

Student Days at Tao House

Eugene O'Neill moves onto Main Street, USA, with Student Days at Tao House sponsored by the Eugene O'Neill Foundation and the National Park Service. The mission of this educational outreach program, now in its seventeenth year, is to bring into this setting, where O'Neill created his most powerful work, students with genuine interests in writing, art, drama, or photography. Since 1991, more than 1800 students from more than thirty schools in the East Bay have participated in Student Days.

High school students at the junior and senior levels benefit from active engagement in the artistic process facilitated by practicing artists in the student's chosen discipline. Many of the students who become a part of this community with shared interests have never before been exposed to the work of O'Neill. Each day begins, then, with an interactive tour of Tao House, led by National Park Service interpretive rangers. This is designed to provide students with an understanding of O'Neill's life story and his creative process, which produced drama of significant impact on the world of theater.

Following the tour, a workshop, led by professionals in the designated discipline, provides students the opportunity to learn more about their chosen art form and then to apply their new knowledge in creating a product that later will be displayed at Tao House. While students participate in their own creative processes, professionals provide mentoring support.

A lunchtime O'Neill's words, written in the nearby study, come alive in a performance of scenes from his plays. By the end of the day, students leave Tao House with deeper understanding of their art, the germ of a creative response to this day of cultural opportunity, and the assignment to complete and polish their work for exhibit.

To participate, students submit a written application that attests to their interests, abilities, and motivation. There is no charge to the students, and transportation to the site is provided for those who otherwise would be unable to attend. Funds for this program have been donated by individuals organizations with an interest in providing students equal access to artistic and cultural experiences.

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