

7th Grade Class to the Kennedy Center

By Diana Hellinger

The 7th Grade Class of St. Michael Catholic School went to the Kennedy Center on September 30 to see Handspeak, the story of teenagers trying to find understanding.

Paul and Alice struggle to have a conversation from two cultures -- Deaf and Hearing. Students watched the characters confront narrow-mindedness and break down barriers of language. The play was written by a 17-year-old, Emily Hedgecock, who based it on people she knew and whose courage inspired her. She entered Handspeak in the Playwright Discovery Program that invites promising young writers to explore the themes and dimensions of disability through the creation of a one-act play. Over 300 middle and high school students responded to the challenge last year by submitting scripts that demonstrated how perceived differences affect their lives, their relationships with their peers, and the world around them. Several St. Michael School 7th Graders intend to write plays for this program in the coming year. A question and answer session between the audience and the writer, director, and actors provided an opportunity for our students to learn more about a theatrical production and the back story of Handspeak.