

# GUSTAFER YELLOWGOLD

## MORGAN TAYLOR AT UCDS SUNNY IN SEATTLE!

In May of 2011 Morgan Taylor visited our school, University Child Development School in Seattle, Washington, for a week's worth of workshops and performances. It was the perfect match for celebrating our yearlong theme study for design. Morgan's cartooning, storytelling and songwriting skills were on full display as he led the students in creating original characters and their wonderfully strange and musical world, Underville. It should be noted that while Morgan had an existing system for his school visits he displayed great flexibility and enthusiasm for trying something different that would mesh with our goals and schedules. The following is a recap of our week!

The week started with a Gustafer Yellowgold show to the students and faculty. Kids and adults alike were immediately transfixed with the song-stories and slideshow. Smiles abounded and quite a few teachers leaned over to ask, "How does he think of that?" Morgan's melodies and characters are extremely compelling and within an hour of the show Gustafer and Slim the Eel began showing up back in classrooms via songs and student artwork.



PHOTO: ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN

This investment set the stage for the workshops that followed. The preschool and kindergarten students were beyond excited to meet Morgan up close, sharing their favorite parts from his show and asking questions like, "Is Gustafer's sun pod real?" Morgan didn't miss a beat, elaborating about the various controls and buttons within the sunpod, helping kids imagine things you couldn't see in the slideshow. The children then worked with Morgan as he designed three main characters. It was an engaging, dynamic brainstorming process. Morgan encouraged the kids to look beyond familiar characters from movies and books to create something unique. What resulted was a terrific trio made up of a half cat-half dog, a turtle with a cuckoo clock and a nearsighted owl that totes a pumpkin with a spider inside! Seeing Morgan edit and revise his sketches, and explain his process as he went was a real treat indeed.



The workshops continued with the first, second and third grade students focusing on character development and storyboarding. It was here that Morgan guided the kids to generate traits for our three heroes and had them cartoon silly scenarios. The quirky characters complete with personalities and



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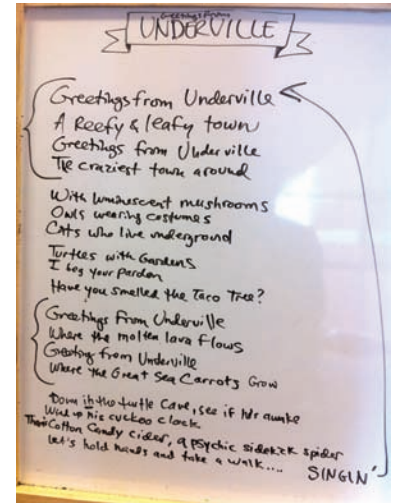
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relationships between them were then handed to the fourth and fifth grade students who were charged with putting the stories into songs. Morgan, who strummed through various genres and tempos, looking for the perfect match for each character's look and feel, expertly assisted them. In this open and relaxed atmosphere, a catchy chorus was created for each tune and kids helped work lyric ideas through different rhyming schemes. What resulted was a batch of songs not only for the three main characters but also for two minor characters and an overall theme song for this new world, Underville!

During the week Morgan also met with a small group of our graduating fifth graders. These kids worked in tandem with the special events committee, a group of teachers and staff from the school, to plan and organize school wide celebrations. The kids were responsible for creating signs for Morgan's visit and two skit-style introductions for his performances. Their enthusiasm for these tasks was super-high, due in large part to how easily won over they were by viewing the quirky-fun Gustafer videos online. Over lunch, they asked Morgan about Gustafer and his world, as well as Morgan's own path as a visual artist and musician. Morgan was open and warm, eliciting numerous laughs from the kids with his quick wit!



The recorded songs and much of the student artwork from the week were compiled into a slideshow that preceded Morgan's second performance, this time for the students, staff, faculty and parents. The show was the same as earlier in the week but for one powerful change, now the kids were singing along! Parents, many of whom were bombarded by kids during the week to visit Morgan's website could finally put all the pieces together. This is why their children were sharing snippets about coats of cheese, rescued eels and the longest sock ever imagined. Again, the smiles were too numerous to count!

All in all it was a highly successful week! Each and every student at UCDS was part of the highly creative process as well as the product, a six song EP available for download by families on our sound cloud page. What more could we ask for? Now that we're part of the band... Maybe a world tour?

In closing, I highly recommend you consider Morgan to be an artist in residence at your school; it's a one of a kind experience for your students and community!

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