

Art, Japanese style

Program teaches beauty of cultural differences

By Casey Hans
staff writer

As the fifth graders gobbled up the puffed rice, rice crackers, and some traditional Japanese sweets, Yuko Nagao appeared pleasantly surprised.

"I'm surprised that they're all trying the snacks," she said. "When they come to my house, they usually say, 'No thanks, Mrs. Nagao.'"

She joined Mike Kuwano and Kimiko Koshiki, all mothers of Wooddale Elementary students, in presenting a special art class for fifth graders last week.

Students learned about Japanese calligraphy, called "shodo" and indigo ink painting, called "sukoboku." They also sampled some traditional Japanese treats and learned how to wrap a kimono, traditional Japanese dress for the past 1,200 years.

Students at Flanders and Longacre also experienced similar programs in May as part of the district's new art curriculum, which



cultural collage

stresses art appreciation.

"We've never done anything like this — it's great for us, too," said teacher Elaine Palmer. "It's important for them to learn about other cultures."

USING INDIA Ink, students learned the Chinese symbol for "friend," and how to write their names in Japanese with the help of the adult assistants, who were all from Japan. Both Chinese symbols and the Japanese alphabet are used in Japanese calligraphy.

"The Japanese culture program ... presented an opportunity for children to associate art forms with the culture from which they originate," said Jean Warner, art consultant

for Flanders, Longacre and Wooddale.

"This is one aspect of the curriculum — to help children develop skills in evaluating and appreciating art."

"It's important we learn about cultural expression."

The Flanders May 24 program was for both fourth and fifth graders and included a presentation by Fusako Ohnishi, Yoshiko Gingerich and Ghilmi Oka.

Longacre's fourth grade program on May 27 was coordinated by Kayoko Asano, Yoshimi Kashiwara, Tomoko Lakeuchi, Michiko Usaba, Keiko Tanaka, Yoko Hayasaka and Hitomi Nishiyama.



Parent Yuko Nagao helps Wooddale student Loren Morrison write his name in Japanese.

Appreciation key in art program revision

□ For a related point of view, see Page 14A.

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Elementary-level art consultants in Farmington schools want to help all students develop an appreciation for art — whether they choose it as a career, collect it, or simply enjoy it.

Art programs for the young students will continue to be activity-centered, but, under a new proposal, would also teach them about world-famous artists and their lives, how to appreciate color and style, and a variety of cultural art experiences.

"It certainly takes an artist more than 15 seconds to create a work of art," said elementary art consultant Harvey Goldstein. "Children can be taught ... how to actively look at a work of art."

"Visual literacy is what it's all about."



The school board is expected to adopt proposed revisions for the elementary art program later in June.

Goldstein chaired a committee of seven that worked for the past two years developing a more comprehensive program for students in grades kindergarten through five. They presented their study results to the school board in May, calling for ex-

panded programs and more time for art.

THE DEPARTMENT goal is to eventually have the program cover grades kindergarten through 12. The proposed elementary-level changes are the "cornerstone" for programs at other levels, Goldstein said.

"What was missing was the intellectual," he explained. If children learned art before, it was "caught," he said, "instead of taught."

The proposal suggests the district eventually increase the amount of time devoted to art education. According to Goldstein, 180 minutes per week is recommended for each child nationally; in Farmington, students in grades 1-5 receive only 30-40 minutes per week during one session.

"We're quite a ways from it," he added.

IN A related area, Trustee James Abernethy asked that a goal be es-

tablished to integrate art into the curriculum at all schools.

This will take place in the fall at the new "common campus" Highmeadow Elementary, Goldstein said, where two enrichment art classes and an open art center will be available to students. He said there would also be interdisciplinary teaching between music and art.

Student "satisfaction" with their work and their ability to appreciate art is stressed in the proposed, revised art program. Students would learn not only skills, but safe use of art tools, art vocabulary, the elements of design, career opportunities for art and leisure activities relating to art. It would also encourage students to relate art to their daily lives.

In addition, the art curriculum committee report also gives a job description for elementary art consultants, and recommends a way that classroom teachers can support and supplement the art program.

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