

Kaiser Permanente
Educational Theatre
Program Northwest

Five-Year Report Executive Summary 2006 - 2011

Through theatre, we inspire people to make healthy choices

We value:

- Quality theatre and quality education
- The voice, intelligence, and experiences of the child
- Innovation
- Listening and responding to the needs of our community

“Educational theatre is a marriage between medicine and art.”

— Philip Wu, MD, Kaiser Permanente Northwest

Who We Are

In 2006, an innovative collaboration was established between **Kaiser Permanente**, a nonprofit health care organization, and **Oregon Children’s Theatre**. The intention of the

collaboration: Revive the long-absent Educational Theatre Program in the Northwest Region. Unlike the previous program, and unlike existing models in other Kaiser Permanente regions, Kaiser Permanente Northwest commissioned a theatre company to launch and manage the **Educational Theatre Program Northwest (ETPNW)**.

Five years later, ETPNW has produced six touring productions, two artists-in-residence programs and a variety of workshops and community interactions, reaching more than 150,000 audience members. ETPNW has embraced the challenge of engaging young people, through theatre, in compelling

explorations of what it means to be healthy, and how they might lead the charge to create healthier communities.

The work of ETPNW is a collaboration in the truest sense of the word, a perfect alchemy of health care expertise and art. Physicians, social workers, dietitians and other advisers from Kaiser Permanente engage in ongoing dialogue with artists about content and form, and reflect on the work at every stage of development. Professional teaching artists, writers, designers, directors, puppet-makers, dancers, musicians, composers, and many others make it possible to effectively disseminate knowledge. But more than that, they tell powerful, funny, enlightening stories in an engaging, accessible way. They transform gymnasiums into theaters, make messages into musical anthems, and create characters real enough to inspire students to write letters of advice, revealing their own challenges and urging better choices.



Kaiser Permanente
**Educational
Theatre**
Program

In collaboration with:

Oregon
Children's
Theatre

ETPNW Production History

“What Would You Do?” (2006)

“If” * (2007)

“The Pressure Point!” * (2008)

“The Amazing Food Detective: The Case of the Sickly Soccer Star” (2009)

“What Do You See?” * (2009)

“Texting the Sun” * (2010)

“Smarty Pants” * (2010-11)

“1½” * (2011)

“The Amazing Food Detective: The Case of the Unsuspecting Suspects” * (2012)

* Original productions created in the Northwest Region

Educational Themes

Bullying

Respect

Conflict Resolution

Media Literacy

Cyberbullying

Healthy Eating

Total Health

Active Living

Interpersonal Communication

Peer Pressure

Self-Image

Leadership

Advocacy

Childhood Obesity

Empathy

Assessment and Growth

From the beginning, productions have been assessed through a variety of tools. The shape, function, and depth of the assessment process has evolved in tandem with the growth of the program and reflects the ever-changing, ever-growing understanding of how effective assessment can create a culture of constant improvement.

In 2006, Russell Granet of Arts Education Resource was contracted to work with all eight ETP regional programs. This expertise has been an invaluable asset, building sound practices, maintaining the integrity and growth of assessment strategies, and aligning with our ETP colleagues nationally.

From our first evaluation process of *“What Would You Do?”*, focused primarily on questions related to whether or not teachers liked a production, to investigations about a school’s particular culture (*“Texting the Sun”*), to a fine-tuned inquiry into the delicate balance of age appropriateness (*“1½”*), assessment has not been a process defined by one single objective. Rather, it has been a living tool, designed to get at specific objectives related to each project, ensuring the effectiveness of the work and alignment with our mission and values.

Assessment at ETPNW hasn’t taken place in a vacuum. In 2007, ETPNW joined the other ETP regions for a national assessment of productions that deliver messages focused on healthy eating and active living, including *“The Amazing Food Detective,” “The Best Me,”* and *“Give Peas a Chance.”* ETP contracted with the Center for Community Health and Evaluation to assess changes in knowledge among student audiences. The hope was to broaden the scope of the assessment by individual regions, to gather data on a national level. As relative newcomers to Kaiser Permanente’s Educational Theatre Program, this opportunity to work with our colleagues to create an assessment strategy, and reflect on the findings, provided an invaluable perspective on our regional efforts.

Values in Action: Spotlight on “1½”

In the summer of 2010, ETPNW embarked on the development of a new interactive touring production for upper elementary students (grades 4 - 6). The subject of the production: childhood obesity. With ever-more-alarming statistics looming, it became clear to Kaiser Permanente that this was an issue that could not be ignored. The journey of developing *“1½”* went on to offer ETPNW insights into the purpose of assessment and the value of transparency.

We value: Quality theatre and quality education

In tackling such a sensitive issue, one that so many struggle to give voice to, it was essential that a strong collaborator with both education and theatre expertise steer the creation of this new project. Playwright Matthew B. Zrebski (*“Texting the Sun”*) was identified as the perfect fit. He worked closely with health professionals at Kaiser Permanente over the course of two years to craft an engaging, thought-provoking, funny play examining this complex issue.

We value: The voice, intelligence, and experiences of the child

In the words of playwright Matthew Zrebski, “Never has a writing project been so personal as ‘1½.’ When given the task of penning a play on issues of childhood obesity, I knew I’d have to re-examine the numerous students who’ve come through my classes over my 15 years as a teaching artist, children in various states of panic about their weight and appearance. I went on the journey. I engaged in a deep retrospective and also conducted interviews with teachers, parents, medical consultants, counselors, and students to better grasp this growing epidemic.”

We value: Innovation

Innovation related to the work of ETPNW is not defined by gimmicks or novelty, but an effort to investigate new stories in new ways, to stimulate conversation, to leave a footprint behind after the story is told. In the case of “1½,” that effort focused on two strategies: 1) finding a way to represent the many challenges faced within the realm of childhood obesity from a variety of perspectives, and 2) experimenting with the idea of interactivity in new ways. In tandem with these experiments was a thoughtful process of inquiry to evaluate the success of each new strategy, and a willingness to listen and respond to what we heard. We believe the best way to innovate is to listen to the audience, neither clinging to the “way it’s always been done,” nor embracing novelty purely for the sake of novelty.

True innovation lives in nimbleness and responsiveness.

We value: Listening and responding to the needs of our community

Though funny and entertaining, it was no surprise that “1½” had moments of intensity, emotion, even brutality when incidents of bullying played out. ETPNW tread new ground with the tone, emotional depth, and fundamental sensitivity of this subject matter. With that in mind, teachers were asked for detailed feedback. While the majority responded positively, a portion suggested that perhaps the envelope was being pushed for the developmental level of their younger students, illuminating the need to make adjustments. Armed with that information, ETPNW took unprecedented action—returning to the studio midtour to gather advisers, artists, and educators to fine-tune content, structure and language to better meet the needs of our audience.

We believe that when the health and well-being of our community is on the line, it’s as important to listen to the few as it is to listen to the many.

What it all means

Nimbleness and transparency make the work better. The real power lies not just in asking the right questions, but a willingness to listen to the answers, and respond to what comes back in a real way. There is power in being open to change, revision and improvement.

Assessment has been, and will continue to be an evolving strategy, anchoring us to our mission and values. No two productions or projects will be served by the same tactics, tools, or questions.

Can we ever claim that we, and we alone, have improved an individual’s health? Perhaps not. What we *can* demonstrate is that we have inspired people to think about their choices, their decision-making processes, and what they’re capable of. We have the capacity to inspire a culture of empathy, personal responsibility, and in fact, personal power.

We relish the opportunity to create quality theatre, with relevant, thought-provoking educational content, inspiring deeper thinking, making advocates of our audiences, leaving them asking more questions about what it means to be healthy. We respect our audiences, whatever their age. We constantly seek the most engaging, innovative way to serve the needs of our community.

Educational Theatre Program Northwest Team

152,000+

Students, teachers, and
community members served
through the work of ETPNW
2006-11

852

Performances

149

Pre- or post-performance
workshops

712

Schools served in
northwestern Oregon and
Southwest Washington, within the
Kaiser Permanente Northwest
service area

45

School districts served

15

Counties served

38

Teaching artists employed

17

Other theatre professionals
employed

31,513

Miles traveled on tour

Kaiser Permanente Northwest

Community Benefit Program

Dan Field, Director, Community Benefit and External Affairs
Molly Haynes, Manager, Community Health Initiative

Advisers

Philip Wu, MD, Department of Pediatrics
Keith Bachman, MD, Department of Internal Medicine
Jean Rystrom, Pediatric Practice Director
Janet Muckridge, RD, Manager, Outpatient Nutrition Services
Kay Pasquesi, LCSW, Pediatric Case Manager

Oregon Children's Theatre

Marcella Crowson, Artistic Director, ETP
Bridie Harrington, Administrative Director, ETP
Tony Fuemmeler, ETP Associate
Stan Foote, Artistic Director, OCT

Special Thanks

Nancy Stevens, Director of Community Benefit, 2004 - 2009
Laura Faye Smith, ETPNW Manager, 2006 - 2008
Russell Granet, Consultant, Arts Education Resource
John Edmiston, Kaiser Permanente,
Community Relations Manager
Matthew B. Zrebski, Playwright

All of the artists, educators, health professionals, students,
and collaborators who contribute to the work of Kaiser
Permanente's Educational Theatre Program Northwest

In collaboration with:

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For more information and to view the full report, go to www.etpnorthwest.org

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