

Art teachers offer deeper living

BY VINCENT HANCOCK
Special to the Record-Eagle

If you visit the home of Craig Fleuter's parents, you won't find their son's art on the living room walls. He was certainly been asked for a painting or two, but the requests have come with strings attached: couldn't they have browns and oranges in them?

Fleuter, K-8 Art instructor at Interlochen Pathfinder School, doesn't seem bothered by the question. He understands — and is grateful for — his parents' constant encouragement of his art. It's just that his work has led him past the point of decoration.

"I try to come up with something that has a soul," he said.

It's an effort lost on many, but Fleuter is one of many local art teachers hoping to introduce students to the potential of the arts. It's not always easy. Mass-produced faucets, wristwatches and perfume bottles have claimed to share the mantle of art in the last century. Now, one can purchase furniture color-coordinated with framed prints.

Journalist Walter Lippmann, writing in 1916, described the element missing from commercial art, no matter how pretty: the stimulation of emotion.

"These things," he wrote, "are often good carpets and good trimmings, but men pray on a rug, not to it; we have been given better clothes, but we are naked."

Art, Lippmann said, promises a path out of ordinary living, by which people "can live a thousand lives, lift the roofs off houses, open sealed caskets, and see the other side of the moon."

As the final weeks of summer vacation slip by, Traverse area instructors are preparing the path by restocking their supplies, rearranging their classrooms, and wrestling with their own creations. Craig Fleuter is struggling to devote more time to a paint-

ing form and color, painting has served a therapeutic purpose. As a young adult, painting helped him through the grief which followed a family tragedy.

His watercolor art has brought him personal rewards and public recognition. While his works depict northern Michigan scenes, they remain unique, personal expressions.

"They're off-kilter and a little goofy," Sprattmoran said. Bobbianne Grant is another teacher who anticipates a dynamic year exploring art with her students. The Upper Elementary director of TCAPS Montessori at Central Grade School, Grant consciously structures the learning environment, rearranging her classroom each year so that it reflects upcoming themes.

After a lesson in art history, Grant says her students gravitate towards certain artists and soon begin working with materials associated with those artists.

Through their investigations, she says, students learn the significance of the artists' achievements.

"Everyone is really excited to find out what the artist did and how he did it. They say, 'I want to do that!'"

Grant's students have explored the Pointillism technique made famous by Georges Seurat, worked with oils, and experimented with pot-making. The finished products don't always come out as well as the students imagined, but further appreciation results.

"Sometimes they can't believe how hard it is, but they see that it takes a lot of time," Grant said. "Nothing done proficiently is done in

a few minutes."

The process also teaches them a practical lesson: how to evaluate what changes they'd make next time.

"That's how it is in life, too," Grant said.

Dan Lisuk, head of TCAPS's Art Department, is also gearing up for the new year. After teaching art for 30 years, he still works in figure drawing and acrylic painting when he gets a chance. For Lisuk, teaching art is itself an artistic endeavor. Even as he challenges his students to find new ways of expressing ideas, he looks forward to the conversation and collaboration which they provide for him.

"Can we show this concept through better means?" he will ask his students, in an effort to help them choose personal images over visual cliches.

Some have applied their art into attractive automobile design. Others tell Lisuk that life, sharpened by artistic sensitivity, is simply better.

"It allows them to live in the world at a higher level," he said.

With their ability to provoke and stimulate the soul beyond the immediate senses, the various arts — whether plastic, visual, musical or literary — constitute a scary, insecure world at times.

Yet that world ultimately increases life, said Walter Lippmann, for the daring.

"They can compress time and space, and obliterate distance, be omnipotent and free and gorgeously sad," he wrote.

Vince Hancock is a local freelance writer.

Gadgets

FROM PAGE 3

Without his cell phone and the laptop computer his parents gave him as a gift, he says the Westover Kindness Project South America might never have happened.

"The computer, the phone, the dayplanner — you can't really communicate or coordinate without them," Micelli said.

Ackley, the New Lebanon principal, says it's a challenge to keep up with kids, who always seem to know about new tech toys before adults do. Just as she makes it a point to see teen-targeted movies, she finds out what's coming next on the gadgetry scene.

Students at her school can bring in gadgets but must store them away and turn them off, except on bus rides and other outside trips. If students are caught with a banned item, they get a warning. The second time, the gear is likely confiscated for the day, and the third time, a parent has to pick it up.

So far, Ackley hasn't had to deal with many cell phones because reception is poor in the school's valley location. But a new cell tower is coming. There is no easy answer to whether phones should be allowed in school, she says, since students and parents can

make a good case that, while certainly a distraction, the phones are needed for safety.

Taylor Justice, 13, of Tyler, Texas — whose favorite gadget is her MP3 music player — takes her cell phone to school each day. Her mother, Sheri, approves, even though the phone is supposed to be off during school hours.

"We've had lockdowns at school before and she text-messages me to let me know what's going on. She also calls to tell me when she needs to be picked up or where she's going," she says.

In the affluent Aspen School District in Colorado, many students come in each day with a phone, iPod or other music player, and a handheld video game, says superintendent Diana Sirko. But they generally respect a turn-off policy during school hours.

"The idea is that the cell phone comes to school for emergencies," Sirko explains, "but we're 100 percent wireless, so they can access the Internet anywhere in the building — and a lot of the phones have the Internet — so we're pretty strict about no games and no chat rooms during the day, not even during breaks. It's too hard to control what they'd be seeing."

And what's in Sirko's own bag? A laptop, iPod, cell phone and electronic calendar, she says with a laugh.

TRAVEL PLANS?


Please donate your newspapers to Traverse City Area Schools.

The Record-Eagle gives schools a discounted education rate, so for every newspaper you donate, four newspapers are donated to our schools. Call our Customer Service department and tell us you're interested in the NIE Vacation Donation Program.

(231) 946-2187 or 1-800-968-8273

NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION

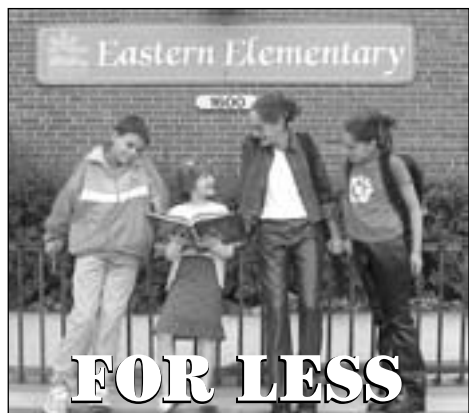
St. Mary-Hannah Elementary School
Now Accepting Applications for 2005-2006
Kindergarten - 6th Grade
Affordable, Quality Education



An Excellent Choice for a Christian Education
that prepares students for life!
Latchkey, Preschool & Day Care Programs
2912 West M-113, Kingsley, MI 49649 (231) 263-5288

bs.8-10.812098

LOOK BACK TO SCHOOL COOL



FOR LESS

Top Drawer
Desale Closures
929-3121
East 8th St., Next to Ben Franklin
Hours Mon. - Sat. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

bs.8-10.812152

**TBAISD—
Your Regional
Educational
Resource**

Traverse Bay Area
Intermediate School District
(TBAISD) serves over
28,000 students and more than
2,200 educators in the
five-county area.

TBAISD provides special zed services for
**Special Education,
Career/Technical Programs,
Media & Technology,
Instructional Services,
Adult Education and
Early Childhood.**

TBA Intermediate School District
1101 Red Drive • Traverse City, MI 49604
(231) 922-6200
www.tbaisd.k12.mi.us

810-8115485

Pick the Local Pharmacy

Eastland Apothecary Shoppe


(formerly Eastland Drug)

947-9825
In Campus Plaza,
1217 E. Front Street
Across from Howe Arena
near hotels and the peninsula

OPEN MON.-FRI. 8:30 A.M. - 7 P.M. & SAT. 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

We are what a pharmacy is meant to be.

- In Store Diabetes Shop
- Conveniently located
- We bill all insurance
- We can handle any out of town prescription
- Full line of over the counter products

 bs.8-10.811926

 **The clog
that flexes**



Marcelle
Red, Brown, Black

Professional*
Oiled Leather Colors:
Black, Antique Brown,
Blueberry & Purple
Latigo Leather:
Brown, Red
& Butterscotch
Waxy Leathers:
Black & Cordovan

**Professional
Embroidered Felt**
Brown, Black & Green

Sizes 36-42 (US 5/6-11/12)
*also in mens sizes 42-47 (US 8-13)

Pla•mon•don Shoes
144 East Front Street • 947-5091
Open 9-8pm, Sat. 9-5:30
Sunday 12-4pm


8-10.bs.811023

DISCOVER THE PATHFINDER DIFFERENCE...

ON THE BAY IN TRAVERSE CITY
INTERLOCHEN
Pathfinder School

**The only ISACS*-accredited independent
elementary and middle school in northern Michigan**

- Small classes
- Rigorous arts-integrated curriculum
- Innovative, dedicated teachers





ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR PRESCHOOL - 8TH GRADE
Call to schedule a campus tour today

231.995.3800
www.interlochen.org/pathfinder

AN OASIS FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING