AIRS

CROSS-DISTRICT COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY 2018/19

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS:

ADMIRAL SEYMOUR ELEMENTARY

BRITANNIA ELEMENTARY

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE ELEMENTARY

MOUNT PLEASANT ELEMENTARY

QUEEN ALEXANDRA F.A.M.I.L.Y SCHOOL

SIR MATTHEW BEGBIE ELEMENTARY

SIR PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU ELEMENTARY

THUNDERBIRD ŠX**9X**A?*9S ELEMENTARY

THE AIRS PROGRAM

The Artist in Residence Studio program (AIRS) partners with the Vancouver School Board to create studio spaces within elementary schools where a long-term artist in residence is able to work collaboratively with teachers to inspire, mentor and engage students across the whole school in meaningful, inquiry-driven and hands-on art making practices.





The AIRS program provides a unique opportunity in arts-based learning for both students and teachers.



Eight Vancouver Elementary schools participated in the AIRS program during the 2018/19 school year.

OUR INQUIRY

Teachers from each school came together to reflect again on the question:



"How does collaborating with a resident artist in an established studio impact student learning within the new curriculum and core competencies."

Our last inquiry had revealed connections between art making in the studio and competencies associated with social emotional learning. We wanted to explore this connection more deeply by asking:

"In what ways might the art making process contribute to the development of social emotional intelligence and mental health?"



OUR PROCESS

Each school developed their own inquiry focus question within the overarching inquiry to align with their unique school context and culture. The lead teachers from each school met four times over the course of the year to share observations and reflect together on the impact of the studio for student learning and social emotional development.

Our inquiry questions were further informed by our three guest speakers:

Dr. Jane Garland: Social Emotional Learning and the Visual Arts



Dr. Jane Garland is professor emeritus of clinical psychiatry at UBC, and leader in the field of mental health for children. She shared her insights on the way the arts naturally foster the conditions necessary for social emotional learning to occur by inviting students into a state of mindful and present awareness; that is calm, attentive and embodied. The visual arts further build social emotional capacity by integrating perception, emotions, reflection and purposeful response or action.

Christine Giesbrecht: Linking habits of mind, SEL and stages of creativity in the studio

Christine Giesbrecht, one of our District Mentor Support Teachers with extensive art teaching experience, invited us to consider the relationship between studio habits (Develop craft; understand Art Worlds; Engage and Persist; Envision; Stretch and Explore; Reflect; Express and Observe) and the development of social emotional learning. A key component is comfort with ambiguity both for students, in taking risks and moving through the place of the unknown, and for teachers, in allowing students to encounter ambiguity through more freedom and choice.



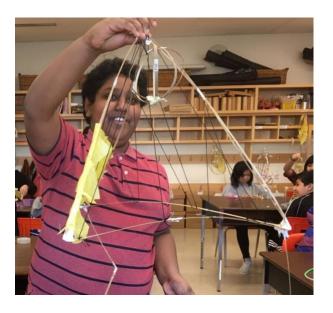


Dr. Sylvia Kind: What is the Space of the Studio?

Dr. Sylvia Kind is a scholar in Early Childhood education and studio art research practices and artist in residence at the Children's centre at Capilano University. Sylvia encouraged us to consider the studio space as one of collaborative co-creation where teachers and students mutually and reflectively inform learning journeys. Being mindful and intentional about what we attend to and give value to in learning through words or documentation, we create opportunities for students to grow the habits of mind that foster social emotional learning.

KEY FINDINGS

The studio residencies this year enabled teachers to work alongside professional artists from a diverse range of artistic practices. These practices included drawing, painting, printmaking, photography to sculpture, weaving, dying, assemblage, comic making and shadow puppetry. Projects also embraced a diversity of approaches and articulations from discrete, individually conceived works, to more ephemeral, exploratory, or site-specific creations, and collaborative works that evolved over time and were articulated through performance or installation.



In the diversity of art engagements across different schools and school cultures, teachers found common ground in the kinds of learning that were activated for students through the art making process within the studio. Socio-emotional capacities such as resilience, focused attention, risk-taking and empowerment were significant. Many teachers noticed that break-through moments for students in the studio resulted in greater confidence and creativity back in the classroom. The development of community and the sense of belonging and inclusivity were also reoccurring themes.



Teachers from new studios remarked on the joyful engagement and expansion of what is possible for students. Those continuing for a second, third and fourth year spoke to cumulative growth in confidence, creativity and complexity of ideas for students and increased fluidity in connecting and integrating studio learning within the classroom.

While sharing our observations together during the collaborative inquiry gatherings, we were able to discern connections between particular aspects of studio practice and the social emotional capacities that they fostered.

In particular we observed connections between:

- material processes and social emotional learning;
- collaboration and community;
- story and belonging;
- studio space and sense of wonder.

The importance of material process:

We noticed the connection between material engagements with their emphasis on process and evidence of social emotional growth in students. This correlates with Jane Garland's finding that embodiment (present and sensory awareness) is key to cultivating the capacity for social emotional learning.



▲ Students engaged in material practices like weaving, hammering, sewing, twisting, constructing or assembling demonstrated remarkable resilience, determination and persistence and were motivated to work through problems and find alternative solutions with purpose.





Using tools from fingers and hands to knives, pliers and hammers to transform and manipulate materials brought a sense of confidence, accomplishment and self-reliance.



■ Freedom to explore the sensory qualities and
possibilities of a variety of materials allowed students to let
go of preconceived expectations, release their
imaginations, take-risks and to notice and take pleasure in
the aesthetic qualities and expressive effects they created.

▼ Responding to the world through tactile and unfolding processes that move between observer and the observed world provides space for students to slow down, look closely and give space to the complexity of ordinary things.



► Material practices that invite experimentation provide an entry point for every student regardless of ability.

"Non-permanent work with materials gave students leeway to try things, remove them and try them again. The most remarkable student learning I experienced was with the district autism class. These students worked on a light table and I invited them to explore materials in different ways. Sometimes this meant that we worked with our bodies off the light table and even into the hallway and outside. This opportunity gave these students a new voice." Amanda, artist at Trudeau



▲ Using natural materials found on the grounds of the school to create dyes and inks connected students to the land and gave them an appreciation of the slow complexity of making from start to finish.



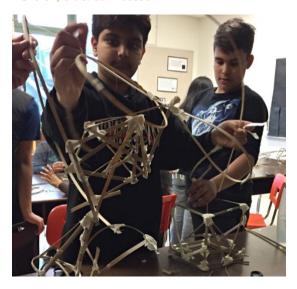
The power of collaboration

Collaboration was a theme that emerged in teacher observations related to social emotional learning. The studio enabled students to work inclusively and collaboratively, whether through larger projects in which every student contributed to the whole or more individually with a mindset of shared inquiry.



▶ Creativity is enriched when we are open to the different ideas, different ways of seeing and the imagining of others.

"We learned everyone has a unique way of making that can be shared, borrowed, transformed, and cultivated through reflective participation." Sholeh, artist at Trudeau





◀ ▲ Teachers noticed that when students focused on the process, they let go of individual perfection and "getting it right". The Studios fostered an open space for shared creativity and risk-taking through exploration, experimentation, and the exchange of ideas.



◀ "Watching students work, and encouraging them to look at and consider alternative approaches taken by classmates elicited pronounced growth in the students' willingness to share ideas, and reflect on different ways to work through problems. Instead of being concerned about others copying their work, they began to share more openly." Alison, intermediate teacher, Trudeau

▶ Working collaboratively on a mural, a weaving or community performance powerfully demonstrates what is possible together. It motivates students to work with care towards a collective vision and common purpose rather than individual satisfaction.



▶ Art brings us all together. Through performance students understand the power of their collective expression to reach others and transform the world.

"I love the way everyone is now caring about the animals and the water. It's not just 3 classes learning about the ocean it's the whole school." Grade 3 students at Nightingale



■ Collaborative art projects provided opportunities for meaningful and authentic inclusivity in which every child has a contribution to make. This is empowering for students who often feel marginalized within academic frameworks of success.

Collaborative works serve as both a visible reminder and vehicle for the creation of community.



Finding my place in story

Teachers noticed the way in which art enabled students to find their own voice, to share their stories and connect to community in a deep and powerful way.

Art gives value to our own stories. It helps us communicate who we are and share what is important to us.

"Sometimes I feel like a Deer Sensitive, shy. I wait and listen And I wander throughout the forest." Grade 4 student Nightingale

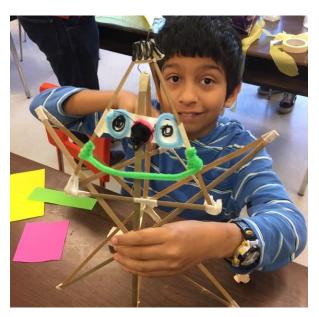


▼"The art experience became the students' voice. Mixing colors, drawing from imagination, and making things from materials allowed students to express themselves in a way that was easier, more meaningful and more intense than words." Elizabeth, Britannia teacher.





◀ Art helps us connect our own story to the world around us in a felt and meaningful way. It helps us to connect to place and find belonging within community.



Student's creations provided a context and motivator for those who struggle with language, communication or written outputs to be able to express their ideas.

"The visual arts are a fundamental language of expression that is inclusive and accessible for all learning and cultural differences."

Dr. Jane Garland

Experiencing a sense of accomplishment through the art making process enabled some students who felt disempowered within the classroom, to create new stories about who they are and what they can do.



"Some kids who struggled with engagement in their classrooms because of anger or opposition did really well in the studio; with just a little individual relationship with me they were able to leverage their tenacity to develop skills, complete their work and become advisors." — Rebecca, artist at Thunderbird

Showcasing student work within the studio, classrooms and throughout the school affirmed the unique vision of each child and created a sense of belonging within community. The opportunity to share with friends and family is powerful because it enables students to not only communicate and share their learning but share who they are.



Art provides an opportunity to encounter and connect empathically to the stories and experiences of others.



The studio as a space of wonder



The studio is not just a space to do art; it is a place of wonder and possibility that comes into being through the co-creative energies and transformative processes of students, artist and teacher making art together.





Teachers noted the importance of the studio for providing a place of safety and freedom of expression in an environment of non-judgement.

"It was wonderful to have a space and set time for the kids to have so much freedom to create in a safe and empowering environment." Seymour teacher

The studio enabled students to engage in practices and processes that would not have been possible in the classroom setting. Students expanded their horizon of what art is and how creativity is expressed.

"The art room gives us a new environment to be creative. The art room gets you in the mood and there is art everywhere hanging on the wall. We get inspiration from the work done by other students." Grade 7 student, Nightingale



The studio provided a space for students to slow down and be calmly attentive. Teachers noticed the way in which children were more mindful, observant and able to self-regulate when engaged in art marking within the studio.

"When I do art, it makes me feel calm and stress-relieved."

"The creative process helps with our sense of feeling good and our ability to stay focused because art is mind-refreshing and satisfying." Grade 6 and 7 students, Trudeau

The art studio is a shared space for the whole school which builds connection, relationships and a sense of belonging within the school and the wider community.

ADMIRAL SEYMOUR ELEMENTARY

How does the AIRS program foster and support the Social and/or Emotional needs of our Inner-City School?

Principal: Dorothy Watkins School Team: April Huang, Natasha Burditt

Artist: Susan McCallum with Indigenous artists Jenoah Esquiro and Louise Profeit-LeBlanc



Visual arts at Seymour Elementary School has encouraged students to connect and recognize the importance of belonging, community, and place. Seymour students embraced the AIRS program for a second year with artist, Susan McCallum. When entering the studio space, students consistently took risks, explored, and discovered their sense of self and community. Students experience continuous as they learned story telling through painting, mask making and puppetry. Students were able to engage in depth with Indigenous stories of Northern Lights, bannock, and salmon. The stories naturally fostered visualizations and expressions where all students felt a sense of belonging — regardless of their cultural and social differences. It became a place of refuge that celebrated differences, imagination, and resilience.

The AIRS program began with a school wide project on bees. Every class created their own posters, bee hotels, flowers, paintings, and ultimately, a large-scale photo booth. The collaboration between grades and classes, built community.

In term two, Susan guided students to find their individuality through masks, puppet making, and a detailed mural backdrop. By using their creativity, recycled materials and a hot glue gun, students engaged in a rich, process-based exploration concentrated on colors, materials, textures and details. T The projects were not bounded by skill-level and ability but demonstrated the potential students have when they are present and mindful.



The AIRS program encourages social emotional learning by allowing students to be mindful of themselves, their place, and others. It enables them to focus on details, their surroundings and reflect on their work in a calm, settling space.

Key Observations

- The studio built a positive and inclusive space for all students and staff. The studio is a place of learning, exploration, risk-taking, and perseverance.
- Over time, students became more socially aware and take responsibility to be inclusive and respectful of others. The art making process allowed for collaboration, which encouraged students to think about how others will feel before they speak and be more supportive of each other.
- Students are asked to slow down, think, observe, and share their discoveries. This creates an atmosphere of dialogue and joy.





Teacher Quotes

"Having an artist collaborate with students fostered a calm, safe, welcoming environment where art became the medium for their creative outlets. Art provided a hands-on experience for free play and imagination." April Huang, Grade 1/2

"Over the year many students who were scared to take risks with their art began to take risks; They would try new techniques and began to be ok when their art didn't turn out exactly as they had hoped. These students have begun to take more risks in other subject areas as well. I do not think that they would have developed this way without the Artist in Residence program." Natasha Burditt, Grade 5/6

"It was wonderful to have a space and set time for the kids to have so much freedom to create in a safe and empowering environment." Anna Ward, Support Staff

In the words of Students:

"Art makes me happy. I like art because I feel happy." Sireen, Grade 1

"Art lets us show everyone our imagination and our creations!" Lily and Casper,

"I loved hearing the story about the moon and bannock and making my own picture!" Kindergarten

"Making the mural painting was an awesome experience! I liked the whole entire thing, it was so much fun!" Mary, Grade 4

"I discovered that art can look messy and still be beautiful and the only way to make it feel beautiful is if you feel something visually or mentally. My art may not look beautiful, but at least I put my best effort in it, which is the most important quality in art." Tony, Grade 5

"I discovered that art was fun because we got to make puppets. It's like making your own little friend. I also liked the colours we got to use." Jennifer, Grade 5



BRITANNIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

How might the arts help students foster a sense of belonging in their community?

Principal: Tricia Rooney Lead Teacher: Maria Elizabeth Costa Artists: Susan Hall, Holly Clarke and Samantha Taylor



At Britannia, our journey with the AIRS program started with our desire, as educators, to further develop key areas of inquiry in the classroom. We know from experience that children are curious, creative, and reflective by nature. We wanted to understand how children think and construct meaning from their experiences. In our view, the studio space, with its hands-on and open-ended approach, would allow students to develop and foster the thinking habits that can lead to deeper understanding of their knowledge and experiences.

At the start of the residency, students were immediately attracted to the studio space. The materials on display piqued their interest and enthusiasm. They were visible, accessible, and ready to be touched and used. Students were intrigued by the materials and quickly began investigating the origins and functionality of the materials. Listening to their questions made us aware of how students use their minds and hands to explore materials. "What's this for?", "Pinecones?! Cool! They're prickly. Where did you get them? Can I try it?", and "Are we using sticks? They're rough. Are we using them, today?" were questions that attest to their curiosity and readiness to get to know the materials through experimentation.



The freedom to see and choose from a wide variety of materials awoken the students' creative impulses and led to discussions about the power of materials to create art. Being able to feel and try the materials in different ways propelled one student to summarize her experiences by saying, "I like to try them. It makes me know them [the materials]."



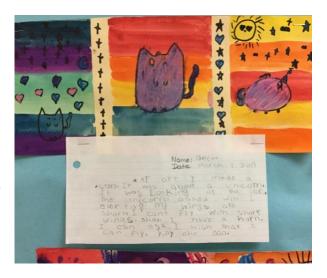
Students were happily surprised with their discoveries. "Look! I made wiggly lines with the leaves. They look like ocean waves", said one student. Another one added, "I made dots with the cone. It's snowing. No, it's raining." One student saw a pattern in a pinecone. "Check this out! You can use the pattern in the pinecone to make patterns [in your work]. See?" Students found connections and shared their innovations with peers.

As the residency continued, students began to hear their voice in their art. Their senses began to trigger memories and sparkle connections as they experimented with paint, pastels, chalk, ink, and watercolours. Since the process of creation was student-driven, the art created by the students made sense to them. For some students, a piece of rough brown cloth reminded them of the fences in their neighborhood. For others, the orange colour brought memories of Cosmo, our neighborhood cat.



Key Observations

- We noticed students became more precise with their language. They began to say, "I drew a picture" instead of "I did a picture." "We made a collage" started making more sense to them than "we used paint and glue, and we glued paper." "I like to paint with watercolors. If you add more water to your paintbrush, it makes the color lighter."
- The art experience became the students' voice. Mixing colors, drawing from imagination, and making things from materials allowed students to express themselves in a way that was easier, more meaningful and more intense than words.
- In the art studio students felt safe, respected, and heard. They felt grounded, connected, and empowered to speak and share ideas. Being able to make choices, follow their creative and artistic instincts, study their exploits, and reflect on what was meaningful, made the art experience more personal and intense.
- As students became immersed in the process of art making, their thinking and attitudes became more focused and mature. They took the time to observe and investigate, slowing down to listen to others and reflect on their new learning. They choose materials, tools, and techniques with the intent to bring their vision to life. They turned mistakes into art, found creative ways to deal with challenges, and praised their peers' efforts and ideas.



Our inquiry question was:

"How might the arts help students foster a sense of belonging in their community?"

At the end, students who engage in artmaking are more likely to explore new ways of thinking, inspire storytelling, and build an understanding of their experiences and connect to others.





Quotes from Parents

"I can see clear enthusiasm from my daughter, at home she is talking about and sharing her work from the AIRS program. She loved working with the artists, as they bring all this knowledge and materials for the students to work with. It is great to see new faces in the community, who care about the students, and who share their expertise. I love the artwork that resulted from AIRS, I frame it and I am proud to display them at home."



"My son loved using the different materials and working on the different art projects. He looked forward to coming to school every time there was AIRS happening on that day. He comes home talking about his projects and what he learned from the artists. They were so innovative, they used different materials, like pinecones and branches, not just the traditional art tools."



From Teachers

"The program was fantastic! Sam and Holly created a supportive and engaging environment. My students felt safe and inspired to take risks. There was also an overall sense of community and belonging."-Mrs. Tobin (Grade 1)

From the Principal

"An integrated program including all learners and empowering each to succeed with pride."

Tricia Rooney, principal

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE ELEMENTARY

How might the visual arts allow children to build social emotional resilience? Why do we see children building this resilience when engaged in authentic art making?

Principal: Parin Morgan
School Team: Colleen Mieczaniec, Eleanor Tufts, Carrie Gelson

Artist: Maggie Milne Martens

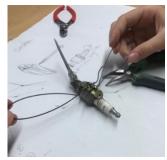


The theme of the Art and Discovery Studio this year was Imagination.

Intermediate students began the year by using surrealistic techniques such as frottage and exquisite corps to release the imagination. They then created insect inspired assemblages using salvaged metal parts such as door knobs, hinges, nails, springs and spark plugs. Students considered the qualities of materials (colour, texture and form) as well as design elements such as proportion and repetition to create a unity of character and form.









During second term, the students used their imagination to retell folktales from cultures around the world using an expanded shadow puppet technique. Students collaborated in small groups to create elaborate puppets, masks, backgrounds, scripts, and sound effects for their story. Using only cardboard and coloured transparencies they created backdrops and handheld puppets that could be thrown onto a large cinematic screen using an overhead projector. Large 3 dimensional masks were designed and constructed to enable the actor to transform into a human puppet and interact with the shadows projected onto the screen. Students put on a powerful performance that was viewed by the school community as well as parents.



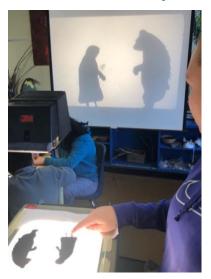
Teacher Reflection (Intermediate)

The Art and Discovery studio has played a pivotal role in shifting my students' ideas about what art is. In turn, it has disrupted their existing narratives regarding their own creative capacities. Students who believe they are "bad at art" because they struggle with drawing, painting, and other skills involving fine motor skills, are able to experiment with a range of modes of creation. Through explorations with various media including sculpture, frottage, sketching, shadow puppetry and drama, my students have discovered that they are capable of artistic creation.

This perception of self-efficacy has been incredibly motivating to my students, who throughout the school year have demonstrated increased self-regulation, self-initiating behaviors, as well as improved collaborative and problem-solving skills.



The self-esteem that I have witnessed in successful moments, as well as the learning that has resulted from the frustrating moments, are all invaluable experiences on the road to developing social-emotional resilience. The Artist in Residence and Art and Discovery Studio as well as all of the resources and expertise therein, have enabled this process to take place.



Parent Quotes:

"This year, my daughter will be graduating from Nightingale Elementary. She's excited for the future, and also sad to be leaving after one of her most rewarding years at the school. I believe the Artist in Residence Program is a major part of her happiness and satisfaction this year, leading her to select programs that will allow her to maintain a strong focus in studio arts."

"The Art and Discovery Program promotes the kids to express themselves in creative, problem solving ways without worry of imperfection. They are taught to connect to the bigger world and to have an appreciation of small beauties. I am continually awed and inspired when I enter the space and view the art created by the children."

Student Quotes:

"It was so interesting to see something that started out rough turn into something so real. Small pieces of paper created a performance through light. A simple idea turned into something really hard (to put together) and then turned into something so magical."

"Art allows your brain to be calm and when you are making art you are mindful"

"Art gives you a vent and helps you deal with stress"

"I felt empowered and proud. I felt good about myself, accomplished and refreshed."

It was an empowering experience that demonstrated the power of the arts to bring a community together through image and performance. Students were amazed and proud of what they had achieved through the sum of their creative energy and hard work." - Maggie



Natural objects and man-made parts were then repurposed and arranged to create ephemeral and printed representations of fierce dragons (kindergartens) and robots with many useful features (grade 1s).



Primary students in kindergarten and grade 1 began the year observing and dialoguing about the everchanging world around them. The explored the form and texture of falling leaves through relief and mono printing and dangled the whimsical prints from branches in the school.



Using our imagination allowed us to explore and gain a better understanding of some challenging topics. After Spring Break, the Kindergarteners and Grads 1's explored the question: "Where does water come from and where does it go?" They investigated bathrooms, hallway plumbing and drains in the school to locate all the places where water goes in and out.

We constructed an enormous water system mural and connected our water supply and the animals who depend on fresh water for survival to our role as citizens of the world.

Creating this mural was a very powerful way for children to connect their learning to real life choices. Working collaboratively on this mural with 4 classes together was also a very natural way for children to experience a sense of community and purpose.



Teacher Reflections (Primary)



I have also seen children I have taught in the past growing into more self-confident, creative and critical thinkers. Over time, our most worrisome students also become less vulnerable and take more risks when involved in the art making process. They appear to come alive and feel comfortable using their hands to create something of beauty.



Finally, I feel it is important to note that the Core Competencies within our new BC curriculum speak to the art making process, or should I say the art making process is imbedded within all the Core Competencies. Authentic art making is a natural way for our children to communicate, think creatively and critically, and build positive personal and cultural identities.

This is my fourth year participating with my class in the AIRS Program. The Art and Discovery Studio under the guidance of our artist, Maggie continues to grow and flourish for the entire school community. I teach the youngest children in the school and am always astounded by how thoughtful, attentive and creative these Kindergartens are capable of being when given the opportunity. Their attention to detail, self- regulation and empathy towards one another is exemplified within the studio.



As a teacher, I continue to see the value of art making within the studio. This has shifted my classroom practise where I have set up a mini studio within my classroom for children to be provided the opportunity to revisit (on a much smaller scale) what they have been learning from Maggie within the studio. The AIRS program has become a built in Professional Development not only for myself, but for the entire staff. There is a feeling of joy throughout the school. This Studio has become one of the highlights of our school community.



Parent Reflections

"The Art and Discovery Studio at Florence Nightingale has ignited a profound interest and passion for creativity in my daughter. She is quiet and reserved but her expression through artwork is powerful and confident."

"As a social worker, I know that creativity and access to art is a preventative/proactive factor for young people and social development. I can see clearly in my daughter that this access to her metaphorical brain in her education has helped with her social/emotional capacities. Thank you."

"I am an Emily Carr alumnus and professional in the technology sector. The Art and Discovery Studio is arguably the most valuable part of our son's first year of school. The calibre of projects and concepts has brought understanding and confidence in our son."

"Thanks to the studio, my son, a kindergarten student, has become more creative in his thinking, as well as more tolerant to 'mistakes' he makes during the artistic process."

"As a parent it is so exciting to have a space like this for our children to explore and create in. It's refreshing to see students participating in "real" art experiences and not simply completing prescribed activities where everyone ends up with the same finished product."

"The Art and Discovery Studio helps teach every student that Art is for everyone, opening up ways for children to express themselves and new ways see the world around them."

"Having the means to work using all their senses, eyes, ears, touch, gives children the self-esteem of producing something unique that is theirs; they get to show others and have an opportunity to flex their developing brains. They get to create something in front of them that stimulates their memories and imagination, and show it off! Explain it, change it, use it, gift it, admire it. It's theirs. They discovered it. They created it. At this age, that's what school is all about."



"My daughters have both shared on many occasions that art is their favourite subject at school. The experience of working with different media encourages the children to experiment, but in a context that allows the fear of doing something wrong to be lifted and replaced by the wonder of creating something unique. One of my daughters can be quite reserved and shy, and runs the risk of being a perfectionist, but when she is creating with Maggie her anxiety is lost in the process. The weaving together of messages and stories with the creative art process also opens up the children's minds to see themselves, others, and the world in new ways. I have heard many parents comment about the welcoming, inclusive community at Nightingale, and I think the art program feeds in to this - when the children have practised taking the time and thought to create their own work, and to reflect on the work of others, I feel that it it increases their own emotional understanding and their empathy for others. This in turn creates an environment that reduces un-empathetic behaviour like bullying, and instead allows each child to see each other as a unique person."

MOUNT PLEASANT ELEMENTARY

"How can we showcase the value of a newly implemented art program and engage the entire school community — staff, students and school families?"

Principal: Darren Mitzel School Team: Linh Liu and Teala Mackowetsky Artist: Jaymie Johnson



This year at Mount Pleasant Elementary the AIRS program was introduced to the entire school community with full steam. An open area space located at the centre of the school was earnestly tidied up by the new resident artist, Jaymie Johnson, and transformed into a blank canvas for students and staff to begin embracing this new chapter of the school. Students were introduced to working with natural materials, natural space, and natural techniques as Jaymie shared her passion with the staff and students over 28 weeks.









Students explored and experimented with plant dyes, pigments, sketching, printing and weaving. She encouraged students to observe and connect with the site that they are on; the plants surrounding us, lost streams and old trees. Jaymie also emphasized art as a collaborative process where she noted each student does not have a precious object to take home but instead to work towards a common goal. During our Celebration of Learning, families and students were asked to work together to create a weaving. This not only involved the students but also allowed the parents to take risks which sprouted a sense of community.



Words from students:

"Something that really inspired me was the fact that with art, you can be as creative as you want. And it inspired me to be more creative with the work I do. The challenge for me was figuring out how to make it my own."

"The thing that was surprising and enjoyable for me was working with others."

"When I thought of art, I thought of painting and drawing, but actually we did things like mapping and making dye. I am glad that I got to look at a different perspective of art."

"Something that was surprising was seeing how many cool colours you can make with plants and resources. Something that was challenging was realizing that not everything has to be accurate, I could draw what I think."

"I learned that I have skills in weaving. I was nervous and frustrated at the start but after I learned how, I had so much fun."



Words from staff:

"I think it was nice to see cooperative school wide projects displayed in an open space within the school."

"In my 25 years I never had the privilege to learn from a real life working artist. She introduced so many interesting concepts and skills to the students."



Words from parents:

"Over the holidays my daughter asked Santa for a loom. I'm so glad the students are being reintroduced to art."

"Just beautiful!"

"After they completed and hung their chrysalis, my child lead me to the gardens to show me the display. I was so impressed that these were created by the students and even more so that it was a project they worked on together."



Some reflections that transpired over the course of the inquiry:

- As the studio space grew and transformed with addition of the student made art displays, the level of engagement shifted and participating in the art sessions became more of a norm
- The artist reminded us to pay attention to the process and engaging them throughout the way rather than the product
- As teachers we naturally assume that we must instruct, model and monitor. We assume that students will ask many questions and require help with many new concepts and skills introduced but in the case of art, students were invited to draw on their own experiences and abilities to take risks to just create and do.



- This was not an introduction to art but rather a reintroduction/reminder that the opportunities
 exist all around us as students reconnected to the space they live and learn on
- Planning ahead with the artist to adapt or modify projects to be more inclusive for the wide range of abilities in each class

Making Connections

Every year, our school has taken part in a community Earth day art initiative at Banditas to raise money for RAVEN Trust (Respecting Aboriginal Values and Environmental Needs). The campaign raises awareness for the Heiltsuk nation to help recover their coast and land. Since the processes Jamie used throughout the year were based on many indigenous practices and ways of living, we felt more of a connection to this event. Most of the materials were collected from the land, the projects were very collaborative, and the students also created rope, dyed silk and created natural paints from natural materials.

Moving Forward:

Providing a central space for art and highlighting it as a collaborative process are important roots to ground the program grows.



QUEEN ALEXANDRA F.A.M.I.L.Y SCHOOL

How does staff focus on the AIRS learning model show change in students within their learning environments?

Principal: John McCormack School Team: Julie Gelson and Karen Samra Artists: Rebecca Heyl and Cole Pauls

The art process for students

This was the first year for both our artists at Queen Alexandra and much of the focus has been on building relationships with our staff and students.

Rebecca worked through playful and sensory inquiry to explore nature both outside and within the studio. Students honed their observation skills building our relationships with the school grounds by getting to know the trees and leaves that grow here. We explored the effects of shadows and light, noticing patterns and spinning stories.

"As we were noticing the natural world around us, we were also relating to one another as well as finding oneself within our unique shadows." - Rebecca





Cole worked with the upper primary and intermediate classes creating comics and zines. The focus is on personal connections and kids creating their own stories. "Kids realized they could create something out of their own identity." Cole felt that "being able to realize that they have their own voice and can share it easily" was an important message.

"Sharing your story, your knowledge, your personal knowledge is sharing a piece of you. It is a gift." - Cole



Reflection on learning for primary students

The primary students learned that art isn't always a "product" or "pretty picture". It is a process. Art can be experiential and temporary in nature, yet the act of noticing can transform the way we see the world. We value listening to each other, exchanging ideas, and imagining other perspectives. Together we can go much deeper into an inquiry than as individuals. "Along the way, we gather students' ideas with photos and conversations as well as students' reflective writing and/or drawing so that we can share some of the journey we have explored together." Over the residency, the studio became a place where students moved, explored and created art according to their own pace and direction. At first some students rushed through their exploration; over time they learned to slow down and begin to actually learn from the materials.

Student noticing: primaries

"The bark rubbing is like a finger print."

"A shadow reflects your body."

"At nighttime, a big shadow covers the earth."

"Shadows follow us - they go in different directions."

"I like how we put in so many different things. You can see the shadows, spiky shadows, from the bumps on the side. I like how you can see the spikes in the shadow that you cannot really see on the things."

Learning for intermediate students

Cole also expanded students' definitions of what art is. Through the creation of their own "zine" and class comic anthologies, students own voices were acknowledged. One student made a zine about the subtle racism she feels when her identity is misrepresented so she could teach others.







Some needed time and space without pressure before feeling comfortable jumping into the project. A grade 7 student refused to do any work in the studio until week 5. She finished in two sessions and was so proud of her work."

One grade 5 student who refused and acted as if he didn't care became engaged when Cole included a small piece the student had done in the finished book. His smile was so big that day. Sometimes the "toughest"

kids just want to be included too.

In the studio with Cole, the students were excited to stretch their comic skills, to share their comics and receive feedback.

Cole discovered that being present in the art studio during recess and lunch allowed for engagement from students who had been reticent during the class sessions. This example speaks to the power of art to engage kids in positive experiences when they are otherwise disengaged with school





Reflections on teacher growth and learning:

- Zine's can be made from paper, a pencil and themselves.
 Students don't need expensive materials, need their own voice and story.
- Students need time to explore materials without rushing to finish a final product.
- Documentation/photos can be the product. The
 documentation stimulates much discussion between kids
 and parents about the process and what they learned and
 experienced in the studio.
- Collaboration is one arts-based approach that Rebecca and Cole both used in the Art Studio.
- Taking time to sharing and celebrate one's own work and being proud of what you have created is important.

Linking Learning to Core Competencies

- I can explore materials and actions
- I get ideas when I explore with my senses.
- I work on my ideas to make them better
- I can try new ways of doing things
- I can share my work
- I can describe my home, family and community
- I can name different groups that I belong to



SIR MATTHEW BEGBIE ELEMENTARY

How will AIRS impact student learning and behaviour i.e. students who have difficulty expressing themselves, verbally or emotionally?"

Principal: John Christopher Cortens School Team: Renata Cazervan and Sam Mok Artists: Rebecca Heyl and Susan Hall



The overarching theme this year was "Tree of Life"; all grades worked to study the trees on the school grounds and the Lower Mainland, and the different facets of trees (trees as storytellers, life givers, and as habitats).



Sir Matthew Begbie is a school of 15 divisions, K to 7 with a significant ELL population, currently enrolling 330 students. Begbie families represent a wide-range of cultural and linguistic groups with many multi-generational families with grandparents often helping with child-care and participating in the life of the school. The Artist in Residence model enjoys strong support from teachers, staff, students and parents at Begbie. Students and teachers were pleased to work with professional artists Susan Hall and Rebecca Heyl for a second year. In the studio, students learn questioning, exploration with various mediums, and an appreciation for diversity beyond tolerance to a practice of seeking alternative view points for the sake of learning.



Primary grades worked on rubbings, and creating found projects such as nests made from gathered natural artifacts. "In the Art Studio we strive to create a collaborative space of inquiry in which we listen to each other, exchange ideas, and imagine other perspectives and ways of thinking. The work is experiential and often temporary in nature. Yet the act of noticing and becoming aware leaves a lasting imprint on us and can transform the way we see the world." Collaboration with classroom teachers created deep connections to subject areas such as Social Studies, Literacies, and Science, thereby extending learning beyond the AIRS studio sessions.



Student Quotes (primaries)

"The leaf rubbing is almost like an x-ray."

"Let's put the animal tracks we made in our forest."

"I did not expect my bird's nest to look so beautiful."



With the intermediate grades the theme of "Ancient Trees as Elders on the Land" guided our explorations through photography, painting, rubbings, and papier-mâché. Students read from world literature to discover the importance of trees as symbols of the interconnectedness of life. A study of master photographer Beth Moon and the science of trees as communities helped students imagine trees as communicators and wise elders overseeing the land. Students were able to visit Stanley Park and Capilano River park to photograph and give voice to the old growth trees on the land in Vancouver.



Student Quotes (Intermediates)

"During AIRS when we walked outside and looked at trees and I felt how cold it was and how trees deal with this." Kiana

"I got better at describing texture" Jenny

I leaned photography requires for you to look at objects in all angles. Anna C

I changed my thoughts to trees. Oscar

In AIRS, I got better at taking my time to understand trees. Kaden

Teacher observations (student case studies)

"During our nature walk around the neighbourhood Student X (Grade 1) sat down on the curbside with everyone else to sketch what she was looking at. She also went to feel the bark for some sensory info, adding even greater detail in her picture"

"This grade 1 student was very engaged for 1 hour! She was happy trying out the different materials... and seemed soothed when touching the different/unique textures... she was extremely pleased with her results."



"This grade 7 student sometimes has difficulty pushing into higher thinking. Today during a writing session in the studio, she was sitting and writing and when asked to read aloud, had very thoughtful pieces to share"

"Another Grade 7 student takes time to notice details while doing art that he does not while doing other school work. I can now remind him of this in Math and Literacies"



"This grade 7 student can struggle with engagement and peer relationships in most subject areas. In AIRS sessions, she is engaged and open"



The Tree of Life is a motif used in many cultures around the world. Both culturally relevant and rich with symbolism, the overarching theme of relationships lends itself well to grounding our work in the art studio at Begbie Elementary. At the same time, this symbol also honours our work. Together with students and teachers, we have planted many seeds- of wonder, curiosity, imagination, intention, perseverance, and collaboration to name only a few — Rebecca and Susan

SIR PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU ELEMENTARY

In what ways might the visual arts support social emotional learning?

Principal: Angela Hughes School Team: Alison Diesvelt and Angela Micozzi Artist: Amanda Wood and Sholeh Mahlouji

Vision and Process

In the studio's third year, Trudeau students and teachers had the opportunity to work with Artists Amanda Wood and Sholeh Mahlouji.

Sholeh worked with primary students to create a 'paper studio' where kindergarten and grade one and two students learned to use and appreciate the capacity of their hands as tools to rip, tear, fold, curl, twist and manipulate paper into a plurality of 2 and 3 dimensional forms as well as creating architectural habitations. Students were awakened to the idea of material transformation and opened up to the infinite capacities of their attentive presence for thinking and acting differently.





Amanda's vision was to explore lines in three dimensions. Beginning with mindful drawing, mark-making and collage, students spent the first term learning about different types of lines and the ways they communicate. Students also learned about using structures like chance to help determine the subject of the work. Students were encouraged to experience lines in their environment and in their cultural fabrics.



The second term allowed for age appropriate inquiries that connected with curricular themes like social responsibility and science. Primary students worked with ephemeral light-based material "drawings", traditional drawing and recycled material site specific installation. Students were very engaged in the ephemeral activities and challenges that allowed them to take risks in a safe way. Knowing that the work was non-permanent gave them leeway to try things, remove them and try them again. The intermediate students worked with three-dimensional mixed media structures.

Teacher observations on the connection between art making and mindful awareness:



"The children hum and are happy when they make art. Art always allows learners who struggle with written and verbal expression to communicate in other ways. For two students in particular the studio was both a safe and successful place. Art prods, educates, reminds me to do art more with the class. Thus, I expanded our exploration of art as a way of looking and seeing to investigate Indigenous and environmentally connected art." Laura Atkinson, Intermediate Teacher

"Students enjoyed the hands-on, tactile experience. I found that when students focused on the process rather than the final outcome, and slowed down, it had a calming effect." Paula Jeram, Intermediate Teacher

"When students were creating their patterns for the "yarn bombing" they were calm and focused. Some students who struggled in the classroom were calmly engaged with the activity. I noticed that students who focused on the perfect recreation of their patterns became frustrated, while others who accepted the difference in the creative modalities where better able to focus." Melissa Marshall, Intermediate Teacher

District Autism Program

"My class is comprised of six children with autism and keeping them calm, engaged and on task is a consistent challenge. Working with the AIRS program and our artist, Amanda Wood, was a wonderful experience. Amanda was so sensitive to the needs of the children and so responsive to their sensibilities. We worked together to develop sensory stations that the students could rotate through. I noticed that while participating in the activities my students were visually absorbed to the extent that the room disappeared from their awareness. The light table with salt caught and focused their attention for a sustained period of time. It was an inspiration to see how fully and beautifully the students engaged with the materials. It was a very rewarding experience." Charlene Wall, Classroom Teacher, Autism Program

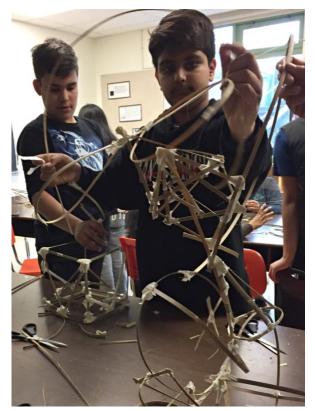


Extended Reflection:

The Visual Arts and the Cultivation of Social Emotional Capacities

This year for the Artist in Residence Studio program the intermediate students at Pierre Elliott Elementary, including my grade 6/7 class, worked with the artist Amanda Wood on processes relating to line and form using bamboo and textiles. Our inquiry question - "In what ways might the visual arts support social emotional learning?" - related to our school goal for the year, and the core competencies of self-regulation, well-being and self-determination. Other competencies were naturally imbedded in the process of inquiry, as children developed, expressed and communicated their ideas and their personal connections to learning, but our primary goal was the consideration of the ways in which the visual arts might support social-emotional capacities.





The ability of the visual arts to cultivate socialemotional capacity seems to be rooted in the way in which the arts are taught and shared. Although we know from educational research that students learn concepts more deeply when they have the opportunity to work at hands-on activities, the visual arts have the ability to elicit a heightened capacity for sustained observation and focused reflection; for consideration of multiple perspectives and problem solving; and for deeper, more thoughtful consideration of why and how feelings and ideas are communicated.

In this year's Artist-in Residence-Studio program, working with Amanda Wood, the main idea was to consider, and communicate through an artistic process, the ways in which interdependent body systems might work together to allow an organism to feel and respond to it's environment through the collection of sensory information.

In Science, students studied the human nervous system and digestive system. They also learned about the structure and interdependence of these and other body systems in humans and other organisms. They created posters that illustrated the diversity of chordates and their primary characteristics. In our studio work with Amanda Wood students observed the structure and beauty of human body systems through photography and imaging, and looked at and discussed the scientific drawings of naturalist and marine biologist, Ernst Haeckel. We also looked at the bamboo work of contemporary Canadian artist, Kai Chan.





Student reflection on interdependent body systems in organisms went a step further with the design of imaginary organisms, and the structure and function of their skeletal, nervous and digestive systems. Students were encouraged to construct three bamboo structures and then work with three basic shapes to create an organism with interdependent systems.

Students engaged well in an environment with simple criteria that had no prescribed outcome other than the consideration of how their imaginary organism might be structured with three interdependent body systems. The classroom environment encouraged playful, imaginative exploration with a range of materials and both artist and teacher maintained a curious, non-judgmental attitude towards the appearance of the students' creative endeavours. Initially, some students required encouragement, but in the end all of the students enjoyed the novelty of exploring new materials and processes.

What struck me most was the students increased ability to accept and enjoy the creative processes and outcomes that were all quite unique and playful. They embraced the idea that there were many diverse and equally fascinating ways that creativity might be expressed and that life might also manifest itself in many previously unimagined forms.

The entire project required a significant amount of sustained attention, not just in the construction of the sculptural work but also in the creative communication that described what they had done. Beyond this, the activity required that students do a considerable amount of individual and collaborative problem solving and the consideration of alternative processes.





Initially, Amanda introduced the various materials to be used for the students' sculptural works, and modeled some ways in which they might be used. In this way she provided a starting point from which the children could work. Watching students work, and encouraging them to look at and consider alternative approaches taken by classmates produced growth in the students' willingness to share ideas, and consider different ways to work through problems. Instead of being concerned about others copying their work, they began to share more openly.

I noticed I was spending less time monitoring and checking behaviour and more time paying attention to what the children were doing and talking about. This practice of stepping back to watch the students work allowed for the observation of discussions relating to how and why students were making specific decisions and choices regarding materials and processes.



Beyond the art studio when students were asked to write about the organism they invented, the level of creative engagement continued. Reflecting back on the completed sculptures- One of my students who is visually impaired and generally functioning well below grade level in language arts did an exquisite summary of work we had been doing. He came to me with a small vile stuffed with a beige elastic band and explained that it was a "worm specimen" and a "food source" for his imaginary organism. He taped the vile to his descriptive notes with a cautionary note, "Do not take out of capsul. Sampils of aquatic worms." This was accompanied with a sketch of a worm that read, "Oquatic worm 5 X smaller." He told me that there was a problem with this worm because there weren't very many of them left. He explained that they were dying off because of the plastics pollution and that we needed to be very concerned about this issue. At the start of the year I would have been happy to see him write two sentences. For this assignment he wrote three, albeit short, paragraphs with a lovely sense of creativity and humour.

Student Reflections from the Grade 6 and 7 students

"Doing art makes me feel more free and I have more control over my creative thoughts and it helps me feel so joyful." P.J.

"The AIRS program has shown me that it doesn't matter what other people think because it is your art. I think every piece of art has soul because in art you are allowed to express your feelings however you want. Art is freedom." L.O.

"I feel more focused when I do art because I enjoy thinking about creative ideas and then transferring the ideas onto my work makes me satisfied. What holds my attention is just the fact that there are so many ideas you can add on and that amazes me. The creative process makes me feel determined to think of more ideas and express all of them in different ways. I feel freer expressing my things in my own way because I feel comfortable and like I control my ideas when I work creatively." L.M.



"The creative process helps with our sense of feeling good and our ability to stay focused because art is mind-refreshing and satisfying. The creativeness holds our attention when we are doing art. There is nothing that can distract us when we are working." S.K.

"When I do art it makes me feel calm and stress-relieved. Art helps me express thoughts and depression when I mess things up, like failing a test or when I do something that makes me feel horrible. I just draw the situation and try to make things better again. I can forget about it if I make myself look silly in ways that I am comfortable." C.M.

THUNDERBIRD ŠX^wəX^wA?əS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"How will the AIRS program help improve student success in relation to self-regulation, agency & voice." "How will these capacities transfer to the classroom environment"

> Principal: Tassie Harris School Team: Janey Lee, Katie Frigault Artist: Rebecca Graham

Thunderbird is a Tier 1 enhanced services school at the Vancouver School Board. It is one of the top 6 elementary schools with the most vulnerable students who would benefit from opportunities outside of the home. We have some families who are new immigrants, single-parent households, as well as 70% of the school being English language learners, with a language other than English at home. Our school is situated across the street from the largest social housing project in the province, with many of our families living in social housing. We have a high percentage of students with special needs compared with other schools in the city, and we also have a significant indigenous population at our school." Camilla Ting, K teacher

Thunderbird has had the pleasure of working with Rebecca Graham for a second year but for the first time within our new Studio Room!

As an environmental artist and weaver, she brings a unique perspective, expertise and a wealth of hands-on opportunities for all our students here at Thunderbird. Many students struggle with self-regulation and focusing within the classroom environment.





"The theme was working with our hands, exploring tools and materials. It seemed to me that the best thing for the students and the program would be to establish a baseline of maker skills that they would be able to use and enhance in future years. I introduced all age groups to the mechanics of using a hammer, and they seemed to crave this physical activity. The older ones I let disassemble shipping pallets -- which is difficult, because the heat-treated wood is very hard and the nails have a spiral shaft that don't pull easily. The younger groups took turns with hammers, working in groups. Kindergarteners we put into groups of 4-5 with an adult with each group, and we took turns going around the circle, each hammering one nail into a softwood block." - Rebecca



in the dyebath.

Intermediates

The Intermediate classes engaged in four distinctly different processes of environmental and hands-on art. We explored the colours we got from the donated flowers by smearing petals on paper and watching the transformation

Students got to explore biology (stripping the flower heads down) and measurement methods (weighing fabrics for the dye baths), and talk about chemical reactions that make the colour bind to the fabric. Some of these fabrics were turned into embroidered name tags. Fine detail manual skills like threading needles, making knots, and tidy stitching were big challenges for some kids. I also introduced the kids to my hand-cranked sewing machine, and many of them coveted the opportunity to use a novel machine.

We moved on to carving the bark of some fresh alder and making tin can lanterns which gave an opportunity talk about the elements and principles of design. The fresh alder bark was soft enough to carve and oxidized from pale green to a deep orange. We created trellises based on shipping pallets and "design team" of students from each class decided how to arrange the cans and carved alder pieces. For our final sessions before the winter break, we installed them in the garden.







Primaries

The Thunderbird **primary** classes learned basic skill-development activities like twisting, braiding, weaving, and using scissors, hammers, and the hand-cranked sewing machine. I made up some games that used the kids' whole bodies to do things like twist fabric

strips into rope, and make multi-strand braids.

We divided into groups and took turns with hammers to hammer nails into lumber to make little looms; and sew the seams of bunting flags using the hand-cranked sewing machine. One of the most popular activities was weaving natural

"I like the weaving. I had to really concentrate."

"I like the rhythm of weaving." Emmanuel "I like the touch of the leaves." Nicole

"I like smelling the plants." William

Printmaking and Observing our Environment



Rebecca created a large 4'x4'+ map of the school and grounds with just the outlines of buildings, surface changes and large trees. When the kids were ready with their blocks and had printed at least one test print and one in their notebooks, they came and did a print of their plant on the big map in the approximate place on the school yard where they got it.

With the two oldest divisions, we did linocut blocks using Speediecut rubber and lino carving knives, and printed using water-based printing inks. With everyone else, we did Styrofoam blocks carved with our trusty class set of framing-nail-and-dowel styluses, and printed using water soluble felt pen misted with water. We could get a great range of effects, from static-like to watercolour depending on the amount of water; and the kids enjoyed making different colourways.

Teacher Quotes and Observations

With our inquiry we hoped to see evidence of self-regulation, agency and voice in our students through the AIRS program and working with Rebecca. The following quotes show that we did indeed observe this.

- " The kids absolutely loved the studio experience."
- " Our kids with designations really thrived when working with Rebecca."
- " We saw children who struggled in the classroom participate with ease."
- " We saw kids demonstrating qualities of Growth Mindset like perseverance, persistence and flexibility!"
- "Children were showing signs of self-regulating their bodies and minds"
- " In the studio, there very little behavior issues"
- "We saw children progress with being able to self-reflect about their time in the studio"
- " One day, students broke out in song while doing fine-motor weaving..... You can do it.... you can do it.... if you put your mind to it You can do it!"



"I saw improvements in skills and shifts into growth mindsets. I often heard things like 'It was hard at first, but then it got easier; I got better at it." Some kids who struggled with engagement in their classrooms because of anger or opposition did really well in the studio; with just a little individual relationship with me they were able to leverage their tenacity to develop their skills, complete their work and become peer advisors. There were at least two students whose teachers said they struggled in class, but had extraordinary latent skills in weaving."—Rebecca

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