



Some 400 John C. Daniels Interdistrict Magnet School students worked collaboratively on this school wide mural project.

SCHOOL WIDE MURAL PROJECT AT JOHN C. DANIELS

— Carroll Ryan, Magnet Resource Coordinator

Preparation for this school wide mural project began months before student painting commenced, with a request for drawings from grade K–8 students. How could they best visually depict the John C. Daniels Interdistrict Magnet School for International Communications magnet theme? Our intention was to have our students draw sketches of what inspires them about our school's magnet theme, International Communication, which is comprised of 4 subthemes, each a focus of study in the 4 corresponding marking periods:

- The World in My Backyard
- Where in the World
- Stewards of Our Planet
- Around the World in 60 Days

continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

School Wide Mural Project...
Carroll Ryan

Alcott Honored as Outstanding...
Holly Wrenn

A Father and Futurist...
Garry Golden

Dynamic Program Opens Up...
Tiffany Caouette

HOT Resources

Featured HOT Resource
Bonnie Koba

HOT is the Way
Meghan Wildstein

The President's Committee...
Tania Kelley

Alcott Honored as Outstanding Elementary

—Holly Wrenn, Principal, Alcott Elementary School

Alcott School has been honored by the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) as Connecticut's Outstanding Elementary School of the Year 2013–2014. This award gives public recognition to an outstanding CAS member elementary school that deserves major recognition for its exemplary programs in meeting the needs of their students.

Over the past few years we have instituted grade level Data Teams as well as Building Early Intervention Teams. Reading instruction is delivered on grade level and differentiated for all students by teachers and reading specialists. Teachers remediate math individually and in small groups with the help of a math tutor. Our Board of Education supports us with Professional Development on new expectations yearly. Our teachers are presently creating materials to address the Common Core State Standards. Our expectation is that everyone can and will achieve. Last year's recognition of Alcott as a School of Distinction "for highest progress and highest overall performance" was confirmation of the hard work that is being done on a daily basis by Alcott students and staff.

For the last twelve years, the HOT Schools program has been the catalyst through which Alcott school involves parents and the community. The personalization of the school environment occurs through the integration of the HOT Schools Core Components – Strong Arts, Arts Integration and Democratic Practice. These, we believe, encourage the development of the emotional and social needs of every student. Student learning is self-directed and supported by peers, parents and the community.

Each September students develop classroom constitutions and then share them on Constitution Day during our Town Meeting. Students

follow a rigorous routine to become Student Council representatives and through Alcott's Student Council student voice is heard. Student classroom representatives bring forth peer proposals for enhancing their school environment and building community connections. Our student led Art and Editorial Boards select student work to be featured at assemblies. Alcott's AV Club provides students with the opportunity to be morning news crew announcers, assembly emcees and technicians for sound and video recording of school plays – thus further developing student voice.

"The Committee was impressed with the collaborative and collective approach to meeting the needs of every student, with the use of assessments to drive instruction and the focus on the emotional and social needs of all students."

—Lorraine Giannini, CAS Elementary Honors and Awards Committee Chairperson

The arts bring the school into the community and the community into the school through school wide projects. Alcott Elementary School invites community members, service organizations, local police and fire departments to participate in our students' learning throughout the year. Our staff participates in and supports after school and community events. We strongly believe that it is important to teach our students the value of supporting their community as well as their surrounding communities.

We are committed to strengthening the school-to-home connection and regularly send out parent surveys asking for school improvement

continued on page 5

School Wide Mural Project. *continued*



"The mural project does inspire me. I like to remember that we are all part of a bigger, important purpose and all together."—Isabel, Fifth Grade Student

Student submissions poured in to Site Resource Coordinator Karen Quinn and me! We were exuberant and overwhelmed by the response of well-thought-out work received and we were excited to share these student renderings with Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artist Mark Patnode. Our first meeting with Mark involved a discussion of our residency timeline, our school magnet theme and a review of student submissions.

"There was a significant decrease in behavior referrals during this school wide arts residency."

—Carroll Ryan, Magnet Resource Coordinator

Mark's first session with students from several grades included displaying the submissions and selecting those that would be used for the final planning phase. Discussion groups were then held to gain understanding about what the 3 mural pieces should look like. More sketches followed. Students then worked in teams to analyze mural

composites constructed by Mark from student submissions. Students prepared the mural canvasses for painting in what would become a long hard day! Excitement built as the students anticipated painting with smocks, brushes and as many colors as they needed. As the students began to paint I whispered to Mark, "Are they going to paint this freehand?" "Yes," he said. I had no idea! Students excelled at this creative challenge and moved ahead at a blistering pace from one round of painting to the next, while remaining focused on the task at hand: depicting our school magnet theme in all 3 mural pieces.

Discussions were facilitated by Mark, Jessica Messina, John C. Daniels' visual arts teacher, and me at various progress points to ensure that elements such as communication symbols, details of people, trees and buildings, etc., were depicted. Changing from one group of painters to another was seamless and work progressed without a glitch. Encouragement and enthusiasm were two key ingredients of this HOT process.



Next Issue: Strong Arts at Kinsella Magnet

HOT SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

Alcott Elementary School
Wolcott

Columbus Magnet School
Norwalk

Gaffney Elementary School
New Britain

High School in the Community
New Haven

Integrated Day Charter School
Norwich

Jack Jackter Intermediate School
Colchester

John C. Daniels School
New Haven

John Lyman Elementary School
Middlefield

Kinsella Magnet School
Hartford

Lincoln Middle School
Meriden

Martin Elementary School
Manchester

Pleasant Valley Elementary School
South Windsor

Samuel Staples Elementary School
Easton

Worthington Hooker School
New Haven

Bonnie Koba
Director

Amy Goldbas
Associate Director for Programming

Christopher Eaves
Associate Director for Professional Development

A Father and Futurist Looks at Our Fears and Dreams

—Garry Golden, Father, Futurist and 2013 HOT Schools Summer Institute Guest Speaker

Anyone can tap their inner Futurist and run a little experiment. The next time you are sitting among friends, family or strangers find a way to prompt the group to talk about the future. Then, in your head count the seconds or minutes that it takes for someone to connect the fate of our future to education. Then watch for how many heads nod in agreement. The most common dreams of a better future are intertwined to our ability to teach and learn.

Where the conversation will split and individual positions become entrenched – comes soon after. Some people may focus on rethinking schools and empowering teachers. Positions will emerge around informal learning and cultivating 21st century skills. Someone will argue passionately for empowering learners through technology. Then others will surface the downsides of too much screen time and digital experiences. From there the conversation often turns negative as fears of lack of resources and the distractions of real-world political battles take over the group's thinking.

“If we doubted our fears instead of doubting our dreams, imagine how much in life we’d accomplish.” —Joel Brown

I have tested this prompt conversation in countless settings both as a father of young child (with another baby on the way) and also as a professional futurist with clients from public and private sectors. Doubts about the dream of creating a learning-focused culture run deep. Some fears are rooted in the impact of bureaucratic priorities for high stakes testing – other concerns around the perceived dehumanizing aspects of technology. As a father and futurist, I spend a great deal of time trying to imagine how we might bypass these fears.

There is risk in trying to place bets on the future or pick winners. Any parent or teacher involved in schools realizes the challenge of bringing about change and embracing new methods. Yet as a futurist I detect one overwhelming emerging issue that might indeed move us closer to the dream of creating more communities of lifelong learners.

continued on page 5

Alcott Honored as Outstanding *continued*

suggestions. Parents are invited to every school function and they play an integral part in our school wide projects.

Visiting artists give students and teachers another outlet of expression and integrate academics with the arts. Students studied Kathak, a classical Indian dance form, with Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artist Rachna Agrawal, learned about dance symmetry, baseball and history with Venessa Logan of the Boston Ballet (a former COA Teaching Artist), wrote songs with Connecticut Troubadours Thomasina Levy and Chuck Costa, built an Indian Long House with Mark Patnode, and performed Shakespearian poetry with Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artist Leslie Johnson. These arts experiences give our students the opportunity to learn more about themselves and the world while building their self-esteem.

It is the vision of Alcott Elementary School to, while striving to meet District and State educational standards, encourage students to be well-rounded individuals of good character and citizenship. Our being a Higher Order Thinking School has been integral to achieving this vision and to being chosen as Connecticut's Outstanding Elementary School for 2013–2014.

A Father and Futurist *continued*

The opportunity is bringing self-awareness to young minds on the learning process itself. The enabling force is an increase in new types of personal data captured from learning experiences. New adaptive learning platforms (e.g. Knewton) allow us to understand in real-time how learners work through problems, develop answers, ask questions and collaborate, and point out to where they get stuck.

For aesthetic learning there are emerging ways to sense feelings and emotional reactions, to capture physical movements and other less tangible learning processes. These new tools show us how, but the debate will be centered on the why! Communities of parents, teachers and learners will soon need

to update their assumptions on the role of data in supporting a learner culture.

Fears over this new type of personal data run far and wide across the educational community. Many believe an expanded focus on data will lead to more high stakes testing. There is also debate over what should be measured and how it might impact the development of the child.

To balance these concerns, we look to edupreneurs and visionaries with very different dreams. They see a generation empowered by more transparency and stronger real-time feedback loops. They see an opportunity for giving learners control over their outcomes data as a way of destroying the political debate over high stakes summative testing. Why would we need to test at the end of the year when we can see how the learner is progressing right now? Why would we base a year of experience around a single letter grade versus giving learners new ways of storytelling around how they have grown? The vision is that this generation will be ready to learn how they learn and surprise us with creative applications of this knowledge.

There are many forces of change driving the future of learning – but we can see the role of data-driven experiences growing in the years ahead. No single article or discussion will resolve fears and doubts about this new lever for empowering the learner. The best way forward is to commit to testing new assumptions aligned with emerging capabilities and social norms.

As a Futurist I recognize that any dream about the future of education cannot be based on a constraint-free utopia. There will be battles, stumbles and efforts gone awry. Yet I see social norms shifting in this younger generation in a way that could embrace new ways of thinking. As a Father, my dream is that my children can then learn how they learn and find teachers and mentors to help drive their curiosity and learning outcomes.

Explore more: Knewton Adaptive Learning Platform; Experience API and Learning Records Store

Dynamic Program Opens Up the HOT Process

—Tiffany Caouette, Principal, Pleasant Valley Elementary School



Mira Stanley, Chuck Costa and the students of Pleasant Valley Elementary School write lyrics.

Parents are a vital piece of any school. Their support is extremely important to the success of a school. Parents often see the products from their children's experiences – performance assessments, quizzes, book reports, and other projects – but they rarely get to see the process that goes into getting to that final product. So what happens when a school has a teacher-artist collaborative and they want parents involved? You get a dynamic program that opens up the HOT process in a transparent way.

During October and November, Pleasant Valley Elementary School in South Windsor hosted a Teacher Artist Collaboration (TAC) between Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artist Chuck Costa and Mira Stanley and three classrooms – a second grade, a third grade, and a fourth grade. Students and the artists planned to write three songs in each classroom. The songs were to be tied to social studies concepts and the topic of community, beginning with a song about the classroom community, growing to a song about the school community, and

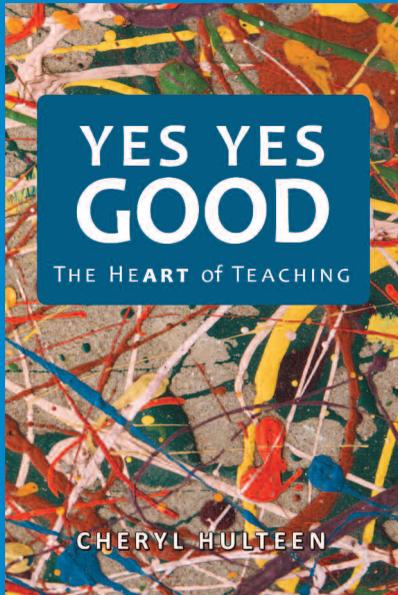
moving onto a song about the local South Windsor and Hartford communities. As the teachers and artists began their collaboration on the planning day, they knew one of the goals they had was to involve parents in the process. Although the school is a HOT school and parents and community members are very familiar with the culminating projects from TACs, the staff wanted to expose parents to the process the students would experience, including the brainstorming sessions that lead to the lyric writing.

Parents were invited to participate in the 8 sessions in each classroom and the three classrooms had a total of 12 parents participate, most more than once. Jody Bemis, mother of a second grade student, thought the process was extremely valuable for her. “The artists facilitated the session but it was really the kids that owned the content and outcome. And for the kids to have such a tangible outcome that they can be proud of was amazing to see.”

continued on page 9

HOT RESOURCES

YES YES GOOD
THE HEART OF TEACHING



CHERYL HULTEEN

YES YES GOOD—THE HEART OF TEACHING explores the poignantly compelling and emotional portraits of students and teachers who learn to: Say YES to their creativity and ideas. Say YES to the creativity and ideas of the people they work with. And make each other look GOOD.

Available through
Amazon and Barnes & Noble

Featured HOT Resource

—Bonnie Koba, Director, HOT Schools

Our featured read for this HOT Newsletter issue is *YES YES GOOD: THE HEART OF TEACHING* by Cheryl Hulteen, a long-time friend to HOT Schools. An actor and educator herself, Cheryl has been a mover and a shaker in the education world for many years – marrying the intrigue and complexity of each profession to enlighten and spark the other. Many HOT educators have experienced the joy of working with Cheryl, a masterful teacher who expertly transforms the tenor of a classroom to one of community by empowering learners - drawing them in through communication and calculated spontaneity to the world of *YES YES GOOD*. It struck me, in reviewing submissions for this issue that Cheryl is indeed the edupreneur that Garry Golden writes about in his article “A Father and Futurist Looks at Our Fears and Dreams.” Cheryl beats a path encouraging teachers on the brink of testing new pathways into the minds and hearts of their students but who have hesitated doing so – for whatever reasons – to dare to do so. If we don’t engage them we cannot teach them. *YES YES GOOD: THE HEART OF TEACHING* will have you laughing and crying just a few pages in. Enjoy!

HOT is the Way

—Meghan Wildstein, Parent, Jack Jackter Intermediate School

What is a Teacher Artist Collaboration (TAC)? Do we as parents fully understand this term and are we aware of the integration of the arts and academic subjects? As parents of a nine-year-old child, my husband and I did not, nor did we know that arts integration would allow our daughter to make extremely personal connections with the academic curriculum. My husband and I have had the pleasure of sharing in such connections over the past two years with our oldest daughter and with Jack Jackter Intermediate School. Due to her

involvement with several artists, and especially Connecticut Office of the Arts Teaching Artists Leslie Johnson and Betsy Davidson, she has honed her critical thinking skills, her ability to analyze herself in a self-portrait which then allowed her to ask open ended questions of her classmates – driving forward conversation so that the students would get to know one another better. During this period we started to notice that she was making personal connections with certain subject matter, thus self-directing her learning. This is thrilling for parents, as we know this can lead to life-long learning – something we wish for all of our children.

As a parent it is gratifying to have a child, a student, return home excited, eager and wanting to express all the details of that day’s TAC. Writing plays, painting and otherwise exercising creativity helps a child, a student, to develop leadership, passion, dedication and self-confidence. HOT is the way all schools should be!

The President's Committee on Arts and Humanities' "Turnaround Arts Initiative" and HOT Schools

—Tania Kelley, Principal, Roosevelt Elementary

NOTE from HOT Schools Director: The Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Network is a community of practice that engages educators in using the HOT Approach, nationally recognized as an innovative way to develop, deepen and expand effective practice in arts education, arts integration, school culture change, and leadership development. Certain schools are selected to participate in the HOT Schools Program but the HOT Approach is shared well beyond designated HOT Schools. Roosevelt School in Bridgeport is one of 8 schools nationwide, distinguished by the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities as a "Turnaround Arts" school. [turnaroundarts.pcah.gov] This initiative is a public private partnership designed to help narrow the achievement gap and increase student engagement through the arts. Roosevelt Elementary, while not a fully participating HOT School, has been exploring the HOT Approach as part of the Turnaround Arts Initiative. Here is a glimpse into their experience.



Roosevelt staff during a HOT PD

During the weeklong 2013 HOT Schools Summer Institute (SI), the Roosevelt Elementary School team worked from sun up to well beyond sundown learning new ways to engage and empower our Roosevelt students to support their academic and social progress. We participated in sequential learning tracks and workshops that emphasize the three core principles of HOT Schools – strong arts, arts integration, and democratic practice.

Conference highlights included a wide variety of performances and speakers. A notable one from Harvard University shared a website featuring several videos entitled *Illuminating the Common Core*. The videos demonstrate, through student exemplars, how arts integrated lessons can help students meet Common Core State Standards. Additionally, we learned strategies such as instant assemblies, line up, timeline song, and fashion show which we will demonstrate for parents during our weekly community gatherings. We had the chance to make art and share ideas with other educators.

The team returned from the conference with a new attitude, inspired to demonstrate that learning should be fun and creative. We formed an interdisciplinary planning team to assist classroom teachers and support staff with integrating the arts into daily lessons. We are developing thematic units for each marking period that are aligned with state standards and our district core curricula, and we are using an idea from the HOT SI to develop a universal core vocabulary to be utilized and reinforced school wide. The targeted core vocabulary words assist students with understanding the multiple applications of a given word across disciplines. For example, we have created visual charts for words such as resting position, compose, and tone. Students are beginning to think of these vocabulary words as concepts, and they are making connections between these concepts in music and language arts, music and math, etc.

continued on page 9

Dynamic Program Opens Up HOT *continued*

Mrs. Bemis was not alone in her thoughts. The feedback from parents was overwhelmingly positive. Parents had been asked to document the TAC process – taking photographs, videos, and notes were a few of their tasks. They also scripted the questions used with students by the artists. Teachers felt that this allowed the classroom teachers to stand back and watch the process, freeing up their ability to plan what they would do for extensions when Chuck and Mira's sessions ended. The long-range goal was to continue the song-writing process throughout different curricular areas, and the teachers didn't feel they could really step back to plan that if they hadn't had help from parents.



Chuck Costa and Pleasant Valley Elementary School students

For parents, though, their involvement was so much more than scripting and note-taking. Johanna Perkin, mother of a student in the TAC, found that her involvement really helped her understand the process the artists go through with the students. "What struck me the most about the HOT experience was the way the children openly displayed their creative sides without any fear of ridicule. Additionally, I enjoyed watching the children work in a situation where there is no right or wrong answer – where all ideas are given equal weight and opportunity."

As the sessions ticked to a close, it was amazing for the parents to see the pace at which the process moved. "That moment when all their ideas and facts about their classroom community came together (and) the surprise and excitement in their voices and faces when they realized that their own words and their own ideas became a song right then and there" was the most important moment for Josie Nelson, parent of a fourth grade student.

For the staff at Pleasant Valley and other HOT schools, it has always been a challenge to show parents the process that is used to create wonderful student performances, artwork, and other masterpieces. The recent involvement in the TAC at Pleasant Valley has set the stage for how to involve parents in the future and open up the HOT process for all to see. Kristy Perry, mother of a third grade student, sums up the experience. "The collaborative effort of the artists in residence and the students has been highly fulfilling to observe. The students are actively engaged from the brainstorming process to performing their final works. This is a truly enriching program, and I know I made the right choice of settling (here)."

The President's Committee *continued*

Attending the HOT Summer Institute was both exhausting and exhilarating! We look forward to continue working with our HOT colleagues from around the state, and implementing the HOT Approach at Roosevelt School.



Department of Economic and
Community Development

Office of the Arts