

Jefferson Elementary teacher weaves art into school studies

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 10 May 2019 07:26



Meet Camille's Teacher of the Month: Dana Baer

Each month, Camille's Sidewalk Cafe recognizes one local teacher within the Gallup area for his or her determination to help students go above and beyond. Prospective teachers are nominated by students who feel they deserve to be recognized.

Dana Baer, of Jefferson Elementary School, has always been someone to emphasize the importance of the arts in a child's growth and development. She also believes that a creative outlet is a good balance to the academic challenges students face through the year.

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She said that she has been a classroom teacher for most of her career, and that she has always loved art and has looked for ways to integrate it into the general curriculum.

“I always did art in the classroom, I think it’s good at integrating across disciplines,” Baer said. “I think it develops brains and then other [aspects] of students.”

Baer added that this development is why art is important for students.

“I look to do techniques [like weaving] during testing, because it’s relaxing,” she said. “I try to make every project that way.”

Baer spoke with the *Sun* on April 26 about what she does to influence her students. She came to Gallup from northern Illinois in 1990, due in part to ties she had to the area since the ‘80s.

A lesson that Baer wants to demonstrate through her teaching is what she calls expectation versus expectancy, or what someone else wants versus what the student ends up making.

“The students ask, ‘I wonder what would happen if ...,’” she said. “It shows creative thinking and gives them space to experiment with doing something.”

Baer said that while she does give the same instructions to her students, she’s always impressed and amazed at the diversity in what they create. from the medium to the subject being presented. She added that if she told them to make something specific, they would not have been able to find the creative answer she thinks they could all produce.

“The students make [personal] connections and learn to think outside the box,” she said. “Everyone is creative and curious.”

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When asked what she teaches her students throughout the year, Baer said she teaches basic principles of art along with how it's integrated across cultures and fields. She feels this knowledge could get lost in the shuffle by students, as they are told to focus on test scores, which she links to students becoming less creative as they get older.

Baer also wanted to note that it is not just her efforts, but the collaboration of the entire art community in Gallup and Jefferson Elementary School that helps with developing and showcasing the creativity and talent of art students.

In addition to posting their creations in the hallways of Jefferson Elementary, the art students' work is on display at Art123 on Coal Avenue. The students partake in numerous festivals across town throughout the year and learn about different mediums of art, Baer said.

"The kids get visual arts, they get to experience music. It would be nice to have multiple mediums for them to learn," she said.

Baer said this support and back-and-forth effort among members of the local art community has been a great boon for helping her students discover how creative they can be.

"Within Jefferson community, we all work together to make life the best we can for the students, as far as learning and enjoying learning," she said.

Interested in nominating your favorite teacher for Teacher of the Month?

Contact Camille's Sidewalk Cafe at (505) 722-5017 or stop by 306 S. Second St. in Gallup.

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