



IPEI Helps Build Archery Project

Friday, April 12, 2013 12:00 AM | Written by Heather Zimar | 



Archery has been a part of Lehman Alternative Community School (LACS) English Teacher Jason Zorn's life since he was a child. This year, with the help of an Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) Red and Gold Grant, he was able to share his knowledge and passion for the practice with his students.

Zorn is one of 26 recipients who received an IPEI Red and Gold Grant in the third round of awards given during the 2012-13 school year. Red and Gold Grants are one-time projects that strengthen and enrich Ithaca schools. May 6 is the next deadline for Red and Gold Grant application submissions, and the awards of up to \$500 are announced

within two weeks.

"I've done archery my whole life," Zorn said. "I've always found it to be one of the most fun and relaxing activities."

When it came to choosing a topic for LACS's teacher-led "projects" this year, Zorn decided to offer archery. The "projects," which are part of the school's alternative learning curriculum, allow students to pursue extra studies two half-days per week outside of their regular classes. Zorn found some existing equipment at the school, including old arrows and bows and a few beat-up targets, but in combination with students' own gear, it was enough to get started.

The new project was the most popular this year based on sign-ups and student interest, Zorn said, but because of inadequate equipment, many students had to be turned away. The target covers were ripped, and there were only a couple bows that were light enough for younger students to be able to hold comfortably.

"The kids got the basics down with the old equipment we had, but they could only get to a certain point, and then they were fighting the equipment," Zorn said. "So this grant has just been phenomenal."

The IPEI grant enabled Zorn to purchase additional appropriately-sized bows and new arrows, as well as gloves and arm guards to protect students' fingers and forearms. He was also able to purchase three new target covers. The new gear will allow Zorn to expand the project to reach 20 students per biweekly class, for 30 weeks of the school year, or 120 students annually.

"The new equipment is amazing," said seventh-grader Connor Craib. "I'm happy my teacher got [the IPEI grant]. Jason is a great teacher, and it really shows that he cares about us."

During the mixed-level and mixed-aged classes, Craib and his classmates learned physical skills as well as health benefits such as muscular/skeletal and hand-eye coordination. In addition, for some students who don't consider themselves athletes, the project was an alternative opportunity to build physical strength and earn physical education credit. "For many students, this has been the only success they have had in a physically demanding setting," Zorn said.

"It was helpful to learn different techniques for shooting and knocking," Craib said. "I learned about techniques and physics. I do archery a lot at home, but this class is nice because I got to try different styles of bows. It's also nice to do it with a lot of my friends."

Sixth-grader Asa Smith said, "At first, all the bows I'd shoot I'd pull back and they wouldn't move. Now I've learned the technique. I know more about pulling it back and shooting it safely." Similarly, sixth-grader Luke Monaghan said: "I've gotten a lot more accurate. I've learned how to fire safely. It's fun to shoot a bow. When the arrow hits the center, it feels really good."

Amanda Coate, a twelfth-grader, said the class taught her about correct form for archery and how to take care of the equipment, but also about confidence and willpower. "I learned to keep working at something even if I'm not immediately perfect at it," she said. "I am a perfectionist, and this has helped me to learn that it's OK to miss the target."

Twelfth-grader Rose Pinnisi said she saw archery as a way to use the skills learned in fencing outside of school. "I like the themes of heroism and chivalry," she said. "Also, there are some aspects that are just cool; I mean, you get to shoot arrows. Where else do you get to do that?"

She added: "I've learned physical things, and also I'm learning a lot about determination, about keeping going even if I get tired. I am working with other people and sharing equipment. I've learned patience from the start."

Zorn said the biggest benefit students have gained is self-confidence. "The whole point is that they get a really amazing skill and they learn they can achieve something that they didn't think they could do before," he said. "When you find something that you can get better at, that bleeds into other parts of your life, and this will always be there for them."

IPEI has awarded nearly \$70,000 in grants this school year, including \$29,509 in 67 Red and Gold Grants; \$37,138 in 31 Teacher Grants; a \$1,900 Community Collaboration Grant; and a \$925 Phyllis B. Brodhead Library Media Technology Grant.

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