CREATING THE JOHN BARRETT MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY MURAL

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CREATING THE JOHN BARRETT MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY MURAL

A Project

By

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Abstract of CREATING THE JOHN BARRETT MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY MURAL by Donald Hartley Wright

Statement of Problem

The general problem forming the basis of this project was the challenge of incorporating the community and students in the creation of a ceramic tile mural. Schools in general have a diverse student body. Creating a mural together involved learning to work together in diverse groups, creating school pride and an awareness of the integral parts of the school. The procedure included group work, internet research for art, learning about tile and the glazing process. The installation of the mural included drilling, anchoring the metal hangers and installing the tiles onto a brick surface in a pleasing manner. The mural was viewed by students, parents, administrators and the Barrett community during the mural reception.

Sources of Data

A variety of books, magazines, periodicals, internet sites, interviews, and personal experiences were sources of data.

Conclusions Research

The Barrett mural was produced and installed on the campus March 30, 2010. The experience demonstrated the positive aspects of a group project. Group work engages student interest in the community, new relationships, and problem solving skills. The experience taught students to work together for a common goal. Students learned about their own special skills. The finished project displayed the perseverance that is needed for a successful outcome.

__________________________, Committee Chair
Crystal Olson, Ed.D.

______________________________
Date
DEDICATION

I dedicate the mural to the students, parents, and the administrators of John Barrett Middle School and the community members. This mural is recorded history for the school about the Arts Program during the school year 2009-2010. It is my wish that the ceramic mural tradition is carried forward and many more murals will fill the blank walls of Barrett Middle School with the evolution of new artists throughout the years to come.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would thank all of my students in Advanced Art for taking the risk with me to complete the first ceramic mural at the entrance of John Barrett Middle School. I would like to thank the Barrett Principal, Lisa Herstrom-Smith and the custodial staff for their help and willingness to help in this project. I would like to thank my current professors: Crystal Olson, Lorie Hammond and Karen Benson for the Masters Program at CSUS for showing me the Arts as a community project.

A special thanks to my wife, Diana, for her support and love during the project and in all the years we have spent together. I thank my parents, Chuck and Audrey Wright for allowing me to experience life and the love of art, nature, and family. And lastly, my three children, Ben, Anthony, and Danielle for inspiring me to become a lifelong learner and a better human being.
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Chapter 1
OVERVIEW

Introduction

Every picture tells a story. The making of a mural is an integration of thinking, feeling, and doing (Rosenberg, 1968). The Barrett ceramic mural project showed the capacity to bring people together. The community can be stimulated with the collaboration between students and the general population in the project of a mural. There are numerous benefits to this type of endeavor. Murals can have an educational benefit to students in the public school system, allowing students to learn through the process of exploration, group work, and school pride. The Barrett mural experience was a guided lesson in exploring opportunities to stimulate direction and learning in a group setting.

Goals of the Project

The goal of the Barrett ceramic mural project was to unite the community and students in a better working relationship. The community will be important in the next years if our schools are to improve and succeed. The lack of funding and apathy in some schools will change with more community involvement. Sports programs, clubs and the arts need the support of the community in volunteering and funding. The mural was for students to express their vision of the school, imagination, and creativity with tiles to share with the community. Volunteering in tutoring, after school activities, and campus beautification was another goal of this project.
Significance of the Project

John Barrett Middle School was built in 1956 and even though many improvements have been made over the years, the campus is mostly painted walls and old brick facades. The mural was chosen as a project to bring art to the entrance of the facility. The mural project is designed to provide students of the school with an experience of self-expression that includes a way to demonstrate talent, gain recognition and gain acceptance from their community. The sense of accomplishment, community participation and an opportunity to learn a new skill, an artistic skill, shows students about community pride. In addition, youth will hopefully develop pride in the mural, viewing it as their own. It has been found that youth often do not deface these murals and discover new respect for public property.

The secondary purpose of this project is to organize and involve some of the community in the enactment of the mural. Soliciting the administration, the school, local clubs, and outside donators allows all elements of a community to work together. For example, youth along with seniors can work together rather than against one another. This approach to developing a mural can create a positive effect on the community, as a whole. Community murals allow self-expression for a population who normally lack a real channel of expression.
Limitations

The only limitation experienced during the project was cracked tiles and matching glaze colors with different firings. The weather played a role when the mural was being installed and grouting was to take place.

Definition of Terms

*Aesthetic:* of or concerning the appreciation of beauty or good taste: the aesthetic experience.

*Ceramics:* the art or technique of making objects from fired clay.

*Grout:* a thin mortar used to fill cracks and crevices in masonry.

*Kiln:* Any of various ovens of hardening, burning, or drying substance such as grain, meal, or clay, especially a brick-lined oven used to bake or fire ceramics.

*Mural:* a work of art (as a painting); (a) of, relating to, or resembling a wall; (b) applied to and made integral with a wall or ceiling surface.

*Public Art:* Art outside of museums.

Assumptions

The assumptions, without further proof or evidence, are the premises upon which are based the implicit and/or explicit arguments of this research. The assumptions are listed as follows:

1. All youth involved in the ceramic mural project will learn an artistic skill.
2. Youth will increase their social skills, through working as a team, in the planning and implementation of the mural.
3. Youth introduced to ceramic mural projects will be given a new forum for self-expression.

4. Completion of the mural will provide a means for self-recognition.

5. Students, creating a mural in their school, will be provided an experience that may increase their own self-esteem.

6. There is self-discovery and self-healing in the creative process.

7. Youth involvement in ceramic mural making or any constructive extra-curricular activity may serve as a positive experience in community involvement.

Meeting Project Goals

The goals were met by personal experience, and research. Personal experience was met by owning and operating a business for over 20 years as a ceramic tile contractor. Research included the important process of group learning, documentation and assessment in the books *The Mural book, A practical guide for educators* and *Murals Creating an Environment*. 
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review consists of theories and practice of arts in education, the history of mural painting, the history of the contemporary mural movement, the value of Art education, the community aspect of mural making, the pride of students and community, and ceramic tile murals. The philosophies presented in this review show the role of art in the development of the cognitive process in student learning. The history of murals from early times to the present demonstrates community art. The art experience is a gateway for all areas of study, whether it is academics or the arts. The research was explored to build a foundation for pursuing this mural project at the school.

Theory and Practice of Art in Education

Theory of art in education has been examined by many of our best educators and philosophers for many years. The theories reviewed include literature and publications by these individuals.

“Education without the arts would be an impoverished enterprise.” (Eisner, 1998, p.82) Eisner argued that the distinctive forms of thinking needed to create artistically crafted work that is relevant not only to what students do, they are relevant to virtually all aspects of what we do, from the design of curriculum, to the practice of teaching, to the features of the environment in which students and teachers live. The
education of our children will be of greater worth if the arts can be added to the curriculum. In many ways the idea that education has something to learn from the arts is very different from our traditional beliefs about how to improve educational practices.

The field of education has always used the platform of scientifically grounded knowledge, at least as an aspiration. The arts as a way to improve education have been introduced usually when there is no science to provide guidance. It has been widely believed that academics are and should be the road to knowledge.

The practices of many, in the arts, think the arts might contribute to the improvement of both the means and ends of education. Many have educational views that differ in fundamental ways from the ones that now prevail. The forms of thinking that the arts evoke create the relevance for re-framing the conceptions of what education might try to accomplish. To challenge the present academic forum, first look at the historical context within which current education practice has been based.

The beginning for this review, will be the end of the 19th century, at which time the educational system as we know it was receiving guidance from psychology. One example of the faith placed in a science of psychology was presented in Edward L. Thorndike’s 1910 lead article in the Journal of Educational Psychology. He wrote:

A complete science of psychology would tell every fact about everyone’s intellect and character and behavior, would tell the cause of every change in human nature, would tell the result of every educational
force-every act of every person that changed any other or the person himself-would have. It would aid us to use human beings for the world’s welfare with the same surety of the result that we now have when we use falling bodies or chemical elements. In proportions as we get such a science we shall become the masters of our own souls as we now are masters of heat and light. Progress toward such a science is being made (p. 143).

Thorndike’s optimism was not shared by all. William James and John Dewey, for example had many reservations regarding what science could provide to so artful an enterprise as teaching. The majority in academics decided the way to go was Thorndike and his science of psychology. The schools in our society were to be efficient manufacturing plants. The vision for educating our youth would be according to specifications prescribed by supervisors and administrators who followed the “science of mind” agenda put forth by Thorndike and others.

In the process of developing the education system, science and art became estranged. Science was always dependable and the artistic process was not. Science was cognitive and the arts were more emotional. The science could be tested whereas the arts were merely a matter of preference. It became very clear to the majority that science was very useful and the arts would have to take a back seat in our educational system.
The majority continue the quest for improvement in education, looking for the “best methods” as if they were independent of context; to do more testing than any nation on earth; and spending countless hours comparing test scores to determine the right schools for children. Children our now part of the process and they believe that the gathering of grades is more important than the inquiry of why.

Educators are not optimistic with the array of values and assumptions that drive our pursuit of improved schools. They believe we can generate other visions of education by expanding our thoughts about how to achieve changes in the system we have. The ideas that will inspire new visions, values, and especially new practices will be explored in this review. The schools we need for our future must look at exploration more than discovery, more value for surprise than to control, more attention to our children and imagination than to test scores.

The public’s perception of the purpose of education supports the current trend. We all need to share our ideas in the classroom to change the social vision of what schools can be. The students, parents, and administrators will have to be shown a new vision.

The educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner was first presented in the education system in 1919, the first Waldorf School, a philosophy that wanted to embrace a new understanding of the individual and community. Steiner felt that children needed a balanced development of their capacities to be prepared as adults to contribute to cultural renewal, instead of to the dehumanization of society. The
purpose of education, he thought, should not be merely to instill knowledge, which can be coldly abstract and destructive when separated from human values and a feeling for the humanity of other people. Steiner’s goal was to educate the whole human being so that thinking, feeling and doing were integrated and capable of functioning in a healthy way. The arts would become a vital part of the vision Steiner saw in this new model of education. “What lives in each human being and what can be developed in him or her?” Steiner asked. Steiner was one of the first in the area of developing age-appropriate learning and many of his practical applications were later borne out of the work of Gesell, Piaget, Gardner, and others. The Waldorf approach recognizes that children younger than seven years learn best when taught using movement and example, whereas children (ages 7-14) learn best when they are engaged imaginatively and artistically. The high school age Waldorf student will usually take these early experiences to analyze and think abstractly in his new environment. An artistic approach to learning permeates the Waldorf curriculum at all levels—it is not something that is “extracurricular.”

The arts teach students to act and to judge in the absence of rule, to rely on feel, to pay attention to nuance, to act and appraise the consequences of one’s choices and the ability to re-think and make better choices. Getting these choices right requires what Nelson Goodman calls “rightness to fit. (p. 77)” One knows one is right because one feels the choice is right. The sensibilities come into play and in the process become refined. The concept is, as students learn in and through the arts they
become more qualitatively intelligent. Goodman said, “curriculum activities should be designed that call attention to such matters and activities that refine perception in each of the fields taught.” (pg. 41) The teacher would have activities that slow down perception rather than speed it up. The majority of perception is highly focal in the classroom. The classroom must be set-up in such a way that all students can be included in the lesson with the ability to focus.

Another lesson that education can learn from the arts pertains to the formulation of aims. The ability to make the formulation of aims, goals, objectives, or standards is a critical act; one that must have clearly defined ends. Once ends are conceptualized, means are formulated, then implemented, and then outcomes are evaluated. In the arts ends may follow means. One may act and the act may itself suggest ends, ends that did not precede the act, but follow it. This process of shifting aims while doing the work at hand is what Dewey called “flexible purposing.” (p. 72) Flexible purposing is opportunistic; it capitalizes on the emergent features appearing within a field of relationships. The teacher who knows when a lesson plan can be altered for that teaching moment understands “flexible purposes.” (p. 72) The education system must put value on exploration and discovery as it already does with prediction and control.

One of the lessons that the arts teach most profoundly is that the relationship of form and content are inseparable. Change the cadence in a line of poetry and you change the poem’s meaning. The creation of expressive and satisfying relationships is
what artistically guided work can become to the student. Dewey tells us that while science states meaning, the arts express meaning. Meaning is not limited to what is proven.

Dewey realized with all his studies and knowledge of the arts that the experience was what every child needed. “Imagination is the chief instrument of the good.”-“Art has been the means of keeping alive the sense of purposes that outrun evidence and of meanings that transcend indurate habit.” (p. 121) Imagination is no mere ornament, nor is art. They might lead us to restore our efforts and create the schools kids deserve to build a strong society.

History of Mural Painting

For centuries, wall decorations, mosaics and frescoes have been a form of art for people to study and admire. Murals stand alone as the most ancient visual art forum of mankind. Over 32,000 years ago artists were painting the details of their everyday lives on the walls of caves, and walls, recording hunts, battles, animals who shared their environments. Artists have used murals as visual forums for social, economic, political and environmental reform through the ages. Murals bring everyday life into the world as easily accessible art exhibitions. Murals have played an important part of the art scene world-wide, nationally and in the local community.

The Greeks and Romans pictured everyday life and the splendid afterlife of their leaders. The Renaissance period brought murals depicting the events of the world in vibrant frescoes. The mural was a narrative painted on the wall. The murals were
painted by members of the group who lived with them daily. Some appear to be part of daily community life, while others show rituals of the time period. Because of the significance of Catholicism, church murals became public art. As Europe moved from religious-dominated feudalism to commodity-dominated capitalism, the favored media of expression kept pace. Murals were becoming a commodity, with the development of secular wealth, patrons were wealthy and their taste wasn’t always appropriate for church walls. Murals were painted in dining rooms and living rooms of private places. The nineteenth century was the start of public murals, decorating public buildings in Europe and the United States (Capek, 1996).

The Mexican mural revival in 1922 spurred the revitalization of contemporary American mural painting (Shapiro, 1978). William Walker is recognized as the founding father in the contemporary mural movement, as a means of community public art, in the United States. In 1967, Walker organized a mural project, entitled the Wall of Respect (Cockcroft & Sanchez, 1993). The Wall of Respect was painted in the spring of 1967 by 20 black artists, on a wall in Chicago, of an abandoned building. The Art consisted of prominent black people in the areas of athletics, music, literature, religion, and statesmanship. The Organization for Black American Culture (OBAC), that supported the construction of the Wall of Respect (Cockcroft & Sanchez, 1993), wanted to provide a new arena for the black artist to pursue his aims unhampered and uninhibited by the prejudices of the mainstream.
The Wall of Respect had such a positive effect on the community that other artists throughout the nation joined the mural movement. Communities throughout the nation started to express themselves through art. It was an influence for all ethnicities; Whites, Blacks and Hispanics to bring a community together through the arts. The mural movement allowed many artists to move from the museums and galleries to interact with society and the social injustices that existed (Cockcroft & Sanchez, 1993).

There is a direct line from European, specifically Italian Christian frescoes to the contemporary mural movement in the United States. That line brought us Diego Rivera. Diego Rivera, after studying in France and Spain but prior to returning home to Mexico toured Italy and viewed first hand many of the finest murals in the world. The experience taught Diego about the use of space in monumental painting. When he returned to Mexico in 1922, Rivera began painting murals at the request of the education minister, Jose Vasconcellos, to educate the largely illiterate population and share their history in art. Rivera was joined by Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Together they were Los Tres Grandes, The Three Great Ones of Mexican muralists, and their works were the inspiration for many who followed. Diego Rivera painted on the walls at the University of Mexico about the troubles and joys of the Mexican life (Drescher, 1991).

The murals were bright and vibrant, showing a community how to join together to work on issues of importance. “The Making of a Fresco Showing the
Building of a City, 1931, “was commissioned by San Francisco and painted by Diego as cities become part of the movement. Diego Rivera significantly influenced San Francisco muralists. Subsequent muralists learned about his murals and of other Mexican masters by visiting the walls themselves and acting as assistants. Rivera was commissioned to work on murals as the WPA (Works Progress Administration) sponsored thousands of murals nationwide from 1934 until 1946 (Drescher, 1991).

Benefits of Mural Making in Art Education

Murals in art education are vital in helping to develop the humanistic aspects of the individual. It is a characteristic of humans to learn to express themselves. Children can learn something from all their artistic experiences. Murals create hands on experience for those involved. Appreciation and understanding come from direct practice; if a child is allowed to use a tool, that child will learn to respect that tool (Rosenberg, 1968). A desire for learning can be created by the involvement in creating. Children working on murals enjoy learning, stretch their imagination, and help to recognize problems and work out solutions (Rosenberg, 1968). The arts provide interest; interest leads to learning; learning leads to success. Any area where children can be successful will help them develop into productive human beings (Anderson & Carter, 1984). Murals provide children with growth–producing opportunities.

Adolescent hood involves discovering who one is, and how one thinks and feels (Anderson & Carter, 1984). Art can provide an avenue for self-awareness and
communicating ideas and feelings. A mural expresses a feeling both from the artist and from the viewer. Through art, youth can communicate ideas about themselves and the life around them with simplicity and remarkable clarity (Rosenberg, 1968). Every picture tells a story. Mural making is an integration of thinking, feeling, and doing (Rosenberg, 1968).

The creative process involves a number of factors such as the physical, emotional and mental powers of the individual being active in an active and functioning project. Art is a creative part of society. Motivated by their experiences, artists project themselves into their art, enabling them to have confidence in other areas. Youth can express themselves through art, as well. Art is a language for self-expression that expresses every conceivable notion man has had. There are many benefits to involvement in a mural making process. Joseph Richman (Grant, 1977) elaborates: “Mural making provides insight without danger, catharsis without guilt, and the expression of deep feeling and fantasies without fear” (p.124).

Mural making helps build feelings of self worth and a positive self esteem. Murals provide an effective way of helping youth improve their self image and validity of artistic expression, creating, can be complex and deep. The feeling of seeing a finished mural that the student was part of. Murals allow the chance to look back into one’s life, viewing past feelings, events, and accomplishments. Youth also pick up tips, on reflecting on the works of others in the group. Through observation, youth can learn how other artists work, see how information is used, incorporate it,
and transform it into their own work (Rosenberg, 1968). The finished project will create great pride in themselves and the community. Mural projects may catch a wider group of students, filling them with a whole-heartedness and boundless enthusiasm not typically found in the school setting.

**Community Mural Projects**

Mural projects motivate group participation and creative group expression. Anne Gregory (1984, an assistant professor at West Texas State University, Canyon, Texas, supervised 15 junior high school students in a mural painting project at Purdue University. She found that working on a single cooperative project was an important learning experience for the students because most thought of art as a solo activity. From the beginning of the project all students had to learn to work together. The youths spent time together previewing existing murals, looking through paintings of murals, and gathering ideas about how to plan their mural. They brainstormed on ideas together about the theme for their mural. They voted on their favorite ideas and then made the final selections. The entire process involved collaboration and cooperation with one another, and pride of the project (Gregory, 1984).

Organizing community youth in a mural project is the undertaking of an ambitious project because the design and construction of a mural project involves teamwork and the challenges of youth working together. But this leads to learning, cooperation among others, and the sense of team effort. The mural project involves developing group cohesion. The mural project is a constructive activity that elicits
positive energy for all involved. The Wall of Respect became a center point of community activity. The wall became an undeclared landmark and a visible rallying point for the entire community (Cockcroft & Sanchez, 1993). Musicians came to play their music, poets to read poems, and neighbors to converse with each other. The mural was like a festival of the arts for the surrounding communities.

Benefits of community murals can be an excellent community forum for constructive expression and community pride. The Wall of Respect exhibited a unique outlet for public communication of black pride, accomplishment, and self respect (Cockcroft et al., 1977). Murals can depict dignity and cultural pride. People identify with the murals because murals tell stories about the community. Pride is based on possession, and neighborhood people speak of community murals as “ours” (Cockcroft et al., 1977). The mural can represent both individual and group pride.

Murals can be the catalyst for a stronger community. The run down Vancouver Island town of Chemainus was ignored until the community decided to fix up the town with a number of murals depicting the rich and rugged history of the Chemainus valley (Obee, 1985). Murals make communities more exciting and appealing. Those who pass by newly constructed murals often comment on the color and display of positive energy they now provide to a place that was once unattractive, and they will be a source of pleasure and inspiration for many years to come (Gregory, 1984). The Round Valley Indian Tribes of Northern California have painted murals on their schools that represent the culture and history of the area. The pride of those
murals is found in most post cards from the area showing different views of the art. Through group mural work, youths learn that they can be successful and create something truly beautiful and thus learn to be proud of themselves. Murals in a common place in a community not only reassure youth that they have created something special, but it also make it possible to share their joy in seeing their work exhibited (Rosenberg, 1968). Youth, and everyone, can benefit from taking pride in them. A sense of pride in one’s self carries over and is demonstrated in one’s actions pertaining to one’s heritage, one’s community, one’s life, and one’s world (Anderson & Carter, 1984).

In service-based learning, the motivation of helping others is the foundation on which student success is built because it is not reliant on socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity or age, but rather the ability to work together cooperatively and perform a service for the benefit of the community, such as a mural.

Professor Jose Montoya was an instructor of art at California State University, Sacramento. He directed mural making and the Barrio Art program from the art department at CSUS. Professor Montoya has had many dealings with youth, from the inner city-sector of Sacramento, working on grand-scale art projects to deter them from dropping out to getting excited about high school. Professor Montoya found that the kids who became involved in mural projects gave them inspiration and motivation to stay in school and complete their educational goals. He loves what he does. “I derive a great deal of satisfaction from helping these high- risk youth succeed and I
whole heartedly support similar endeavors because I have discovered that they work!” (Montoya, 1988). The professor was asked why more programs don’t exist. He stated “Lack of funds is the biggest reason”—yet he has seen a change in policy recently and we may see improvement.

Murals of Ceramic

Today murals are made of many materials beside paint. Tiles have been made by man for 4,000 years. Tiles are all around us for everyone to enjoy. They are used in churches and mosques, restaurants and shops, hospitals and homes. Tiles cover walls and floors, roofs and pavement, furniture and stoves. Tiles are the simplest form of ceramic art. Ceramic tiles are made from clay. The tiles were made by hand in the past, thus each was a work of art in its own right, and dried by the sun. Today, ceramic tiles go through a firing process in a kiln under very high heat to harden the tile body and to create the surface glaze. The process is two-fold with the first firing producing a “bisque” tile and the second firing at a higher temperature to melt the glaze that has been applied. In the 19th century Britain pioneered mass-produced tiles. English tile making expanded rapidly during the industrial revolution, peaked in the late 1800s and slumped soon after the turn of the century. American tile makers enjoyed similar prosperity throughout the 19th century in the use of tile for bathroom, kitchen and fireplace surrounds. The durability of ceramic tile has led to the product being used throughout the housing industry worldwide. The primary advantage of
using ceramic tile in a mural is the durability and clarity of the images over a period of
time.

Summary

In conclusion, the review of literature proves that many in the art community see youth in a mural project to be highly successful in improving self esteem and creating future artists. Public art effects change in the community by the theme of the project and participation of local people. Students acting as catalysts can participate and share their experiences. The location and theme must be shared by those involved in the project. The mural project should be shared within the school relating to present and past endeavors. The community would benefit because of the participation and recognition of a certain area. Murals have a tradition of not only enriching the surface of a public place but as functioning as a means of enlightenment (Shapiro, 1978). Murals can provide youth with a sense of community which is lacking in today’s society. Murals help the public understand its history, the ideals of its society, and give pride to the local community.
Chapter 3

CERAMIC TILE MURAL PROJECT

The Mural Site

The site of the mural project was Barrett Middle School, Carmichael, California. It is located at 4743 Barrett Road between Lincoln and Winding way in a mainly residential community. The school is one of nine middle schools in the San Juan Unified School District. John Barrett Middle School was built in 1956 on property donated by a previous school board member, John Barrett. The front of the school has newer fencing and landscaping, thanks to an improvement bond passed in the last couple of years. All automotive and foot traffic entering the school on school days or week-ends will enjoy the art experience.

Personal Experience

I, Don Wright have been a teacher at John Barrett Middle School for the past nine years, the last three years I have been in charge of the art department. My other duties include coaching the wrestling and track teams and coordinating all other sports teams on campus. Previous to teaching, I was a ceramic tile contractor for over 20 years in the Bay Area. I graduated from San Francisco State University with a teaching credential covering Physical Education and Art in 1973. I taught two summers of ceramics and substituted in the San Mateo Unified School district before entering the contracting business in 1975. Coaching high school and middle school
wrestling and other sports was my only contact with youth on a regular basis. I have been married for 33 years and have three grown children.

My first art projects at Barrett were experimenting with the supplies on hand and engaging the students in the school. I had access to ceramic tile from my business days and was experienced with glazing and small backsplash murals. I teach four elective art classes and one advanced class. The elective classes cover many phases of art including history, mediums, and design. The students were taught how to design and glaze a four by four inch ceramic tile for one lesson. The success kids had with glazing tiles led me to start having name plates in tile for every teacher on our campus. The advanced class has created many small tile signs on campus representing school rules and clubs.

As I became more involved with the arts and our community, I looked forward to creating more murals on campus with student participation. The students were always engaged with the design, glazing, and displaying of art that was seen by the community. The mural project became the topic of discussion in all classes and when it would be started.

Mural Theme

The project was first presented to the principal of Barrett, Lisa Smith at the beginning of the new school year, (2009-2010). The front of the school was chosen for placement of the mural, thus allowing for the community and students greater access for enjoyment. All art classes were invited to take part in selecting the theme
and size of the Mural. Academics and extra-curricular activities were voted on by classes as the main theme for the mural. The classes took part in discussions on school history, the Carmichael community and history time-lines before deciding on the theme to be used. The advanced art class was designated as the lead for the project because of their experience with glazing and ceramic tile in other areas of the school. The class was divided into seven groups with four to five students per group. The groups each secured a large class table to sit around and brainstorm the next phase of the project. Every table was invited to sketch the areas of the school experience which they remembered as being meaningful. English, history, math, science, music, sports, Avid, and dance were voted on as the main areas of involvement in the school. The class decided on a central Bronco and school title to be the focus of the center piece of the mural. The Bronco is our mascot and was thought to best represent “the Barrett experience.” The dance and music were combined and every group was assigned one of the areas to design a section of the mural. The class decided on twelve by twelve white tiles to be used for the mural project.

The next step for groups was to design in scale, a design using the area of the school curriculum they had chosen. Every group was given eight squares of paper (different colors) to represent the tiles they would be designing. An example would be: Math group uses pink paper- two tiles by four tiles- and designs all eight papers to represent their design for the mural. The class became very involved once groups were assigned to a certain area. I instructed them on using the internet and literature to
create the design and lettering for mural section. It was decided that the seven groups each using eight tiles would create a finished mural with a length of eighteen feet and a height of four feet. The center would have to be four tiles across to have room for the Bronco and school name.

Mural Process

The excitement of the mural was growing, and all the art students wanted to have a part. My dilemma was solved with a class project of glazing small four by four tiles and having all students participate. I found that by using carbon paper, the “Bronco” could be recreated on a tile by every student in all my classes. The guidelines of the project were to design a background using only the school colors: green, black, and white. The assignment led to some different backgrounds and “Broncos” of three different colors. Students all had their own unique style and were allowed to put initials on the bottom corner to identify them. The four by four inch tiles were done by every student, including the advanced art students. The classes decided on putting a border around the main mural, allowing more students to participate on the project. The border should have 165-175 4 by 4 tiles edging the main mural.

The advanced art class spent days designing and collaborating with their groups on the layout of the mural. Groups used the library and the internet to create designs and lettering for their specific space on the mural. Every group used a different colored twelve by twelve paper to create eight squares for the mural. The
class worked together to make certain all squares would compliment each other. The class spent a couple of days discussing improvements in the project. I was thrilled to watch many individuals become team players as the project moved forward.

The challenge of transferring paper square art to ceramic twelve by twelve tiles was solved with carbon paper. The students had used carbon to trace “Broncos” on small tiles and were confident in their ability on a larger scale. The tracing of art was completed in five days on all tiles. A sharpie was used to stay on the tile before the glazing process. I had experimented years ago with using a sharpie to draw designs on ceramic and then glazing between the lines. The sharpie line would burn off in the kiln and fine white lines between colors would be seen. I taught all my classes to use sharpie for design and knew how easy they would find glazing with the line method. The sharpie line creates a barrier which prevents glazes to puddle and not cross over. My classes found the concept very interesting and became very confident in their skills.

The glazing of individual tiles became the next step. The color of glaze was written on the paper squares in case any tiles were damaged and had to be reproduced. Every table group spent a week glazing tiles and inspecting for mistakes. The class was really getting excited to see the fired tiles completed. I could only fire seven tiles at a time because of the shelves in the kiln. The first firing left two tiles warped because I let them hang over the shelf and the high temperature softened them to another shape. The lesson became how learning comes from trying and failing. The
class also learned that re-glazing a tile weakened it the second time through the firing and often hairline cracks or break-age occurred. I have enjoyed watching the class mature as they work together on this project.

The completion of all fifty-six inner tiles was finally completed the first week of March. The large Barrett Bronco logo and a dedication tile, thanking the students and community for their support and donations to the project was painted and inserted to the middle of the mural project. The mural was laid out in the classroom and pictures were taken by groups of the entire art work.

The last quarter of the school year was beginning and one hundred and twenty-three new artists entered the art classroom. The students were told about the mural and the expectations of a Bronco being created by every student. Tiles were passed out to the last group of students to trace Broncos and create the border of the Mural. The last group, looking through boxes of finished Bronco tiles by other students, began creating some of the most interesting backgrounds I had seen. The experience of former artists allowed the new group to observe techniques and improve on them. The last group of tiles used the same colors with many new results.

Installing the Mural

The installation of the mural was the final part of the project. First you needed to find the center of the outside wall displaying the mural. Metal J-bend had to be secured with galvanized screws over the existing brick façade on all four sides of the mural. All metal was leveled on bottom and sides to display the mural properly. The
pilot holes for anchors were done with masonry bits. A group of young men and women were taught to use the level, power drill, and screw driver. The product to set all tiles on the brick wall was white thin-set mortar. The mortar was mixed properly and all four by four tiles were set on the bottom piece of metal. The metal was in three sections on the bottom, measuring nineteen feet and five inches. The tile was laid out along the bottom with two smaller tiles to act as borders on both sides. The mortar was applied to the small tiles and the outside border was started. The level and spacers were used to keep the mural level and centered on the brick wall. The installation of entire mural took approximately eight hours over a two day period. The installation was done on a week-end, allowing students to participate in a new experience with instructor guidance. The tiles were allowed to dry before classes were allowed to grout and polish the mural.
Chapter 4

ANALYZING SUCCESS

One of the main goals of the Barrett Mural Project was to give the community an art experience that will last for decades to come. The goals also included teamwork, discipline, and pride among the students of the school. The participants having a sense of community involvement, as proposed in the literature review, was another goal of the project. The history of murals gave the participants an insight into why their efforts could lead to a greater awareness of their school and its role in the community. Participants experienced through this art project, on the wall of Barrett school, a sense of belonging and empowerment that would be on display for decades to come.

The success of the project taught the students invaluable lessons about their future in group projects. The main mural group consisted of 37 students, broken into seven groups, learning to share ideas and agree on certain themes. Leadership was earned or taken by individuals or pairs of every group. Students realized that some individuals are willing to take on more of the work than others. Group work can lead to conversation and praise among unlikely peers. No one in the group can agree on everything, everybody has an opinion. Overall, the students felt that group work was a positive experience because it brought students together to share ideas and create a team building art experience.
The individual tiles, made by students in elective art classes, formed an exciting colorful border. The students were overjoyed as they pulled into school after the weekend and were thrilled to see their art on display. The first lunch was spent observing art students pointing out the tile produced by them. The general population was quick to praise their peers for spending time and effort to enhance the school. The students became interested in being a part of the group to grout the finished product. Students of the elective class were excited to be part of the advanced class for next year.

Teacher Reflections

The students were very excited with the finished project. Group work creates an awareness of others and talents to explore. The project taught students how to work together to finish a job. The students learned about their strengths and weaknesses on a project. This project taught us how tile would react after glazing and firing. The students excelled at finishing tiles that met expectations of the group. The level of integrity increased as the project drew near completion. Students have inquired about other projects and themes for future murals. Neighbors have come forward to admire and talk about the school and its importance to them. Teachers and employees have been very positive in their praise and excitement for the students and the school. Student participation should be available to more students interested in this type of project.
In the future, I plan on exploring yearly projects on different areas of the campus. There are several areas of our school that would benefit from having students’ talents exposed for the community to enjoy. The school is used daily for a multitude of activities throughout the community. The arts are one medium to draw praise from the community and create a pride in our facilities. Teaching other schools about the techniques and challenges will enhance the district for the future.
APPENDIX A

Students Outlining and Glazing Tile
APPENDIX B

Finished 12x12 Tiles
APPENDIX C

Installed Mural
REFERENCES


