

Carlisle JH weaves math and art together for masterpieces

By John Cummings

Managing Editor

It is a project that Carlisle Junior High art teacher Erika Sprandel has done for years with her seventh and eighth graders.

Find a picture, break it into quadrants and then draw it by quadrant.

It is something that Sprandel does herself when she gets ready to create something.

“As an artist myself, I find that when I first start a drawing it is important to break it down into smaller sections, I typically do four sections,” Sprandel said. “If forces me to pay closer attention to detail. Knowing what works for me I felt this would be an excellent assignment for young artist who are just learning to draw.”

“After studying the artist Chuck Close we used his ideas and mine to force students to focus on shapes not the “whole image” breaking things down really helped each student.”

In the process, the students are receiving an extra math class without realizing it.

Students have to use math to break the picture down into sections and then must use mental math in taking each section and transforming it into their own art.

It is one of the reasons why Sprandel enjoys the project so

much.

“I feel it is so important to incorporate core lessons into each project my students complete,” Sprandel said. “Art is an outlet for many students, if I can “sneak” in math, history, language arts into each lesson it not only helps the academic areas, it helps students see how what they are learning in those core classes can be applied to daily things they enjoy doing.”

“How many times has a math teacher been asked, “When will I ever use this?” My Art room is just one place. Once they see its fun they may look at it differently. If nothing else it’s super important to reinforce what the students are learning in their core academics.”

Each student selected their own image for the project.

Sprandel said it was important for them to pick something that is important – or meaningful – to them. They are tasked with picking something that will be challenging to them to complete.

“These projects take some time to complete and if they choose something they want, they are extra invested and work hard,” Sprandel said. “The kids that have had me in the past cannot wait to do this project. They ask as soon as the semester starts or they ask are we going to do the Grid drawings again

this year?”

“I try to encourage them to use the same method on other projects but this one is by far a true favorite. They have grown up looking at these projects for years and they are so ready to dive in.”

The kids, though, aren’t the

only ones excited by the project.

As Sprandel watches the kids turn a photo into original art, she gets excited by the process and seeing the final products.

“I tell the kids every year this will be your favorite project of the year. It is so awesome watching them take something

they have selected and then being able to draw it so well on such a large scale,” Sprandel said. “It truly amazes me year after year. It truly is where everything starts to click. They can take skills that they have learned throughout the year and piece them all together. One of the reasons I love my job, seeing the joy on their faces. They are so proud of what they have done.

“Every year I am blown away. It never fails, I watch kids grow during this project, those that have struggled really can shine, they start to believe in themselves. They see wow, I can draw, and it’s because they are forced to draw shapes and shadows that are within 1” box, everyone can do that. When it all comes together we are always so amazed, and they want to keep doing more.”

The project has extra lessons hidden inside.

In addition to using math, students use something from every other lesson from Sprandel’s class to complete the project.

When the final product is presented in the display case at the new building, the kids are blown away by what they were able to accomplish.

“Kids go through all kinds of emotions during this process,

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