 year old building in the Worthington School district, a northwest suburb of Columbus. We have 458 students this year in grades K-6, over 10% of whom are ESL (English as a Second Language). In our three kindergarten classes alone, we have over 19 different languages spoken in the home. I had 56 fifth grade students, and 63 students in the 6th grade. Because we are such a diverse school family, ROR is a perfect compliment to the emphasis we have on tolerance and understanding that different isn't bad, it's just different. We have a Kids Saving Earth club that focuses on environmental, as well as cultural learning. We have partnered with the Columbus Zoo's "Partners in Conservation" (PIC) project for over 10 years. This year alone, we raised over \$500.00 to send to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo for the people and the mountain gorillas. Members of PIC will be traveling to Rwanda later this month and will be taking our donation along, as well as those of other area schools. Our monies are earmarked this year to provide goats for the people in the villages surrounding the National Forest where the gorillas live; stove kits that enable the people to cook cleaner and use less wood from the forest; and money to help the baby gorilla orphanage, which is raising six young gorillas that were kidnapped from their families to be sold on the black market. The baby gorillas were recovered, and will be raised together and later released into the wild to start a new gorilla colony.

My fifth grade students focused on Guinea and built djembe drums, while the sixth graders studied Ghana and built dondos. We decorated our drums with authentic Adinkra and Kente symbols, as well as animal designs researched by myself and the art teacher. In art classes, the fifth graders made coiled fabric baskets and the sixth graders created dramatic African masks. Each of our older classes have younger "buddies" in kindergarten through 2nd grade, and one of our culminating activities was to have performances and workshops for our buddies. The pictures you have are of these sessions. After performing ensembles for them, the students taught their buddies how to play their drums. Everyone loved the experience.

In April of this year, my 4th-6th grade choir had a spring concert in which we performed a piece in Swahili, accompanying ourselves on our dondo and djembe drums, with various African bells and shakers as well. One of the highlights of the concert was the wearing of headbands and hats that I made from fabric I bought through Partners in Conservation. When PIC travels to Rwanda and the Congo, they buy products made by men and women in workshops sponsored by the organization. These products (hand dyed and batiked cloth, dolls, baskets, carved wooden animals, bags, purses and other unique wares) are purchased by people here in the Columbus area, and the monies are then sent back to the people. I really felt that the playing of our drums, and the wearing of the authentic fabric brought us full circle.

I hope to continue using Roots of Rhythm in my classes in the years to come. It was very positive "hands on" learning for all of us.

Sincerely,
Leslie Ritter
Granby Elementary Music Teacher