

Norman Johnson Fund For The Arts

The Norman Johnson Fund for the Arts supports access to transformative arts education for TBS students, teachers, and the broader school and local community. From on-campus art classes, workshops, field trips, performances, and ongoing relationships with mission-aligned artists and arts organizations, the Fund allows all TBS students to develop the artistic agency that can ignite minds, awaken hearts, and change the world.



The Opportunity

As a school with two campuses in the heart of Berkeley, TBS has the opportunity to connect with the diverse range of Berkeley artists and institutions whose missions extend to arts education and outreach. Our school constantly seeks to build programs and relationships that advance our school's mission, support local arts and arts education, and ensure that current and future students will feel connected to arts and art-making in ways that will last a lifetime.

The Berkeley School is surrounded by nationally known and respected performing arts organizations that share our desire to shape the future by offering experiences that ignite minds, awaken hearts, and engage the changing world. While many have well-established education and outreach programs, others are seeking to establish such programs in an effort to advance their missions – especially in the wake of a pandemic that forced all community organizations to scale back and reimagine their operations.

The Norman Johnson Fund for the Arts makes it possible for TBS to sustain current arts education programs, continue its current collaboration with the Freight and Salvage, restart pre-pandemic institutional relationships, and continue outreach to other local institutions whose programs would enrich TBS students' learning for years to come.

About Norman Johnson

Norman Johnson (1959-2023) was a beloved educator who served the TBS community for 23 years as a teacher, advisor, board member, and SEED group facilitator. An actor, playwright, and director who grew up in Jamaica and worked professionally in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, Norman incorporated his love of language, oratory, and the embodied truth of acting and performance into all his teaching, providing encouraging windows into theater arts for students with limited prior experience and rigorous mirrors for those who wanted to dive in deeper.

In 2013, Norman founded the school's first standalone drama program, building on a school tradition of classroom and grade-level productions and incorporating his conviction that oratory, improvisational acting, and formal theater productions were essential in helping middle-school students develop a strong sense of individual identity and agency while remaining connected to a fundamental feeling of community and shared purpose. Norman's middle-school productions ranged from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to *Miss Nelson is Missing!* to original plays written by local playwrights, and every step of the production process – from auditions to casting to rehearsals to performance – reminded students that success would only come from collective commitment and the desire to support each other in putting forth the best effort possible.

Norman's time at TBS unexpectedly paused in August 2022, and his death in January 2023 left current and former students, colleagues, and friends grieving his loss and seeking ways to sustain his personal and educational legacy. The Norman Johnson Fund for the Arts is an expression of our collective gratitude for the ways that Norman's wisdom, experience, and love of learning informed the TBS educational program and continue to influence the ways we think about and care for students, teachers, and the TBS community.



Norman Patrick Johnson (1959-2023)