*Powering Student Progress with STEAM!*

At Waterville Primary School we are very excited to expand our STEAM initiative into our art classroom this school year.  We seek to cultivate our students’ intrinsic motivation and natural curiosities as they use art to problem solve and explore areas of personal relevance.  The art programming becomes self-directed, personalized, differentiated, and can facilitate new meaning. Our students will now travel to the “Art Studio” as Jean Imes (resident facilitator of creativity) implements a new approach to teaching art referred to as “TAB” or Teaching for Artistic Behaviors.  The Art Studio has then suddenly evolved into a learner directed classroom as our students develop creative thinking, play, and engage in experimentation and innovation through art.

Our young artists will focus on developing their studio habits of mind that include (1) Envisioning; (2) Developing the Craft, (3) Engaging and Persisting; (4) Expression; (5) Observation; (6) Stretching and Exploring; (7) Reflection; and (8) Understanding the Art World.  Ms. Imes will begin each class with a five to eight minute demonstration (that will embody multiple learning standards) or introduction to a medium or materials, providing the least amount of influence over the students’ thinking as possible.  Ms. Imes no longer wants her students to mass produce works of art that are perhaps simply a reflection of her own identity as an artist.  We will eliminate the practice of students comparing his/her project against a class example or the other three students at the table also creating the same piece.  Students will then be given the majority of the class time to travel to different centers and work on individual pieces that meet the varied learning objectives.  Some of the more permanent classroom centers will include (1) Drawing; (2) Painting; (3) Collage; (4) Fibers; and (5)/Sculpture/3D/Architecture.  A Clay center, Printmaking center, and a center filled with sewing machines are examples that will be set up periodically to provide students access and opportunity to work with these varied resources.

Ms. Imes will be able to individually instruct using a responsive teaching style and provide support or stretch to students at they authentically explore the different art centers.  Students will manage individual binders to document the time spent at the various centers, learning objectives focused upon, and projects completed (may have multiple pieces going at once).  Ms. Imes will monitor the progress to facilitate student growth within their choices.  Students will self-assess and reflect upon their work using rubrics and criteria to evaluate the difference between practice pieces and “WOW”  (Wonderful Original Work of Art) pieces.  Students will self-select, reflect, and write an artist’s statement about the work that they will showcase in the culminating district wide art show.  This year’s show will be unlike all previous shows as each student displays unique pieces that have solved artistic problems, generated new ideas, and satisfied interests unique to each artist.

Waterville Primary will rise to the challenge of cultivating creativity.  We will strive to repair the disconnect between creativity and art education.  As we teach for artistic behaviors, we are preparing our students to crave the ambiguous and challenges across all content areas and life in general, as we all think and create like artists.