

The Transformative Power of School Art Projects To Foster Community and Identity

Art projects within the school environment play a pivotal role in shaping not just the aesthetics of the campus but also the sense of community among students, teachers, and staff. When executed collaboratively, these projects forge bonds of mutual respect and camaraderie, contributing to a vibrant school culture. As an art teacher, I have witnessed the profound impact of such initiatives, mainly when students, student teachers and art teachers come together to create lasting pieces of art that become a testament to the shared experiences within the school.

One such transformative project was a large-scale mosaic in our school's foyer. The intention was not merely to create a visually striking piece but to delve into the medium's potential by experimenting with broken tiles, different adhesives, and exploring the nuances of grout colouring. Importantly, this project became a platform for acknowledging and respecting the Indigenous heritage of many students in our school. The mosaic depicted "Turtle Island," symbolizing Canada, with the majestic Rocky Mountains in the background and an eagle overseeing, laden with symbolic meaning in Indigenous cultures. The success of this project spurred a series of smaller mosaic initiatives, with students working in assigned groups.





Since last year, we have been embarking on a more extensive venture, creating seven large-scale murals with the assistance and collaboration of students, myself, and student teachers to represent various geographical regions of Canada. These murals intricately capture the essence of different regions, incorporating animals native to each location. The intention is not just to create visually appealing art but to immerse students in a profound exploration of Canada's geographical and cultural diversity. Our second floor has since become a colourful canvas showcasing our country's diverse landscapes and wildlife. This collaborative effort fosters a sense of pride in students while instilling respect for Indigenous peoples' traditions and wisdom.





Our next endeavour will employ stencil techniques to paint representations of native Canadian animals in landscape environments. These paintings will adorn the boards hanging above students' lockers, transforming the second floor into a vibrant "Little Canada" that encapsulates the richness of our nation. This project will add aesthetic value to our school. It will also be a constant reminder to students, old and new, of their pride in being Canadian.

In conclusion, collaborative school art projects are more than just creative endeavours; they are instruments of community building and identity formation. Similar to sports team activities, these projects provide students with a platform to express their sense of belonging, bridge gaps, and foster a shared appreciation for Canada's diverse tapestry. As students, teachers, and alums proudly walk through the hallways adorned with these creations, they carry a tangible connection to the community they helped build and the unique identity of the school they call home.

Izabella Orzelski, art representative