

Mural Artist Chooses Vycom's Celtec® to Engage Students in Creating a Vibrant Mural to Raise School Spirit Using a Safer Material

Artist Gayle Mangan Kassal selected Vycom's Celtec® expanded PVC for a mural at Benfield Elementary school in Severna Park, Maryland. It is lightweight and safer for the students to work with compared to wood.

SCRANTON, Pa., /PRNewswire/ - Benfield Elementary School, in Severna Park, Maryland, commissioned artist Gayle Mangan Kassal to create a mural with students to add vibrant color to an otherwise bland hallway. Kassal chose to create the piece on Vycom's Celtec® expanded PVC material to make it safer and easier for students to be involved in the process.

"This substrate is student-friendly because it does not splinter or warp like old, traditional methods of mural work using wood products. It's flexible and half the weight," explains Kassal, who has worked extensively with the material.

"Celtec is extremely easy to cut into shapes and produces very little dust or residue when sanding or cutting. This means it's safe for use in my home studio, around my children, as well as for the students I work with."



Artist Gayle Mangan Kassal poses with Benfield Elementary's new mural.

Benfield's Art Teacher Tracy Edwards was the driving force behind the project, wanting as many third, fourth and fifth grade students to be as hands-on as possible. She defined the mural's focus as bringing the joys of summer sailing inside and joining it with the delight of learning.

The school's official colors are red, white and blue. However, the hallway includes bright, apple-green support poles and fluorescent orange lockers. Using all of these and more, Kassal designed a colorful mural to unify the space and honor the school. Sailboats ride on the "wave" pages of an old, well-loved book of dreams and Mark Twain's quote of "Explore, Dream, Discover" provided names to the three boats.

The mural is painted on primed ¼-inch-thick Celtec expanded PVC sheet panels purchased from Piedmont Plastics in Elkridge, Md. Kassal prepped all seven, 10' by 4' panels in her studio and brought a few at a time to school for students to apply the basecoats. "This is another wonderful feature of Celtec, the fact that I can fit the panels in my minivan to easily move them where they need to go," she says.

Using panels of the material made it possible for children to safely paint the project wherever they were most comfortable, whether on tables or the floor. When mistakes were made, they simply repainted it.



"It holds up beautifully to many coats of paint and polyurethane without cracking or chipping," says Kassal. "Even after being without air conditioning during a humid summer, the mural looks pristine."

She finished the project by custom cutting and fitting each panel. The curves of the waves, sails and mast appear to be three dimensional. Each individual flag was cut from Celtec and attached to the wall.

"The installers found it easy to work with. They were able to sand the Celtec slightly to accommodate a bulge in the wall without impacting the look or lines of the mural. It was important to keep the book lying straight."

At the end of the year, parents of many students took photos of their children in front of the whole mural, or the portions they worked on. "They really are so proud of it and so am I," says Kassal.