

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**BERKELEY REP'S SCHOOL OF THEATRE ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH BERKELEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS FUND TO EXPAND ITS POPULAR STORY BUILDERS PROGRAM DISTRICT-WIDE****Innovative arts-integrated curriculum funded for expansion to 36 third-grade classrooms**

October 12, 2015 – Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre today announced a partnership with Berkeley Public Schools Fund (BPSF) to expand its Story Builders program to every third-grade classroom in Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) during the 2015-16 academic year. This partnership will bring Story Builders, a popular literacy and theatre workshop, into a total of 36 classrooms, reaching over 1,000 students. To learn more about participating in Story Builders, visit: berkeleyrep.org/outreach.

"This is the sixth year that we have worked with Berkeley Public Schools Fund to bring the Story Builders program to Berkeley Unified School District students," remarks **Rachel Fink**, director of Berkeley Rep's School of Theatre. "This year BPSF is providing district-wide funding of the program, which will provide each third-grade BUSD student the opportunity to participate in a well-established arts-integrated curriculum regardless of individual resources. We are thrilled to provide this critical resource to even more students who normally wouldn't have the access to this life-enriching experience."

Story Builders is one of the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre's most innovative and far-reaching programs, bringing literacy and theatre workshops into grade K-5 elementary school classrooms in nine counties throughout the Bay Area. In each workshop Berkeley Rep teaching artists use the core fundamentals of theatre to increase literacy skills while strengthening students' writing, critical thinking, and cooperation skills. Students use sound, movement, dialogue, and improvisation to turn the classroom into a living theatre. The workshop adheres to the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards in addition to the California Common Core State Standards for Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening for third graders.

"One of the goals of the Berkeley Public Schools Fund is to bring the incredible cultural and intellectual resources that we have in Berkeley into our schools," says **Erin Rhoades**, Berkeley Public Schools Fund's executive director. "The Story Builders program was already extremely popular with teachers through individual classroom grants from the Schools Fund. Now every third-grade class in the district has the opportunity to participate in this program and also learn about the incredible world-renowned theatre company we have in Berkeley: Berkeley Rep."

Story Builders is just one of many high-quality workshops offered to Bay Area schools to foster strong community connections and engagement through the arts. Since the School of Theatre opened its doors in 2001, it has served over 269,000 people, collaborated with 450 professional teaching artists, led workshops in 2,785 classrooms in nine counties in the Bay Area, produced nearly 100 original plays created by youth and teen students, and mentored 205 young professionals through its Fellowship program. With its year-round operations and service to more than 100 Bay Area K-12 schools, Berkeley Rep is proud to run one of the most comprehensive arts education programs of any professional arts organization in California. Visit berkeleyrep.org/school to learn more about the School of Theatre's outreach program.

ABOUT BERKELEY REP

Berkeley Rep has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its core values of imagination and excellence, as well as its educated and adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep. These shows have gone on to win five Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, and many other honors. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997.

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