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West Patent Students Explore Emotions Through Art

Bedford, NY — “A big, fun project is the perfect way to help us express our emotions,” said West Patent Elementary School fifth grader Sophia Sasso.

Sophia and classmates Matilda Lea-Hilpert, Sophia Oh and Blake Kolodny recently collaborated on a large-scale mural in art class that was inspired by the Mood Meter, a tool that is used to help students think of emotions more concretely through visualization as part of the RULER approach to social-emotional learning. As each of our schools begins implementing the approach, its impact on students is beginning to show up in interesting ways.

“I often discuss the Mood Meter during class and how making art can help shift our moods and express our feelings,” said art teacher Eleana Sipowicz. “Class discussions might look at how events have affected our moods, and how we can use those feelings in an artistic way to help create the mood we want to be in. Sometimes we connect to the elements of design and how different colors and lines make us feel.”

The four students who collaborated found inspiration in a lid mural that hangs in the art studio. They decided they wanted to create their own large-scale piece of art using bottle caps and lids.

“They went through many ideas of what might be important subject matter to share with the school community,” Sipowicz said. “One of my favorite parts of the project was watching them discuss different ideas. Once the Mood Meter was brought into the conversation, there was unanimous excitement and agreement.”

Sophia Sasso noted how helpful she finds the Mood Meter.

“I think it's hard to define emotions, especially this year,” she said. “The Mood Meter is a perfect tool to help us describe our moods.”

Sipowicz saw it as her job to encourage her students and help them work out the logistics of creating a large-scale mural.

Students planned, measured, taped a grid and painted quadrants before exploring different design layout possibilities.
“They were constantly working through challenges and problem solving together,” Sipowicz said. “Some felt measuring the grids was the hardest part and some felt it was adding the lids. One notable moment was when they could not agree on the layout of the caps but they collaborated to come up with a solution together. It was a wonderful thing to see.”

The finished piece will be on display in the building for the whole school community to enjoy.

“This project weaves together so many important aspects of learning, including student voice, interdisciplinary connections between math, science, and art, and creating something that will have a meaningful and lasting impact on our school community,” said Principal Judy Brewster. “During this challenging time in our lives, reaching for the Mood Meter fosters the kind of dialogue we need and crave.”

The finished product not only encourages school community members to recognize how they are feeling, but it incorporates reusing materials. That is very important to the environmentally-minded school, which is working to become zero waste.

Link to story: https://tinyurl.com/2p89jncp

*Fifth graders work on the project’s layout*