

Cooperative Effort Brings Art Into The Classroom

As a function of the service-learning component of the art teacher training program at Grand Valley State University, pre-service teachers are drawing from past experiences to work with underserved populations in the Grand Rapids community.

This is the third year that the Art Education Program — under the supervision of professor Bill Charland, Ph.D. — has collaborated with Ottawa Hills Montessori, bringing art to the classroom. Each year, a different concept and medium is taught.

This year, there was a concentration on the expression of identity issues through multi-color block prints, and group paintings. Through service-learning, pre-service art teachers applied educational theory in concrete ways, an approach to better prepare them for their future professional responsibilities by demonstrating the connections between art, education and a democratic society.

Funding for supplies and materials was provided through a service-learning grant from the Johnson Center for Philanthropy.

An exhibition of the artwork was held this spring. By the time of the exhibition, art education pre-service teachers had met with the middle school students 10 times during the semester. All efforts were directed toward students gaining knowledge and skills in a specific medium to develop a better understanding of contemporary approaches to art, while building a greater sense of community.

Principal Jerry Bentley, and Ottawa Hills Middle School teachers Mary Lewandoski and Anna Kitavi coordinated the site visits with regular classroom activities. The art education pre-service teachers related the themes of their lessons to aspects of the classroom curriculum.

For instance, beyond the skills, techniques and aesthetic approaches taught as component lessons in block printing and painting, lessons on contemporary African American artists were presented which tied in with

social studies units, as well as addressing adolescent identity development issues.

The community-building component of the project was reflected both within and outside the classroom with pre-service



Pre-service teachers Rebecca Schaub, upper left, and Carol Kuiper, upper right, provide instruction as part of GVSU's Art Education Program, while elementary students, right, work on their projects at Ottawa Hills Montessori School in Grand Rapids.

teachers working in teams of five members to develop and deliver lessons while supporting the efforts of the other teams, and sharing successes and failures. Students in the schools created a series of group paintings to create a teamwork effect for the final composition.

The program is coordinated by Grand Valley State University Art Education Program and Ottawa Hills Montessori Middle School.



Art Program Promotes Learning By Teaching

GVSU's Art Education in Community Organizations Program has collaborated with 13 West Michigan schools over the past four years, providing high level, comprehensive art education to underserved populations by pre-service teachers.

Partners in the service-learning enrichment program have included community-based and social service organizations such as the Baxter Center, the United Methodist Community House, and the YMCA, public institutions such as the Grand Rapids Children's Museum, and the GVSU Childcare Center, and schools themselves, including Coit Elementary, Brookside Elementary, Coopersville Elementary, New Branches Charter, New Century High School, Ottawa Hills Elementary, Ottawa Hills Middle School, and Ottawa Hills High School.

Pre-service teachers evaluate their experiences both formally and informally throughout the semester. In the field, pre-service teachers check for understanding through ongoing summative assessments of student learning.

Ultimately, pre-service teachers are given far more responsibility for their own learning and the learning of others than is expected in traditional teacher training courses.

Celebrate Literacy Festival Returns In October

The fifth annual Celebrate Literacy Conference -- a GVSU sponsored festival of creativity, reading and learning for educators -- is penciled in for two fun-filled days in October at Grand Valley State University's Kirkhof Center.

Two days of sessions with authors and illustrators are set for Oct. 18-19 at the Kirkhof Center on GVSU's Allendale Campus. An intriguing selection of authors, illustrators, poets and nationally known literacy experts will present sessions and share strategies for improving reading instruction and literacy for all students.

The keynote speakers for Friday's sessions include Tim Rasinski, Nancy Padak and Jeffrey Wilhelm on Friday. On Saturday, Cyd Moore and Gary Schmidt will be featured.

"People right here in West Michigan have access to a lot of key people in the field of literacy, and one-on-one access to a lot of authors and illustrators," says Celebrate Literacy coordinator Liz Storey.

Special features include an author/illustrator panel and reception on Friday, and Saturday's author/illustrator luncheon. Sessions include Michigan Literacy Proficiency Profile, State Standards, Assessment, Reaching All Learners, New Books, Technology and Best Practices For K-12.

Also featured is a prize of an author visit to a school that has a teacher/administrator attending the conference. The 2001 winner was Judy Ellison of Rather Elementary School Author/illustrator Jane Stroschin provided a "prize" presentation to the school. This year, one conference participant attending the closing session will win a classroom visit by Michigan illustrator Tom Woodruff.

Celebrate Literacy Conference is a cooperative effort among the School of Education, GVSU's English Department and Zumberge Library. Registration forms may be obtained by e-mailing storeyl@gvsu.edu