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## The Magic of Learning

GAGES LAKE – When Danny Orleans was a boy, he spent a lot of time pursuing his hobby – magic. That childhood interest is now a career for Orleans, as he travels around the country entertaining children and adults through magic. "It's everybody's dream to pursue what they love to do deep down in their soul and make a living at it," Orleans said. And I'm living my dream.

Orleans, of Chicago, used to be a teacher, so his magic shows are educational. And he shared his teaching skills and magic tricks with Woodland Primary School in Gages Lake Jan. 17. His show, titled "Feel the Magic," teaches children about their five senses.

Sarah Hoover, a teaching assistant at Woodland, said it was great to have Orleans at the school. "It's fun for the students," she said. "It's exciting, and it's a way to show them that there's life outside of these walls and mommy and daddy."

Hoover said using magic is a good way to educate children. "Magic engages them," she said. "They listen better, and they learn how to behave in a group."

Orleans agreed that magic is a perfect teaching tool. "Magic is a great teaching medium because you have people's attention, and when you have people's attention, they're open to learning. It's extremely satisfying."

Orleans taught at North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka for a year and then taught math and science through a CETA grant for nursery schools in

Evanston for a year and a half. But in the 1970s, Orleans said, it was difficult to find a teaching job. "So I said to myself, 'You know what? I'll become a professional magician.' And I loved performing," he said.

Orleans' passion for being in front of a crowd seemed apparent Jan. 17, as the children cheered in excitement. During one trick, Orleans held up a blank coloring book and asked for two volunteers to help him color it. Allison Novak, 5, and Ivan Salinas, 6, helped make the colors magically appear.

"It was fun," Novak said of assisting Orleans. "And he was very, very funny!" Novak said her favorite part of the show was when Orleans gave Salinas a magic crayon to hold, and the crayon kept breaking. But there was learning embedded into the fun. Orleans then had the children hold up five fingers to represent the five senses. His show included tricks that highlighted each sense — even the sixth sense. "Now I'm going to trick your sixth sense – your common sense," he said as he made a ball float in the air.

For his final trick, Orleans placed colored scarves in his magic hat. But when he later reached in his hat for the scarves, he pulled out a white bird instead. "That really surprised the children," Ms. Hoover said. But the best surprise of all was, when he was done with the show, even the youngest kids could name each of their five senses." Perhaps that was his best trick of all.



Ivan Salinas, 6, and Allison Novak, 5, both kindergarteners at Woodland Primary School in Gages Lake, help magician Danny Orleans during his educational magic show. (Dani Schweigert photo)