

10TH ANNUAL PALATINE HIGH SCHOOL ELS PLAY SHOWCASES 'OCEAN LIFE'



For the 10th straight year, students in the Educational Life Skills (ELS) program at Palatine High School dedicated their classroom work to showcase their talent and creativity in a spring play.

The annual ELS play took place on April 8 in the auditorium, and students chose to create an "Ocean Party" that spoke of themes accepting others' differences, not judging someone by their appearance, and taking care of the Earth. The range of student ability is vast, but all students participated regardless of their physical or cognitive disabilities.

"We do this every year, and it is definitely something the kids and school look forward to," said Karen Lange, art teacher at Palatine High School. "The students love that they can perform in front of the school, and it's a very positive event."



The show is completely put together by students in the Fine Arts A100 class, which is an art elective for students in the ELS program. The school and parents are invited to the play, which takes place during their class period. Students, under the supervision of their teacher and teaching assistants, work together to produce props, costumes, storylines, and a dialogue for the show.

This year's show, "Ocean Party," featured characters in an underwater community, complete with fish, jellyfish, and a scary shark that had no sea creature friends. Each scene revolved around the general theme of accepting others' differences. In the past, themes have included aliens, time traveling through history, and the ABCs of art.



Lange said the class worked on the projects, costumes, and practiced their roles for about 11 weeks. She said this activity is not only important in developing physical and cognitive skills, but it boosts students' confidence by providing an opportunity for them to be on stage. She added that she believes these types of sensory projects help her students.

"Art education is necessary and can expand paths," Lange said. "Art gives back, and this is a great, different avenue for our students to be creative, which is very relevant to their lives. It challenges them, excites them, allows them to move their bodies in different ways, and by the day of the play they really step up to the plate."