

Grants Connect Math and Art in Projects at Enfield

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With the help of an Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) Teacher Grant, Enfield Elementary School Art Teacher Christine Finnigan and community partner artist Jay Stooks of the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) created with their students a new "Artful Math Mural" for the school.

Finnigan is one of 31 teachers who received an IPEI Teacher Grant this academic year. Teacher Grants are awards of up to \$1,500 for teachers to implement an innovative educational program with a community partner in Ithaca schools.

"Christine had explained to me that throughout the year students had been working on other math-related art and also focusing on gradients of color," Stooks said. "Based on our conversations, I came up with a mural design featuring both math and color gradients. The mural is made up of triangles, squares, and rectangles that follow patterns of colors. The students can count the number of shapes that are in the piece, and also measure them by figuring out right and left angles, lines, and other math-related problems."

Enfield's fourth- and fifth-graders collaborated with students in the GIAC and Enfield afterschool programs. Students took part in each stage of the project from priming and measuring to taping and painting. "The students got to see the whole artistic process," Finnigan said. "They got to see the mural evolve from when it was just a sketch on the paper. They saw every step."



"We all had a part in painting the mural," said fifth-grader Morgan Mordock-Bowers. "It was cool since we fifth-graders are going to leave Enfield next year. The school will still have a part of us."

Fifth-grader Savannah Stevens said: "For years, the wall had been plain. The artist came in and did the design, and he told us about the art. Everybody got a chance to paint. Since it's in the younger kids' hallway, and where we walk to get lunch, everyone can see it every day."

"The students can look at it and see where they took part," Finnigan said. "They saw how it took everybody to make it happen. That's the best part of these group projects."

Stooks said: "I enjoy making public art and really appreciate every opportunity I get to make art with so many different people of all ages. For me, it is a humbling feeling that I can teach something that I love and get to share my talent and energy with the community. I am thankful for the support from the IPEI."

Finnigan has continued to integrate math and art at Enfield this spring through an IPEI Red and Gold Grant project. Red and Gold Grants are awards for 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.

Finnigan's Red and Gold Grant project engages third- through fifth-grade art classes in creating a new number timeline using painted tiles. The timeline will be hung in the hallway where Pre-K and Kindergarteners have close access. "We're replacing the old timeline with a beautiful new one," she said. "The tiles will be magnetized so they will be mobile and interactive." "It's to attract the little kids, and to help them with math, Stevens said. "Kindergarteners and Pre-Kers are just learning to count so it helps them learn numbers."

The IPEI grant money went toward primer to prepare the square tiles, as wells as acrylic paint and transfer paper, Finnigan said. Students were each assigned a number and came up with a unique design to paint on the tile. Fifth-grader Nicco Albertsman worked on the number 66 tile and decided to create a candy-colored theme. "I got the idea for the tile from the mural," he said. "I really like colorful art. I thought Pre-K kids like candy, so I thought I'd do a candy-like theme."

Fifth-grader Mason Wacht said: "I'm doing plaid using three different colors, sometimes four." Wacht said his favorite part was "putting the design on the numbers."

Payton Waight, a fifth-grader, added: "The students can use math, and they can multiply with it. The most fun part was painting the number at the end."

The new timeline "is for everybody," Finnigan said.

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