

Bonita Unified

SCHOOL DISTRICT

115 W. Allen Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773 ★ (909) 971-8200 ★ do.bonita.k12.ca.us/

NEWS RELEASE

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Bonita Unified Middle School Students Discover the Joy of Woodworking in Shop Class

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Lone Hill Middle School students are learning the joy of developing their craft skills in wood shop, an elective class that allows them the freedom to create intricate works of art and discover that woodworking is a pursuit that can bring the whole family together.

In his 27 years as Lone Hill's wood shop teacher, Mitch Jacobs has seen how modern technology has transformed the class by making the wood cutting process safer for students, and although his students generally enter the class with less knowledge of basic tool kits, they respond by fashioning projects well beyond the bookshelves and bird feeders of wood shops past.

"Many things have changed in wood shop. The tools are smaller, less intimidating and not nearly as loud, allowing my students to work with more finesse," Jacobs said. "It's amazing what a student can do with a scroll saw, a hot glue gun and an idea for a pattern."

Another big change in wood shop is the influx of female students into what has traditionally been strictly the domain of males. The inclusivity is evident in the scope of projects created by students, which range from simple wood carvings of animals to elaborately designed and etched plaques to large-scale projects like a full-size depiction of Jesus on a crucifix.

"It doesn't matter if a student enters the class with great interest or little interest in woodworking, they quickly become enamored of the process," Jacobs said. "It's a tactile, sensate and emotional craft that resonates with the kids. When you're woodworking, time seems to melt away. I've worked at Lone Hill for 27 years but it seems like five or six years. I have a lot of fun. I get to play with power tools every day!"

It is the connection with parents that Jacobs finds the most rewarding. Jacobs has lost track of how many parents have contacted him after their children have brought home a fully realized project. Often, the parents want to learn woodworking themselves, or ask his advice on how to create a woodshop at home and work together as a family. For Jacobs, the testimonials from his students say it all:

"We now have a couple tools in our garage and are making a small woodshop with my dad and grandpa," Lone Hill seventh-grader S. Humphrey said.

"My dad set up a scroll saw at home and now I teach him how to use it and make things," Lone Hill seventh-grader R. Thorpe said.

MORE

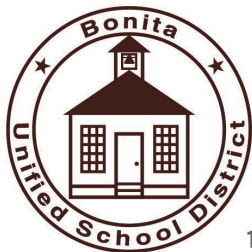


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Another benefit of wood shop is the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Though students have access to a complete shop filled with state-of-the-art tools like drill presses, routers, table saws, wood burners and air compressors, occasionally students work on a project that necessitates the creation of a new tool.

“Once, a student built an odd-shaped cabinet bench that needed to fit in a corner of their room,” Jacobs said. “With all the tools at their disposal, they still couldn’t make the angles right, so we created our own angle-making tool so they could complete their project. You could probably buy that tool today, but back then it was a good lesson in resourcefulness for our students.”

Over the years, Jacobs has seen it all, including a student creating a miniature trebuchet, a machine used for hurling stones in medieval day warfare, though his students today are more interested in creating etchings of Jack Skellington and Sally Shock from “The Nightmare Before Christmas,” or a sign that reads “I Love You, You’re the Best Mom and Dad.”

“Mitch Jacobs is an amazing teacher who has the ability to inspire his students to go outside of their comfort zone and learn a skill that can bring them years of enjoyment and possibly lead to a career,” Lone Hill Principal Dan Gribbon said. “More than that, Mitch has adapted his shop and curriculum to keep up with the changing technology and fit the interests of his students, and allow them to create handmade projects of their own design. We truly value Mitch’s dedication.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

BUSD_WOODSHOP1: Lone Hill Middle School students cut out pumpkin- and cat-shaped figurines using a scroll saw during the school’s wood shop elective. The class is led by Mitch Jacobs, who has taught the subject at Lone Hill for 27 years.

BUSD_WOODSHOP2: Adorned with safety glasses, Lone Hill Middle School students are zeroed in on their assignment – which entails cutting out a series of increasingly complicated figures using a scroll saw – during their wood shop class. The class has become a popular elective for female students.

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