



WRITE A PLAY Strengthens Local Impact

This season, FST's award-winning arts-in-education program, WRITE A PLAY, is celebrating its 33rd year. Since the program was founded in 1990, it has reached over one million students around the world. However, the largest impact is often on students right here in Sarasota.

This year, FST focused on strengthening its partnerships with three schools in its own backyard: Alta Vista Elementary School, Pine View School, and Emma E. Booker Elementary School. Instead of working with students over the course of just one week, FST hosted multi-week residencies at each school with a special focus on what each student body needed.

"So many of the teachers in Sarasota are new, and we wanted them to see that they can complete the WRITE A PLAY program with their classes, and that their students can be successful at playwriting," said Caroline Saldivar, FST's Director of Children's Theatre.

WRITE A PLAY started this year with students seeing a production of a play brought to life by professional actors at the start of the school year. Some students took a field trip to FST's downtown Sarasota campus to see *The Velveteen Rabbit*. For students who couldn't make the trip, FST brought a touring production of *Red Riding Hood* to their school.

Next, students saw *Imagination Rocks!*, a compilation of short plays written by their peers, at their school. Then, students learned about the four key components of playwriting: character, setting, conflict, and dialogue, before creating a play together as a class. From there, FST Teaching Artists came back to each classroom three or four more times to lead additional playwriting workshops, ensuring that every student got an in-depth understanding of playwriting.

"The best part of this process is watching students tap into their creativity," said Trisha Stever, one of the Teaching Artists who got to see WRITE A PLAY's impact on local students. "Rather than relying on popular characters, the students create their own."

Being involved in WRITE A PLAY even reminded Stever about why she got into arts education in the first place.

"My biggest takeaway from this program is the power and importance of bringing arts and theatre into the classroom, where students learn about everything that goes into making a play come to life," added Stever. "It is incredible to watch and facilitate each student's creativity and passion."

After several comprehensive workshops, students put pen to paper and wrote their own plays—either individually, in small groups, or in pairs. Their creations were sent to FST and submitted to the theatre's annual youth playwriting competition. FST has already received some plays from these creative students, such as *Snowboard Dragon Plays Golf*, *The Parenting Dilemma*, *Truckless Jason*, and *Kraken Got Ya Turkey!*

"We want to demonstrate that all children can be successful in playwriting, regardless of where they come from," said Caroline Saldivar. "Through our extended residencies in these schools, we have a variety of types of students participating, but WRITE A PLAY works for all of them because of its tailor-made approach."

Young playwrights are not required to have a Teaching Artist come to their school in order to submit a play to FST's youth playwriting competition. They can simply visit FST's website, download the WRITE A PLAY submission packet, and mail in their play.

Join us for our production of *The Power of Peanut Butter & Other Winning Plays*, which begins playing March 30, to see if any of these brilliant local writers are a winning playwright this year.

The Power of Peanut Butter & Other Winning Plays

By Young Playwrights
Plays Select Saturdays and Sundays
Starting March 30
Keating Theatre

Pictured Top: Keegan Penny works with students in Memphis, TN. Photo from FST.