Art Matters

Art is not often the primary focus in school, yet art can open up avenues for students to foster problem solving skills, creativity, imagination, and literacy skills.

LKSD invited Beth Olshansky from University of New Hampshire to do a workshop on “Integrating Art Within the Writing Process” at the Summer 2001 Bilingual Institute. In the beginning of the workshop, many of the bilingual educators were nervous about writing and doing art, but after a week of training, they were all feeling confident as artists and writers. Each of the participants illustrated and wrote two books. Beth was invited back again in September to train specialists from the Department of Academic Programs and teachers from different villages in this process. Integrating art with writing has opened up a brand new path for teachers in helping students with the writing process. The process not only includes art as a catalyst for writing, but also incorporates relevant children’s literature as well.

Workshop art!

ME School pages from book!

I am yellow and blue.
I am yellow and orange.
I am yellow and blue.
It's dark blue, green, and yellow.

I am reflecting.
I am going down.
I am out. I am rising.
It's shining into the water.

I am watching.
I am pooling.
I like to sleep.
It's reflecting.

I like play hide-and-go-seek.
I am sunset.
I like to hide in the clouds.
It's night.

I am afternoon.
By Jae Hwan Lee
By David Irwin
By Jesse Krleka
By Elliott Hoffman
Fostering literacy through art has been gradually implemented throughout the district. Julie McWilliams has been working with Jill Hoffman’s students at M.E. School. After three weeks of exploring with the colorful paints, the students completed their first classroom book. They are now working on individual stories with their surplus paintings. The students eagerly joined Julie for the daily shared reading which introduced rich language, and then immersed themselves in the daily painting activities. When it came time to write, the students reflected on the art before them and the words flowed. Even the most reluctant writers could find words to describe their own art.

Pam Yancey has worked with upper elementary students at Kilbuck and Chefornak. She also has seen the incredible enthusiasm in students’ attitudes for painting and how writing seems to come relatively easy, even for the limited English speakers. We are definitely moving in the right direction by using art as a vehicle for writing!