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UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Powell Elementary Students Stage Ceramic Art Show with the Help of Azusa Pacific Student Mentors

Azusa, CA - Displaying ceramic works created with the assistance of Azusa Pacific University art students, 44 Powell Elementary School fifth-graders welcomed friends and family to the inaugural Powell Gallery Show, held Nov. 29 in the school's newly-created art studio.

The art show was the culmination of a partnership between Powell and the APU Service Learning Department, which brought Powell fifth-graders to the university for a series of ceramics workshops conducted by APU Art and Design Professor William Catling.

Catling recruited his own art students to act as mentors, providing Powell students with one-on-one classroom assistance and encouraging them to design, glaze and create ceramic artwork utilizing symbols and pictographs inspired by indigenous Southwestern pottery.

"We wanted to do something fun to celebrate our budding artists, so we thought we would have an old-fashioned gallery show right here on campus," Powell Principal Jennifer Wiebe said. "The art was displayed along with short descriptions written by the students. For many, this is the first time they have ever been to an art show. It is very exciting for them."

Powell recently adopted an arts focus, with an emphasis on an arts-integrated curriculum and hands-on learning. The ceramics workshop was designed to supplement lessons taught by Powell fifth-grade teacher Cesar Govea.

"We have been studying Southwestern pottery and utensils," said Govea, who also serves as Powell's art coach. "Not only are the students learning how to create ceramic art, but they are gaining a much better understanding of how indigenous people lived and how they used natural resources on a daily basis."

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In creating their ceramic work, Catling urged the students to incorporate symbols that were relevant to their own lives. The results were unpredictable and wildly imaginative.

Fifth-grader Eve Jimenez crafted a corn cob cone made with a scoop of potato ice cream. Among the symbols carved into the sides of the ice cream were a polka-dotted Yeti riding a skateboard and eating pizza, a moon, two tacos and a whole pizza.

Creating the ceramic cone brought Jimenez closer to her mentor, APU senior Julia Hines, and reinforced the benefits of the partnership beyond enhancing the school's standards-based curriculum – that of making new friends and building relationships.

"It has been a pleasure working with a college student and my friend," Powell fifth-grader Benny Millian said. "I hope I'll do it again."

Powell alumna Denise Agro's daughter, Rachel, served as an APU mentor and said the program served as a mutual learning opportunity.

"Rachel discovered that she loves art and that she loves children," Agro said. "She had never put the two together, but after mentoring these students she is thinking in terms of combining the two for a future career."

To accommodate the 44 students who participated, as well as their mentors, the art show was divided into morning and afternoon sessions. In the spring, Powell fourth-graders will take part in the program.

"Our primary mission at Azusa is to prepare every student for higher education," AUSD Superintendent Dr. Linda Kaminski said. "The partnership between Powell and Azusa Pacific allows the students to participate in college-level classes while socializing with college students. This is a wonderful program and demonstrates how powerful the visual arts are in educating and inspiring our students."

Photo:

Ceramic1: Azusa Unified's Powell Elementary students welcomed friends and family to the inaugural Powell Gallery Show, held Nov. 29 in the school's newly-created art studio, which showcased ceramic works created with the assistance of Azusa Pacific University art students.

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