

Overview of Art Literacy

HISTORY

The Art Literacy Program was founded in 1982 by a handful of parent volunteers committed to enriching education through art. It began with only five artist presentations piloted in just two schools. It has since grown to ninety artists with over 200 volunteers presenting in all ten of our elementary schools and two private schools. In 1991 the teachings and techniques of Discipline Based Art Education were blended into the Art Literacy Program to give a consistent element to how art was taught in school. The volunteer based program is guided by a district level coordinator with support from an Arts Council comprised of the art coordinators from each school.

VOLUNTEERS

Art Literacy presentors are lay school volunteers and need only to have enthusiasm and an interest in art. Monthly meetings to review the featured artist are given to the presenter by the school coordinator. District training and workshops are also available to further develop presentation skills and offer knowledge on the use of various media. Local professional artists give quarterly workshops with hands-on art projects using mediums such as watercolors, pastels, clay, or pen and ink. Volunteers are also invited to participate in docent-guided tours at the Portland Art Museum. Tours and workshops are free to all volunteers. Because the program is personally rewarding, volunteers tend to remain in the program for many years.

CLASSROOM PRESENTATIONS

Each month volunteers present a featured artist's works as a starting point to teach art history, vocabulary, technique, and art appreciation and criticism. The presentations include biographical information on the artist, a Powerpoint presentation on the works of art, a lesson in art history, art appreciation skills, and a hands-on art project. The DBAE methodical approach is used to teach how art is done, how it fits into its time, place, and concurrent events, and how and why a given piece of art evokes reactions. It also creates interest and an understanding of art's place in the world. A dedicated bulletin board filled with prints of the artist's works reinforces monthly lessons.

Schools are provided with 8 artists for the year from each of the 8 categories; Cultural, Renaissance, Impressionist, European, Illustrators, Modern, African American, and American, without any repetition through elementary school.

SUPPORT

The sustaining source of funding comes from the parent volunteer organizations of the schools. These resources fund the ongoing maintenance of current materials, the development of new artists, books, and shared art supplies. Sponsorships, donations, and discounts from businesses and organizations are also accepted and appreciated.