

Etchings of Our Community
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In May 2009, the David Brearley High School Art Department completed the second year of a three-year Artists-in-Education Residency Grant project funded by The New Jersey State Council on the Arts in partnership with Arts Horizons. Our work is in collaboration with the Kenilworth Historical Society which asked us for help in documenting the present day life of the town.

Our main objective in designing this project was to create a unique learning community of students, teachers and residents of Kenilworth who would work together to create a record of Kenilworth daily life. In the process we hoped that, with the help of the resident artist, Nanci Hersh, the participants would learn printmaking techniques beyond the scope of the classroom art teacher's expertise. We also wanted to interest the students in the history of their community and to make them understand that they are a part of its continuing story.

It was important to those of us involved in its planning, to make the project interdisciplinary. In this way we encouraged the students to understand that community projects involve a range of skills and a variety of efforts. We had the art, business, photography, technology and English classes work together to create, publish and market a cookbook of community recipes to the public.

Members of the town's Historical Society and the Senior Citizens Organization attended our Professional Development Day where they were taught printmaking techniques by the students themselves. This communal involvement led to exactly the type of bonding we had hoped for. The cookbook was so successful that we applied for and were granted a two-year extension of the residency. The following year, we went on to publish a community calendar planner filled with prints and photographs of our town.

The 2008 community cookbook was illustrated with printmaking students' etchings inspired by photography students' shots of Kenilworth food establishments (stores and restaurants.) Two of the etchings are shown below.



Le Rendez-Vous Restaurant



Rich's Deli on the Kenilworth Boulevard

"Karen DeMaio, mother of senior Alexis DeMaio, was thrilled that her daughter became proficient with the printing press, and often helped her fellow students to pull their prints. Alexis, a student with a unique learning style who sometimes found academics to be

frustrating, produced two etchings rather than one which her mother framed and now has on display in their home. Karen felt that this project, and Alexis' hands-on work with resident printmaker Nanci Hersh, did a great deal to increase her self-esteem." *Janice Marsili*

The creation of the etchings addressed NJ Core Curriculum Standard 1.1 in which students employ the elements and pinciples that govern art production.

At our culminating event on June 19, 2008, we celebrated the release of the cookbook, and our Business Class, having previously divided into two teams, competed to accumulate the most cookbook sales for a group prize. Proceeds were divided between the Brearley Art Department and the Kenilworth Historical Society. Below is a shot of our guests enjoying the event as well as a picture of the two competing sales teams.



The culminating project touched on NJ Core Curriculum Standard 1.3 which addresses the synthesizing of skills, media, methods and technology appropriate to creating and presenting art.

Additionally, through a connection with our resident printmaker, we carried out a printmaking exchange project with the student artists at a South African printmaking cooperative known as Artist Proof Studio. We exchanged "Paper Prayers" with our African colleagues and collected \$100 in donations for their worthy organization. Below are some pictures of the printmakers of Artist Proof Studio holding both the paper prayers they made and our students' prints which inspired their work. Below that are close-up images of our students' paper prayers, and finally, a picture of art teacher/project coordinator Janice Marsili and resident printmaker Nanci Hersh in the process of making a presentation about the project to the Kenilworth Historical Society.



The students' involvement with the South African artists helped them to achieve NJ Core Curriculum Standard 1.2 by helping them to understand the role, development and influence of the arts throughout history and across cultures.

Schering-Plough Corporation was kind enough to professionally frame each of the students' etchings which were used as cookbook illustrations. These framed prints were displayed at the corporation's corporate gallery for two months. Afterwards, the company allowed the students to keep their individual prints. Below are some pictures of the gallery show.



Art Department profits from the sale of the cookbooks were used to fund our 2009 residency program, for which we continued our documentation of the town. The photography students started us off by taking pictures on a walking tour of town "hubs" such as the Senior Citizen's Center, the Fire Department and the Elementary School in October 2008. Below are students' photos of these three places.



"This was one of the best field trips of my high school career. I loved visiting the senior citizens, taking a picture of my relative Art Morison, and then creating a linoleum block print of the photo. I gave copies of the print to my family members and they loved them." *Alessia Dotro (student)*

With the help of our new resident printmaker, Molly Gaston Johnson, printmaking students created silk screen images based on the photography classes' work. These silk screen prints ultimately became the covers of a 2010 Kenilworth calendar/planner. Below is a copy of a student photograph of two cyclists on the town Boulevard along with the silk screen image it inspired. This image was used as one of the calendar/planner covers. Below this is another one of the covers, an image of the Kenilworth Town Hall, followed by a shot of an actual page from the body of the calendar/planner.



The production of the calendar/planner, especially the preparation for its delivery to the printer, exposed the students to NJ Core Curriculum Standard 1.4 as they demonstrated and applied an understanding of arts philosophies, judgement and analyses to their own personal yet communal work of art.

Within this book were included the student photographs from the walking tour, linoleum block prints of the photos, as well as writings (inspired by the photographs and prints) created by students with the help of a resident writer. Below are two student linoleum block prints inspired by walking tour photos. Both of these prints were included in the calendar/planner.



Alessia Dotro's linoleum print of her relative Art Morison inspired by a photo taken on the walking tour.



The calendar was published on May 18, 2009 and presented at a release party at the Kenilworth Veterans Center. Our school's business class again divided, this time into three groups, that competed with one another to market the calendar/planners. At our event the "apprentice-like" groups of students worked hard to make sales. They organized raffles and give-aways to everyone's enjoyment. The townspeople who attended prepared and brought samples of their favorite recipes and the school choir performed.



This year's culminating event again exposed the students to NJ Core Curriculum Standard 1.3 which deals with the synthesization of skills, media, methods and technology appropriate to creating and presenting works of art.

An additional component to this project involved the continuation of our partnership with Artist Proof Studio in South Africa. Our students created hand-made books that were filled with writings and silk screen prints based on their personal concepts of community. We sent two copies of each student's book to our South African partner artists who added their own artwork and writings to the books, kept one of each book for themselves and returned the other to our students. They also sent a series of original prints for us to sell to provide revenue

for their program. We were able to collect \$200 for Artist Proof Studio, whose director is eager to continue our partnership in the future. Below are images of the bookmaking project beginning with the books themselves, followed by the students holding their own books showing the work that their South African partners added, and finally shots of the students opening the package of books when it arrived from South Africa.



Once again, the students' collaboration with the South Africans achieved NJ Core Curriculum Standard 1.2 by helping them to understand the role of art throughout history and across cultures.

Throughout this project we kept a set of five educational goals in mind: The Holistic Development of the students; Art Specific Skills gained by both students and teachers; Interdisciplinary Skills/Curriculum Integration achieved; School and Community Relationship Development; and Professional Development acquired by the adult participants. Our success in working towards these goals is summarized below.

Holistic Development

This grant project led to the holistic development of the students by allowing them to use their personal styles of learning as they exhibited their individual strengths. The different instructional techniques of the classroom teacher and the resident artist provided multiple opportunities for learning and the comradery of the instructors created a pleasant and motivational learning environment. The shared sense of responsibility that the students developed for this community-wide project increased their self-esteem as well as their connection with the residents of the town and the school community. Everyone involved loved the walking tour of the town which kicked off the project. Despite its simplicity, one senior student even commented that it had been her favorite high school field trip. She told us that she had enjoyed visiting the grammar school students and the senior citizens and that it had truly changed her view of her town.

Art Specific Skills

Molly Johnson, our resident printmaker, brought entirely new printmaking processes to the classroom. The students were excited to learn the techniques of photo emulsion silk screening, especially tee shirt silk screening. During the course of the project, one student purchased her own screen, and created her own design, which she and a classmate then used to produce silk-screened shirts for themselves and the resident artist. They then silk-screened the design onto canvas bags which they presented to the other three teachers involved in the project. Their pride in their work and their ability to produce a professional-looking product independently was clearly evident.

Interdisciplinary Skills and Curriculum Integration

From the outset of this project in the fall of 2007, the photography students worked closely with the printmaking students to take, choose, and alter the images that would be used to create the etching illustrations of the 2008 cookbook. Later, the printmaking students worked with the business students who marketed the book as well as the English students who wrote poetry based on the cookbook illustrations. In year two of the project, new students in the same classes worked together again, this time to produce the silk-screen and linoleum block prints that became part of that year's calendar/planner. The printmaking students also repeated their partnership with the business and English students. This coming year, the new members of these classes will collaborate once more to produce a product that will showcase the art and literary work of the students.

It is not often that students in different subject areas work together to produce a communal product; in this case one that can be marketed and sold to the community. The real-life aspect of the project was appealing to the students and the presence of a professional artist from outside the school community added to that attraction. One senior student, a team-leader from the business class, so enjoyed coming up with sales strategies and marketing techniques for the project that he decided to major in business in college. He is still following that course.

Public Relations

This three-year long project, which is in its last year, has forged an extremely strong collaboration between the Kenilworth Historical Society, the town's Senior Citizens and the school community. The aim of the grant project has always been to document the present-day life of Kenilworth. However, in the course of pursuing that goal, the students have also learned a great deal about their town's history from the Senior Citizens and the Historical Society. From the project's collaboration with the South African artists' cooperative, the students have also broadened their understanding of everyday life beyond the borders of their own country, and they have realized that art truly is a universal and lasting language of expression. By the end of the 2008/2009 school year, several students had volunteered to help out at the Kenilworth Senior Center on a regular basis, and there are now several student members of the Kenilworth Historical Society.

Professional Development

In the first year of the grant, all of the teachers involved in the project participated in the Professional Development Day. This allowed the English, Photography, Technology, English and Business teachers to learn and practice printmaking techniques which gave them a much greater understanding and ownership of the project. The students acted as their teachers, which allowed both groups to interact on a new and interesting level.

The same PD format was adopted for the second year of the grant, but this time, members of the Historical Society and the Senior Citizens were also invited. In addition, a representative administrator participated. These additional people enjoyed the session, and all said that it gave them a much more thorough understanding of the grant and the artistic processes that were being used in its execution.

Our overall success in attaining the above goals is further evidenced by the fact that every one of the thirty-seven participating printmaking students this past year produced at least ten calendar/planners showcasing their own original artwork on the covers. Of the photography students, over 90% had at least one of their photographs published in the book, and the business students posted an 85% participation rate. 75% of the writers had poetry included in the publication as well.

As the facilitator of this grant, I have had the pleasure of attending the two-week long aTi summer session for the past three years. It has strengthened my teaching techniques, inspired my creativity and connected me with a network of teachers that has provided a seemingly endless source of information and support. This coming year, buoyed by the confidence I have gained at aTi, I intend to take on my most ambitious goal yet. My aTi Memoir instructor Anndee Hochman will be our visiting artist, spending two days with our students. In order to make their experience more complete, I intend to share with them the knowledge of memoir writing I have gained in my two aTi sessions. This will allow Anndee to spend a day-long session with each class, helping them to revise the work they will have ready for her. I finally feel, after two summers of her instruction, that I will be able to help my students prepare for this. If it were not for my attendance at aTi, I would never have been able to even consider instructing my students in memoir writing, especially when the purpose was to prepare a memoir for publication.

With the help of resident printmaker Molly Johnson and visiting writer Anndee Hochman, we will continue with our documentation of Kenilworth present-day life in this last year of our AIE grant. We are still brainstorming about the vehicle that we will use to showcase our prints and writings. We do know, however, that we will highlight the families and homes of the town. We will update this site as we confirm our plans. We are happy to answer any questions about our project. Please contact Janice Marsili at silifam@verizon.net.