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MMSD Students to Participate in Project Soapbox at Overture

Madison, Wis. (March 12, 2024) — More than 100 students from 16 Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) middle and high schools will gather at Overture Center for the Arts this Thursday, March 14, to take part in the 17th Annual Mikva Challenge Project Soapbox Youth Speech Showcase, an exercise in civic engagement that affords participants the opportunity to deliver speeches on cultural, social, political and economic issues that are important to them.

This event marks the culmination of a process that began earlier this year at the school level; all the invited student speakers were selected based on the strength of addresses made previously to their classmates. Select students will be offered the chance to participate in Soapbox Nation, a celebration that convenes Project Soapbox speakers from across the country.

As event host, Overture provides space, tech services and logistics so students can have a first-hand professional speaking experience, which ties with our DEI values. We provide the 10 finalists with certificates for Overture tickets. In addition, we have provided the schools with our online “Democracy” exhibition and curriculum, which correlates with the civic engagement part of the project.

“We choose to partner with Project Soapbox for its advocacy of youth voices through speeches and storytelling,” said Alanna Medearis, director of education and community engagement. “The event offers a powerful platform for students with professional speaking experiences—all in front of civic partners who can help drive change today. It’s also exciting to welcome many new families to Overture for the first times to see their own kids shine and have their voices heard.”

Who: MMSD students in grades 6 through 12

Where: Overture Center for the Arts (201 State Street, Madison, WI 53703)

When: Thursday, March 14, 2024 | 9:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

RSVP: If you’d like to attend, RSVP to Ian Folger (ifolger@madison.k12.wi.us) or MMSD Communications (communications@madison.k12.wi.us).

Judges are made up of the following community members:

- Jasmine Banks, Operation Fresh Start
- Brian Benford, UW-Madison
- Emily Duernberger, Office of State Senator Melissa Agard
- Mark Dziedzic, Greater Madison Writing Project, UW-Madison
- Read Eldred, retired
- Barbara Harrington-McKinney, Madison Common Council
- Cynthia Jasper, UW-Madison
- Charlotte Nichols, The Civics Center
- Iris Patterson, Goodman Community Center
- Tom Qualls, Madison Public Schools Foundation
- Jeremy Stoddard, UW-Madison
- Kate Ullman, Legislative Semester
- Bianca Williams-Griffin, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

About the Madison Metropolitan School District

The Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) is the second-largest school district in Wisconsin, serving more than 25,000 students across 52 schools. The district's vision is that every school will be a thriving school that prepares every student to graduate ready for college, career, and community. With more than 4,500 teachers and staff, MMSD is committed to ensuring the district's goals and core values are held at the center of its efforts, so students can learn, belong, and thrive. For more information, visit mmsd.org.

OVERTURE CENTER FOR THE ARTS in Madison, Wis., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization that features seven state-of-the-art performance spaces and four galleries where national and international touring artists, nine resident companies and hundreds of local artists engage people in nearly 700,000 educational and artistic experiences each year. Overture's mission is to support and elevate our community's creative culture, economy and quality of life through the arts. overture.org

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