

AIRS

CROSS-DISTRICT COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY 2017/8

Participating school communities:

Grandview Elementary

Sir Matthew Begbie Elementary

Queen Alexandra F.A.M.I.L.Y. School

Admiral Seymour Elementary

Sir Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary

Florence Nightingale Elementary

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The Artist in Residence Studio program (AIRS) operates in partnership with the Vancouver School Board to support the creation of a designated studio space within the school and to enable a long-term artist in residence to collaborate with teachers to provide regular, meaningful hands-on engagement in the visual arts for students across the whole school.



The AIRS program provides a unique learning opportunity for both students and teachers.



We wondered...



*How does collaborating with a
long-term resident artist
within a designated studio space
impact student learning
within the new curriculum
and core competencies?*



Over the course of the year, lead teachers and principals met together to share their observations on the impact of the studio residency on students and teachers through artifacts, case studies, and anecdotal stories. Each school examined this broader inquiry question through a specific lens to focus on aspects of student learning that reflected the unique needs or goals of their school community.

Sharing observations together through the inquiry confirmed the common benefits of focused, embedded art engagement for students as they emerged spontaneously across very different sites, communities and art experiences.



Common themes of positive impacts for students were:

- increased confidence and risk taking for students
- increased levels of focus and sustained attention
- empowerment for students who struggle within the classroom but flourish within a creative, hands-on context of non-judgement
- building of a greater sense of community

For some schools, the studio program was a new venture. For others this program was in its second or third year allowing teachers to observe shifts in student learning over a longer period of time. Teachers were able to share challenges, innovations, and unexpected consequences as well as locate their own experiences within a trajectory of learning within the studio program that is deepened, strengthened and amplified over time.



Grandview ɥuuqinak'uuh Elementary

School Team: Shannon Dolen
Principal: Stephen Leung
Artists: Christine Mackenzie, Dean Heron

“What do students learn through engaging in art within the studio?”



At Grandview, working with artists Christine MacKenzie and Dean Heron, students from k-7 learned the elements and principles of design in North West Coast art. The three early primary grades worked with local Kwakiutl artist Christine MacKenzie integrating story, dance and visual art to learn about first nations design, protocol, depictions of animals and develop a positive self-identity through art forms.

With Dean Heron intermediate students explored the first nations forms and their combination through painting and printmaking and were introduced to the craft of carving. Students learned to engage, focus and persist in sculpting and finishing a hand-carved spoon. Aboriginal enhancement worker Shannon Dolen shared that this project enabled new positive narratives to emerge for some students who typically have behavioural challenges. Students also learned about important first nations artists that have shaped the revival and development of First Nations art in BC and to see themselves as part of this rich heritage.





Our students struggle within many academic areas. In order to help students find their own identity and experience success at school, we look for things that will help them express themselves and their learning in areas other than reading, writing, and math. Our students have demonstrated a stronger ability to learn when given meaningful tasks that are hands on. In the studio, the students are learning to draw, print and carve. More importantly, working with an indigenous artist allows students to explore self-identity and connection with cultural roots within our urban setting which is meaningful to the lives of these students. Already, students have begun to develop their focus at schoolwork and find new ways to communicate their own thoughts through making and learning about First Nations art and to, build confidence and self-empowerment.

Stephen Leung, Principal, Grandview Elementary

In the words of Students

"It takes a lot of hard practice but in the end it looks nice and is all worth it."

Avery

"I learned it takes time and if you rush, it won't be as good when carving."

Thalia

"I learned how indigenous art in BC connects us to our ancestors."

Max



"Thank you, Mr. Leung, for bringing Dean Heron to our school."

Grade 6 student

"This (working on carving with Dean) has been the best thing that has ever happened to me."

Grade 7 student



Sir Matthew Begbie Elementary

School Team: Renata Caverzan, Rosa Oudt, M.J. Moram

Principal: John Cortens

Artists: Rebecca Heyl (primary), Susan Hall (intermediate)

“How does art impact students who have difficulty expressing themselves verbally or emotionally?”

At Begbie all students in grade K-7 engaged in visual art experiences that developed artistic habits of mind; develop craft, understand art worlds, stretch and explore, engage and persist, reflect, observe, envision, express. The emphasis on the creative process freed the learner to be present and mindful, ask questions, and explore self-expression through a variety of mediums.



The primaries explored patterns in nature (K/1) and the transformative quality of light (2) through observation, process-based material inquiry and collaboration.

“On their own, the art pieces are beautiful, but when they all come together, it makes something even more amazing.” - primary student



The intermediates explored identity through photography, movement and painting. Throughout, students learned the importance of artistic voice through the elements and principles of design, the role of images within our culture and the diversity of perspectives in how we respond to images.





“Seeing patterns in nature up close and personal kept my learners focused and engaged. The art-making process really centred and grounded my kids.”

Rosa Oudt, primary teachers

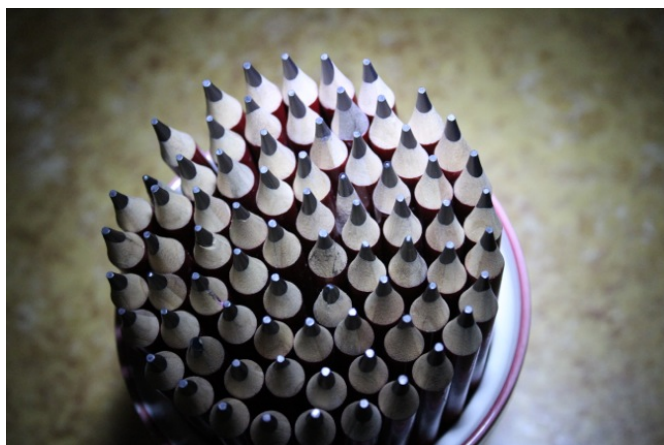
“One student I observed in the art sessions is hesitant and resistant to change. Initially, it was a challenge to get my student excited, but by the second session, there was a complete turnaround. While this student usually prefers to do things separately from peers the arts sessions opened him up to working more collaboratively whilst also allowing for some independence and free thinking.”

Irma, Grade 2 teacher

In the words of students and parents:

“It’s so interesting to see how things that are so ordinary can be so different when you look through the camera.”

Zoie, Grade 5 Begbie student



“I learned how to take different photos which were pretty neat. I learned topics like lighting, perspective, reflection and space.”

Kyle, Grade 7 Begbie student

“When I saw the photographs for the first time, I was blown away by the professional look of the photos. It was incredible to see how the students were able to transform something so simple as patterns into art.”

Darren Mitzel, intermediate parent

Some reflections from the inquiry that emerged over the course of the year included:

- Shifting mindsets for teachers with the emphasis on the process rather than product
- The exhibition of work is powerful for building community for parents and students
- The anticipation and excitement of students about working in the studio is part of the experience
- Deeper learning is experienced by making connections from the work from the studio into the classroom through written reflections and visual extensions in the classroom for deeper learning
- Students are building a vocabulary to talk about art and increasing their perceptual capacities



Queen Alexandra Elementary

School Team: Julie Gelson, Karen Samra

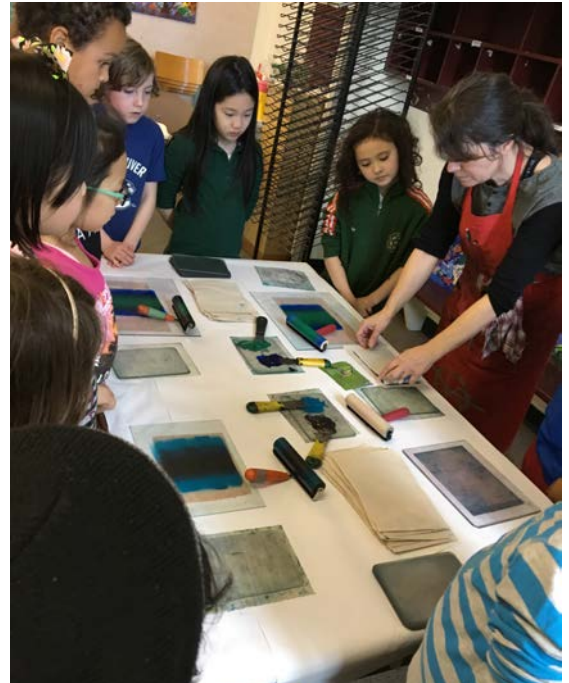
Principal: Megan Davies

Artist: Julie McIntyre

“How can art enable students to discover, understand and communicate?”



Working with printmaker Julie McIntyre, students across the school were explored patterning in nature, biodiversity and metamorphosis through a variety of hands-on printmaking processes including monotypes, relief and lift prints, collagraph and drypoint. These processes allowed for students to engage in a rich, process-based exploration of texture, the qualities of mark making, form and composition.



Reflections over the course of the inquiry:

- The empowerment of student through exposing them to new techniques and processes and believing in the potential of students to independently use and master these new skills.



- The studio provided a space for focused engagement that was different from the classroom setting particularly for classrooms that had the most behavioural challenges.
- Importance of continuing the residency beyond a single year in order to build on what is started for students and allow confidence and resilience to continue to develop.



“Our dynamic and diverse student population has been able to benefit from the differentiated instruction, opportunities for self-expression and ability to grow and express themselves as artists. It was wonderful to observe students fully engaged, participative, enthusiastic and proud.”

Megan Davies, principal, Queen Alexandra F.A.M.I.L.Y School

“Overall the program was inspiring because it made me realize how far my students have come since the beginning of the year. They learned many new techniques, used new tools and used and talked about new vocabulary. “

Teacher, Queen Alexandra

Sir Admiral Seymour Elementary

School Team: Jenni Watson

Principal: Dorothy Watkins

Artist: Susan McCallum with indigenous artists Jenoah and Sho Sho Esquiro

“How will AIRS impact our vulnerable children’s learning and behaviour?”

Working with artist Susan McCallum, Seymour students learned to draw, paint, collaborate and express their connection to place and story through mask making and mural painting. Susan weaved indigenous knowledge, myth and respect for the natural world and the fish, birds and trees that are important to our environment. Students were also able to meet, learn and be inspired by local indigenous artists, weavers, story tellers and fashion designers. A sketchbook practice enabled students to develop skills in drawing, shading and brush techniques and to powerfully document their progress and growth over time.



Some shared reflections during the inquiry:

- Teachers are able to see students in a different light, particularly those who struggle with regulation and output in the classroom, but in the studio are discovering their potential.
- The studio is a safe place to take risks particularly for vulnerable students, who are risk averse because of the number of challenges they face on a daily basis.
- The studio provides a place of calm for the students and engagement with natural objects, wood, stone, branches

“Our students sometimes live in a harsh urban environment where they see the negative effects of poverty. Things such as art and music are considered extras in a community that often struggles with food, clothing, and rent. Having a studio space and an artist in residence who explores artistic expression and teaches art process skills gives such support and encouragement to these children. The students are learning to express themselves and have the opportunity to show their knowledge through art.”

Dorothy Watkins, Principal, Seymour Elementary





Teacher reflections on the studio and beyond

"Students loved it and made interesting pieces. We want it to carry on next year."

"I would like to have a key to take students there more easily. Students calm down there so I'd like to use it more."

To make it better, we should have the room stocked with all sorts of supplies to do something simple easily and have more choice in the activities for "reluctant" artists."

In the words of Students

How was the AIRS program for you?

It brought me joy.

I am glad I got to be a real artist.

It was awesome and I learned new techniques.

We should have it for every class for every term- not just for a few times.

We don't have a lot of art in our own class so this was special.

Susan taught us things that made our own work better.

It was fun.



Is it good to have the studio at Seymour?

I would like to use it more often and stay inside at lunch to do more art.

We get to do things we wouldn't normally do in the classroom.

Having a sink in the room is great for the H2O colouring techniques.

I think it is a great space for stressed kids to relax and do art.

It is calming when I do art there. I want to do it next year.

How could we make the room better?

Put more art up all the time.

Have more materials (paints & stuff) ready for us to use when our teacher lets us come.

We would like to learn about First Nations art and other art too-so we need more time.

We could do more if Susan had more help.

Can we open it at lunchtime?



Words that describe the Reggio Room:

natural - relaxing - modern - calming - quiet - memories - messy — outlet — stress-free - feel happy - focus - relaxing — artistic

Sir Pierre Elliot Trudeau Elementary

School Team: Alison Diesvelt and Andrew Swain

Principal: Angela Hughes

Artist: Maggie Milne Martens

“How can we inspire greater engagement and support, both in and beyond the school, for the importance of the arts and the significance of visual imagery?”

This year Trudeau Elementary School is in its second year with its new studio space and the Artist in Residence Studio Program. Trudeau Elementary has 11 divisions and 245 children all of whom participated in the AIRS program.

Project Summary

The residency was sixteen weeks long and explored questions of home and belonging through the lens of different aspects of the Vancouver environment: the sky, the built environment, the forest/earth, and the water. Over the course of the residency we created a large-scale mixed-media installation using painting, printmaking and sculpture. Each class participated in two different art-making processes that contributed to the final project. Throughout these processes students explored aspects of landscape and history relating to the place in which they live, and the ancestral lands of our local indigenous communities. They looked at contrasts and comparisons between the natural and built environment, expressing a connection to place through creative processes. An overarching question was: How can the care of our environment and one another impact our sense of belonging?



Impact of AIRS: The Teachers

The staff at Trudeau are unanimous in their acclaim for the 2018 AIRS program. Teachers appreciated the professional development afforded by the Artist-in-Residence Studio Program, gaining a deeper understanding of the visual arts as a powerful way to explore personal-cultural identity, creative and critical thinking, and social responsibility. Working with the underlying concept of “belonging” granted considerable scope across the grades. Having an artist with significant depth of experience meant that teachers learned about the work of local artists, predominantly but not exclusively Indigenous; about the conceptual and symbolic nature of some contemporary art works; about the ways in which the elements of art and the principles of design can be used to discuss and interpret works of art; and about authentic art making processes that require substantial focus and reflection. Working with the artist-in-residence allowed teachers to expand their understanding of the ways in which content and competencies can be used in hands-on contexts for greater concept and skill acquisition.



“This enabled me to return to my pre-public-school-teacher roots of using art to build community and identity.”

Laura Atkinson, Grade 4/5 Teacher, Trudeau Elementary



“The artist’s ability to guide and encourage helped to boost my confidence in combining various curricular content areas, competencies and school goals. The focus was on experiencing the artistic process rather than creating a product and this approach was deeply engaging for myself and my students.”

Andrew Swain, K Teacher

“Watching Maggie introduce the lessons with a class has helped me think about how I would introduce these lessons in my class. The process of art is the important part of the lesson.”

Angela Micozzi, Grade 1 teacher

“What a great way for the Trudeau community to work together.”

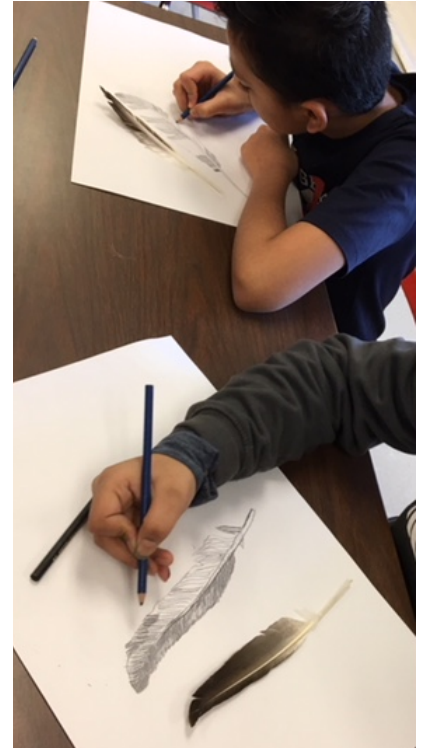
Mary Lee, Grade 1/2 Teacher, Trudeau Elementary

Inspiring greater engagement and support for the importance of the arts: The Inquiry Question

Throughout the 2018 AIRS program what we did most was watch and listen and support the process for our students and our colleagues. This year teachers wanted more time with the artist in order to go deeper with their students, so we were able to work this out. The teachers and the artist wanted to get out into the community and engage with the built and the natural environment, and this was done. When teachers asked about how to use the art to connect with the core competencies we organized an arts pro-d. We looked at the “competencies” in relation to a well-structured lesson and the artist gave a talk about the importance of art in education. This pushed all of us to think a little more deeply. Teachers asked for books and resources to help with lesson planning and we now have an art room library with close to 50 books. We used the inquiry book fund to start the collection and others have added to it.



The use of the studio has increased slowly as teachers see the potential of the space, and we anticipate the engagement with the space will continue to grow as teachers become increasingly confident with the new materials and methodologies they are being exposed to through the residencies. As the staff moves forward with new school goals for next year they are asking about how the arts are connected to SEL and the cultivation of social responsibility. This year’s residency was a springboard for some rich questions and next year we have more pro-d planned to support the growth of creative and critical thinking along with social responsibility and communication, through the arts.



More recently we had a request from teachers to have a workshop with our artist to understand more fully, and experience the slow contemplative nature of simply drawing. The governing ethos of this workshop was to provide space for non-judgmental creative exploration and the sensation of calm reflection that is fostered through the process of observational drawing. It is an experiential process and it’s effects grasped more fully through the sensation of doing, rather than listening to explanations.



Impact of AIRS: The Students

One of the key components of the AIRS Program was having a space devoted exclusively to visual arts. The children have come to associate the room with a sense of emotional safety where exploration and risk-taking is encouraged. There is a sense of excitement and anticipation consistently apparent when classes head to the art room. When arriving in the room students are asked to slow down, think, observe and share, creating an atmosphere of dialogue and joy. Working with the artist-in residence there is a sense of non-judgment, inclusion and care that embraces the students. At the primary level we observed an increase in the level of care, deliberation and attention to detail in the work of students. At the intermediate level we noticed a marked increase in students' creative confidence and competence that reached across curricular areas.

This program provided the opportunity for students to build positive relationships as they explored and worked together in a warm, non-threatening environment.”

Mary Lee, Grade 1/2 Teacher “



“So exciting...the paint! We use a roller to put the paint. Then we put white paper and black paper. I make a clam!”

Asmena, kindergarten student

“Working in the Art Room taught me a lot of stuff since we were doing a lot of drawings and working on a sense of belonging and it was really fun. We were able to use a lot of utensils such as pastels, chalk, sketch pencils, paint; that was different than what we use in class.”

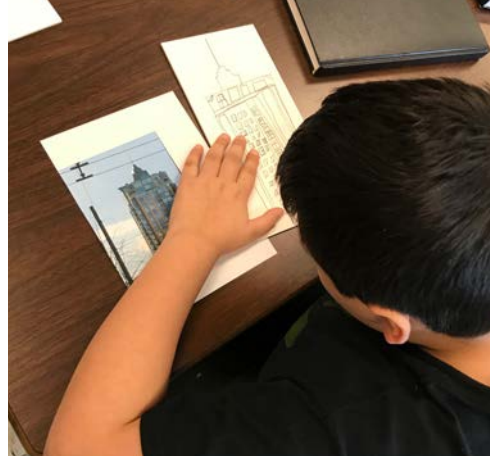
Aryan, Grade 6

I love this room (the studio)” – kindergarten student



“The most distractible, agitated children in my class are calmer when they do art. Two students in particular are blossoming with the calm, hands-on, judgement-free opportunities to draw, explore ideas and take on new challenges.”

Alison Diesvelt, Grade 6/7 Teacher



Key reflections from our final inquiry



- Over the course of the residency there has been a transformation and awakening within the teaching staff in terms of understanding the value of the visual arts, its possibilities for deepening student learning and empowering them to incorporate the arts more confidently into their own teaching practice.
- Understanding the importance of process and allowing the work to emerge along the way

“Trudeau students have embraced the studio program. This new opportunity has given many students another way to express themselves under the guidance of an experienced artist. Teachers have also expanded their repertoire’s by attending further workshops provided within the school. This has provided the students at Trudeau a rich art program. We have also noticed that this expression through the arts has been particularly beneficial for students socially and emotionally. A sense of calm comes across the room as children are working and exploring their sense of belonging which was this year’s theme.”

Angela Hughes, principal, Trudeau Elementary

Florence Nightingale Elementary

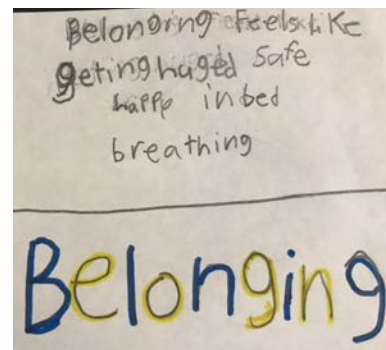
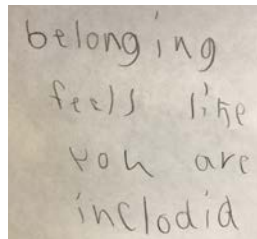
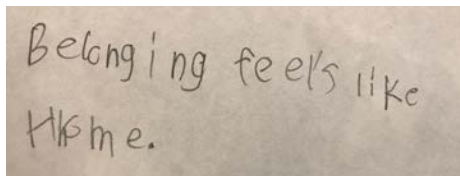
School Team: Colleen Mieczanec, Carrie Gelson, Peter Hartwick and Cynthia Shan

Principal: Armin Samei

Artist: Maggie Milne Martens

“How might the visual arts allow children to build social emotional resilience?”

In the Art and Discovery Studio at Florence Nightingale, students embarked on a school wide exploration of on the theme of belonging. What is home? How can we create places of belonging for ourselves, and for others?



We began with a whole school mural in which featured a self-portrait watercolour of every child within the school. A portrait is not just a likeness, but a connection to our story - who we are, our memories, histories and our being-ness in the world – it is also the face that brings joyful recognition to those who love us.

Even though every part of us is unique, from the contours of our ear to the arch of our eyebrows, we all need to feel that we belong.



Over the course of the year, we continued to explore the experiences of belonging through gestures, memories, the places that are important to our families, our school community, the animals who live in our urban environment, and the value of belonging for society as a whole— what do all children need to feel a sense of belonging? Throughout this journey we developed knowledge and proficiency in a variety of material process including observational and reflective drawing, assemblage, wire sculpture, painting and printmaking.



The primaries explored the feeling of belonging through stuffy portraits, and the idea of ‘home’ through the nests, burrows and dens animals make in our urban environment. We created a salmon stream and a cedar forest and an urban alley transforming our school into a living environment of belonging and wonder.



The grade 3s and 4s, created mixed media family collages of special places, made prints telling the stories of belonging about places within their school and constructed marvelous adventure home of belonging through assemblage.



The older intermediates represented the feelings of 'belonging' or 'not belonging' through painting incorporating the expressive qualities of gesture, colour and composition. In the new year, we created wire sculpture installations of birds, feathers and dragonflies, subjects that suggest hope and transformation, in order to transform lonely spaces within our school. They also created silk-screen street posters that declare the rights, needs and concerns that are important to them in belonging within the world.



In the words of students

"I can't believe this is learning", Grade 3 student

"I could do this forever", Grade 3 student

"The studio is important, because it is not the classroom. This is where we get to be creative", Grade 6 student

"I love being in the Art and Discovery Studio". Grade 5 student



Over the course of the inquiry teachers noted:

- Development of growth mindset for students which carries over into other learning
- Breakthroughs for students working in the studio for second year in risk taking and persistence
- Increased complexity in the projects that (emerge out of a long-term relationship with artist and consistent engagement with art making processes) allows for connections at a deeper level with student's stories and sense of identity.



- Allowing students to find a vehicle and safe outlet for sharing the difficult experiences they carry inside them.
- The studio and the art making process allowed some students who are disengaged or struggle with regular classroom work to find themselves and for teachers to see their true capacity

- Providing a safe and quiet space as a solace from difficult classroom dynamics
- Allow some students to find pride in their sense of accomplishment for the first time



“In the studio, students see their work as part of a meaningful process that leads to completed pieces on which to reflect and share. The powerful things I observed in my students: risk taking, quiet noticing, slowing down, and free exploration. In the studio, students are inspired by the surroundings and by each other – it isn't a place where you had to know how to do anything - it was a place where playful exploration brought great success. This led to students seeing themselves as competent and capable. They were happily surprised by what they could do which brought self-esteem and positive self-awareness. Students were willing to be open to learning new things and working with new materials with less fear of the unknown and less need to control.”

Carrie Gelson, Grade 3 teacher



"For me I see a calm come over my kids as they enter the Art and Discovery Studio. My students are engaged and their skills are developing over time. They use their art time in a productive way. There is something magical about a space where 6, 7 and 8 year olds can work hard, for an hour, developing skills and not even realize those skills are transferring to other areas of their learning. I see the impact of what they are learning in the art room every day in my classroom, from their printing, to their drawing, use of colour, attention to detail and ability to focus. Art is something we all need to nourish ourselves with. It helps make us complete and children grow.: - Greg Canning, Grade 2 teacher

Reflections on AIRS from Parents and Community Members



"Our students and school community are so fortunate to have such creative and explorative learning in this age of technology and cuts to education."

"The confidence and ability that my child has expressed and experienced is priceless. I wish every child could have the opportunity to explore their creativity in such a way. "

"I would like this program to continue as it helps children develop their creative abilities and critical thinking."

"The Art and Discovery Studio is beyond impressive to me every time I see it. The level of imagination, beauty, thoughtfulness and sheer focus that each piece of work involves makes me so proud to know my child is exposed to an environment that fosters such a gift. Art is not valued enough in many classrooms nowadays and to see such a thoughtful emphasis on it at Nightingale really elevates the school."



"The Art and Discovery Studio demonstrates the potential from art activities to enhance childrens' self-regulation by integrating social and emotional awareness with cognitive capacities such as patience and sustained attention." – Dr. Jane Garland, Professor Emeritus in Psychiatry, UBC

"Studying art in many forms, is an essential part of success in school, work and life. I have seen it help build critical thinking and self-confidence. In many of my schools I've noticed the quality of art study is disappearing. In all my years of being in schools and youth organizations I notice that Florence Nightingale has a unique set of students. I believe it is because of the studio space dedicated to arts. The students at Nightingale are excelling, engaged and have a thirst for knowledge." Christine MacKenzie, visiting artist

WHY DO THE VISUAL ARTS MATTER?

Grade 6 and 7 students at Trudeau reflect



"Art expresses my own sense of creativity, what matters to me." Gurhazoor

"Art can tell stories about people's lives and their connections to each other, the land, their values."
Aryan

"Art can express different ideas without language."
Zaira

"Art lets us express our feelings without feeling discriminated." Stefani Alexa

"Arts improve your imagination." Aseeskaur

"Art makes everything perfect." Stephanie

"Art supports creative thinking". Manroop

"Art contains a lot of history...a lot of knowledge."
Danica

"The elements of art are in everything, even animation and digital media." Alex



"Studying nature, we see art everywhere." Avani



"Art promotes peaceful communication."
Aryan

"Because we can make our feelings. We can draw special things from our minds."
Manreet

"Art is a way that people can express a passion." Alex

"Art is everything. All our imagination and the way we express ourselves." Tanishka

"Art can be seen everywhere we go." Krishna