



Students and artist team up to create murals at the East Elementary School

By Lisa Crist / Guest writer

Posted Jun 21, 2015 at 9:47 AM

Excitement is in the air at East Elementary with the installation of a mosaic mural both designed and created by students.

The mural, comprised of eight panels that cover two brick pillars at the front entrance to the school, is the culmination of a yearlong artist-in-residence program that gave art teacher Jenn Grossman a unique opportunity to integrate work with local artist Joshua Winer into the curriculum.

Based in Boston, Winer has spent 20 years creating more than 100 murals, mosaics and works of public art in cities across the United States.

This year, he is working with the East Elementary School community to design and create a permanent mosaic mural for the school. Students, parents, teachers, and even school alumni took part in a collaborative process to determine a theme for the project, contribute ideas for the design, and then create each panel.

Students worked together to create the mosaic panels in small groups during art classes. Groups had to decide which color combinations to use and how to fit the tiles into the design outline. They even learned how to safely cut tiles to obtain the shapes they needed.

There are eight panels, each with a different detailed design, as well as borders and smaller, separate plaques.

East Principal Liz Murphy said, "The mosaic mural project has brought our entire community together towards a common goal. Each part of the process has been a genuine collaboration of our East family. Parents, students, staff members, and even alumni of East, have all worked together to establish the theme, design the mosaic, and create a highly visible work of art that will represent our wonderful elementary school."

The mural design is based on the school's "H.E.A.R.T" theme, which stands for helpfulness, effort, acceptance, respect, and teamwork.

"The students are creating a collaborative piece of artwork with a working artist. It is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for them to connect personally with a part of the curriculum which is extremely important, but rarely accessed," said Grossman. "The Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework includes a standard about the roles of artists in communities and this mosaic mural project lets us put that learning into action."

Although many students said that cutting the tiles is their favorite part of the project, others enjoyed working together.

A fourth grader said that what she enjoys most is to work with friends to make the panels and her classmates agreed. Many students can point out particular elements in the design that came from a Kindergartener or a fifth grader.

Winer explained to the group at the end of one class session that working as a team enables them to create a much bigger and more detailed project than if everyone worked alone.

The artist-in-resident project is funded by the East Elementary PTO and through grants from the Sharon Education Foundation, Sharon F.A.M.E, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. About East Elementary East Elementary School is a public K-5 school in Sharon, MA that enrolls approximately 452 students. East was named a 2014 National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education.

More information can be found at http://ee.sharon.k12.ma.us/pages/SPS_EastES. About the Artist Joshua Winer is an experienced artist and teacher who specializes in working with schools and communities to create works of mosaic art. More information can be found at www.schoolmosaics.net.