



PROVIDED PHOTO

Ithaca High School freshman Thea Clarkberg adds height to her newspaper sculpture during an art class project.

# IHS STUDENTS TRY TO DEFY GRAVITY

## Ithaca Public Education Initiative funds sculpture project

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Students in Ithaca High School art teacher Jackie Richardson's sculpture class were recently tasked with solving a problem — gravity — with art.

Given limited supplies of only tape, newspaper and wire, they were encouraged to create a standing 4-foot structure.

"The challenge is to take this material with no structural integrity on its own and make it stand up," said visiting local sculptor Ann Reichlin.

The spring project was part of an Ithaca Public Education Initiative Red and Gold Grant awarded to Richardson and Reichlin. Red and Gold Grants are one-time awards of up to \$500 for projects that enrich learning in the Ithaca City School District.

"The purpose of this project is to introduce the idea that making art often

responds to a problem that needs to be solved," Richardson and Reichlin stated in their grant application, which also included the second purpose of introducing the idea of limitation. "Creative solutions are often triggered by narrowing the options that one has to work with."

While students wrapped, rolled and curled newspaper into various shapes and sizes, Reichlin encouraged them to experiment.

"No one is going to judge you," she said. "It's something that can be done in a spontaneous way. It's the element of surprise that makes it interesting to do this."

One student's structure resembled a pinwheel, while others looked like versions of cubes, pyramids and towers.

In the final phase of the program, students developed their structures using plaster gauze, editing and transforming them in the process.

Reichlin noted that this underscores the third objective of the project, that students learn that often "artists begin an artwork with a simple premise and then tease out and develop the potential of that idea as they go along."

"It was wonderful to see my students respond to the visual challenge that was presented to them," Richardson said. "Inspired by Ann's work, students created individual sculptures where only size and material parameters were given. Work evolved into architectural and organic forms."

While the grant program focused on the idea of structure, creative process, abstraction and scale, it also included a presentation by Reichlin about her career as an artist.

*Heather Zimar is a member of the Ithaca Public Education Initiative public relations committee and an Ithaca City School District parent.*