



Art Imitating Life Results In Awards For New West Youth

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New Westminster: They say art imitates life. It can also shine a light on some of the more uncomfortable or difficult subject matter of today. Nothing is more true than when big and challenging topics are brought to life through the performing arts by 12 and 13 year olds.

But that is exactly what a group of New Westminster students did, turning heads and winning awards at the recent ISABC VISTA one act play festival held May 24th-26th at St. George's School. 'Inside', an original play written, directed and performed by Urban Academy Students tackles the complex topic of being a transgendered youth.

In a contest reminiscent of David v. Goliath, Urban Academy Middle School Students nabbed two of the eight awards handed out, as well as one honourable mention. Not bad for a small school competing against nine long time established drama programs. Under the guidance of UA Theatre Teacher, Patricia Brooke, the students were challenged to write, act and produce a play that speaks to an issue of social justice.

"It was all their idea, their topic and their writing" Mrs. Brooke, also the Co-Founder of Shadows and Dreams Theatre Company, commented proudly. "These students really worked through some challenging subject matter and committed to putting forward a production they could be proud of," noting that they even practiced over Skype the long weekend prior so as not to miss a class.

Vienna McKenzie and Karen Wei (Grades 8 and 7 respectively) wrote the play, winning VISTA's 'Best Art for Social Action' award, while Grade 11 student Ashlyn Drummond won honourable mention for 'Best Student Direction'. The top award for Best Actor went to Urban Academy's Grade 7 student Colby Kington for his convincing portrayal of a transgender youth.

UA's Head of School Cheryle Beaumont knows that this is just the beginning for the growing school with deep roots in the arts. "This was only our second time competing at VISTA, so last year was a wonderful learning opportunity for our students." Attributing the students' success to the school's approach to learning Beaumont continued, "working through issues of injustice and social change often involve the arts as it allows students to express themselves and develop empathy for those around them." The Head of School also noted that typically the students who compete at VISTA are in higher grades, but she knew they were ready.

Clearly they were, and they are already planning on attending the competition with multiple drama crews for VISTA 2018.

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The VISTA (Vancouver Independent Schools Theatre Alliance) one act play festival is a competition put together by and for member schools of ISABC (Independent Schools Association of BC). Plays must be student-acted and no longer than 30 minutes.

For More Information Contact:

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