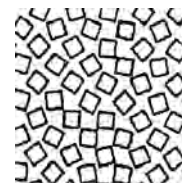


West Aurora High School Visual Arts Department

Illinois Art Education Association Best School Art Program



The West Aurora Art Department is made up of 7 teachers: Jenna Goeringer, Scott Schultz, Kristi Rhodes, Emily Bogucki, Jen Hornberg, Bettina Adorjan and Jay Hearn. They acknowledged that they are honored to receive this award but realize they couldn't be successful without their fantastic students and a great administration. The West Aurora Art teachers are blessed with an incredibly supportive administration both in our school and throughout the district – they are exceptionally invested in the arts and their students.

The West Aurora Art department is committed to ensuring that each student who passes through their doors is given an appreciation and understanding for art. They learn about the role it plays in the shaping of culture, the design in their lives, and the vision and voice it gives to many. Their school is unique, in that they are one of the largest and most diverse high schools in the state. With a population of 3,884, nearly a third of their student body takes at least one art course during their time at West Aurora High School. The World Relief organization places many refugees in the area and as a result, the school diversity extends beyond that of other schools to include students from Syria, Iraq, Russia, Myanmar, Bhutan, the Congo and more. These different backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences provide countless viewpoints and areas of creative exploration for their student body. Therefore, their curriculum is designed to reflect the diversity of their students by including artists from many backgrounds, and projects that investigate a variety of topics. The curriculum is designed to not only teach students to master technique, but to treat art as a language and to use that language to give voice to their experiences. As their body of work grows, that voice is explored not just in the work itself, but also through critique, written reflection, and presentation.

Students experience a great deal of success in the art classes and are given many opportunities to display and present that

success to the school, community, and beyond. In addition to opportunities to show their work, the art department provides supplementary development opportunities for our young artists. Guest artists and professors are brought in to give talks and conduct portfolio reviews. Students also benefit from guest speakers and art schools come in to discuss careers in the arts. The National Art Honor Society and Photo Club work to develop independent art leaders who develop and organize their own events, fundraisers, and art exhibitions.

The West Aurora students often find themselves to be the top recipients of awards in juried art shows and are often awarded art-merit scholarships at schools such as Northern Illinois University, Pratt and Parsons. Students place annually at the National level of the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and have even made the trip to accept their scholastic awards on the stage of Carnegie Hall! The annual Alumni Show demonstrates that students continue to conduct a professional art practice long after they leave their program. Many West Aurora Alumni art students are now professional fine artists, art writers and bloggers, commercial photographers, community artists and activists, graphic designers, art teachers, and even hold internships at prestigious institutions like the Museum of Contemporary Art.

The art teachers of West Aurora High School realize that in order to establish a lasting impact on their students, they must show personal passion and expertise in the field. The art teachers are committed to personal growth both as artists and teachers. They continue to create their own art and have even shown their work together. They seek out professional development opportunities that inform their teaching practice.

The West Aurora High School art teachers state, "we strive to create students who will go on to speak, to invent, to change, to challenge, to problem solve, to be difference makers, to move us into a socially just future, and most importantly, to help us to see the world around us with new eyes. That is what we do, and that is why art education matters."

Undergraduate Scholarship Recipient:

Machaela Leno, University of Illinois

Graduate Scholarship Recipient:

Michelle Sendy, Illinois State University

IAEA Professional Development Grant Recipients:

Karyl Silerzio

Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design - Summer 2017
Creative Educator's Institute - Advanced Printmaking

Jeanette Thompson

Lillstreet Art Center - Handbuilding Class and Digital
Illustration Class