



Transforming Lives Through Theater

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**First Stage and Messmer Catholic Schools selected as one of
12 Partnership Teams from across the nation in
The Kennedy Center's Partners in Education Program.**

*Teams will be inducted at the Partners in Education Institute
April 25-28, 2012 at the Kennedy Center.*

Washington, D.C. – In April 2012, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts will host the 13th Partners in Education Institute, a four-day intensive designed for arts organizations and school districts interested in partnering together to initiate or expand professional development programs for teachers. First Stage and Messmer Catholic Schools were selected by the Kennedy Center along with 11 other arts organizations and schools systems across the nation to participate in the Partners in Education Institute, April 25-28, 2012.

While at the Kennedy Center, each team develops a plan specific to their community for the partners to establish or expand arts-based professional development programs for teachers. Teams receive a detailed planning guide, attend performances, and meet with national education leaders and guest artists while at the Kennedy Center. First Stage and Messmer Catholic Schools, along with the other newly-selected teams met the criteria for selection by effectively demonstrating the potential for the arts organization and the school system to initiate or expand programs for teachers and the stated commitment by both partners to collaborate on developing programs.

First Stage's Theater in Education department seeks to incite young people's excitement for learning by helping classroom teachers explore their curriculum in interactive, imaginative and integrated methods, and has offered professional development opportunities for teachers since 1993. "We're excited to partner with Messmer Catholic Schools in this opportunity to expand

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First Stage and Messmer Catholic Schools selected for Kennedy Center program/add one

one of the fundamental goals of our Theater in Education department, to give teachers the tools they need to facilitate meaningful arts education – everyday,” said First Stage’s managing director, Rob Goodman.

Br. Bob Smith, OFM Cap. President and CEO of Messmer Catholic Schools was equally enthusiastic about the partnership. “At Messmer, we're committed to offering our students access to arts programming, locally, and in partnership with organizations around the country. Nearly 90% of our students are from low-income backgrounds, the Arts programming we offer may be these students first and only exposure to the Arts. Our past history has shown however this is a worthwhile investment. Our students have gone on to receive numerous awards and recognition at leading arts institutions around the country. We're excited about our First Stage partnership and the opportunity to participate in the Kennedy Center program.”

About FIRST STAGE Celebrating its 25th anniversary in the 2011-12 season, First Stage touches hearts, engages minds, and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences for young people and families through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten, and entertain; unparalleled Theater Academy training that fosters life skills through stage skills; and dynamic Theater in Education programs that promote active learning in our schools and community. First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education and Americans for the Arts, as well as Theatre Wisconsin and Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). Visit www.firststage.org for more information.

About MESSMER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS Founded in 1926 Messmer Catholic Schools are renowned for their pioneering leadership role and success in urban education. Serving nearly 1700 students across three Milwaukee area campuses, Messmer students are almost entirely from low-income, single parent backgrounds. The schools are diverse with student body comprised of two thirds African American students and one third Latino students. Messmer students are two and a half times more likely to graduate and enter college than their peers. 85% will continue to a four year college, while the balance attend two year institutions or join the military. Over \$4.5 million in academic scholarships were awarded to Messmer graduates in 2011. Visit www.messmerschools.org for more information.

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