

As we studied the art found across our eARTH, we realized what a beautiful, unique and vast world this is. As students traveled this great planet of ours virtually and visually, they witnessed the artwork that documents our history and helps us better understand who we are.

This multicultural approach to teaching the visual arts works so well because our vast society gets to share in the learning and diversity found in classrooms across our nation. Students of all nationalities find a connection in this series of lessons and it is highly successful for everyone. Truly, no child gets left behind in this year-long curriculum!

Students were excited to travel to North America, South America, Africa, Antarctica, Europe, Asia and Australia, and they were most excited to invite our community into the school for the end of the year "Student Art Exhibit ... Passports to Fun!" where they could teach their friends and families about the world in which we live.

Students decided that the best way to showcase the art they had created throughout the school year was in actual installations. Each continent had a large sign hanging from the ceiling and the art created by kindergartners through fifth-graders was hung on the walls in that specific continent. Students had writing samples to go with the art to show that they not only learned about a new art style from that given continent, but they also researched it and learned about its rich culture!

To assess my students, I gave them each an Art Passport assessment sheet (fifth-grade sample is available at www.artsandactivities.com) and as they went through the show, they had an opportunity to reflect on the art they created during that specific continent. Their passport had space for them to write about what they learned, what they liked or didn't like about the art they created, and what further activity they would like to do in regards to the country or continent studied.

My art-club students helped hang all of the art (4,000-plus pieces in all!) and they made the brochures showcasing where each classroom teacher's art was located, as well as the giant "Map of the World" entrance sign. It was a most delightful night and it worked well in that it was advertised as one of our PTA nights. Our music teacher joined in the fun and had the school chorus sing multicultural songs that made the night a cross-cultural event!

Here are some "how-tos" that will make this event a success at your school as well!

HOW TO ...

- *get the art to stick?*

I use box tape and after the individual art or panels of art are hung, I reinforce with a glue gun on the tape. The art stays for at least a month at a time!

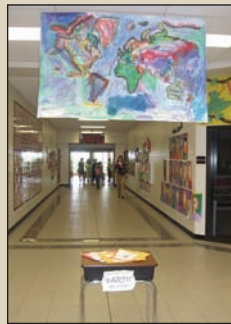
- *get all of the art up before the show?*

As mentioned in the introduction to this series, I hang the art as soon as it's completed, so throughout the school year students actually see the art installed and get more excited about the actual end-of-the-year event!

- *get the community involved?*

I invite our local legislators to come into the art room and roll up their sleeves to make art with our kids. I invite teachers, parents and community members to come and make art with our kids. I also invite the administration into my art room constantly.

It is so important they know that art is being taught for



Art-club students made the giant "Map of the World" entrance sign.



Each continent had a large sign hanging from the ceiling, with related student art hung on the walls in that specific continent area.



Go to artsandactivities.com and click on this button to access and download the "Art Passport" mentioned in this article.

art's sake, as well as a means to teach interdisciplinary lessons. This curriculum is a perfect means to incorporating all of the subject areas, in this case specifically, social studies!

- *stay focused and not get stressed?*

Be a time manager! Organize your lessons, your curriculum, your overarching theme, your end-of-the-year exhibit and your life ahead of time. Hopefully this series of lessons will make it that much easier for you!

Enjoy ... and get your passports ready to make this curriculum a reality at your school. It has been my pleasure to bring this theme-based, yearlong curriculum to you, and it is my hope that it ensures visual art learning at its highest level! ■

Currently an art teacher at North Gwinnet High School, Debi West wrote her "eARTH: it's got ART" curriculum while at Level Creek Elementary (both in Suwanee, Ga.). She's also a past-president of the GAEA and owns the Crystal Collage Children's Art Studio.

The EXHIBIT!

by Debi West