

Arts Immersion Report

September 2021

The Art of Learning

As we embark on our 19th year at Calgary Arts Academy, we continue to draw on our team's resiliency, creativity and commitment to our charter mandate, delivering world class inclusive Arts Immersion education in a multi-aged, multi-disciplinary, democratic learning environment. The pandemic has continued to create challenges, however, with meaningful planning and preparation, we have found innovative approaches that support both Arts Immersion learning, and adherence to the necessary health protocols.

The monthly Arts Immersion Report is intended to demonstrate our approach to Arts Immersion learning, celebrate the exceptional work of our students and educators, and highlight our community partnerships and outreach.



Professional Development

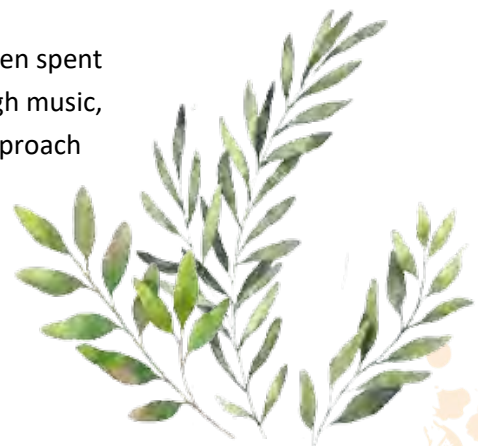
Every school year at Calgary Arts Academy begins with establishing a theme that guides inspired learning opportunities. The 2021-2022 theme is, “The Art of Growing: Cultivating Excellence.” The first week of professional development provided opportunities to further explore this theme, while building team cohesion and allowing existing staff to introduce the new staff to the core pillars of Calgary Arts Academy. Interactive presentations emphasized The Circle of Courage, Contract Learning, Developmental Assets, Democratic Discipline and Mindfulness.



Staff were challenged to learn and collaborate just as their students do, through Arts Immersion activities. For example, Arts Immersion teaching was demonstrated when staff were tasked to collaboratively write stories that were then presented through choreographed movement; parts of speech were extracted from the written works, to create movement using the following framework – adjectives became gestures, nouns were frozen shapes, verbs translated into traveling movement. This hands-on learning reminded staff not only of the value of Arts Immersion in the classroom but also the courage it takes for students to be vulnerable and share their creations. Staff watching the presentations were encouraged to utilize the Circle of Courage core values of belonging and generosity, when providing constructive feedback and positive affirmations, further emulating the expectations of the CAA community.

There was plenty of opportunity for team building through a creative lens; learning teams experimented with constructing new paint colours, representative of their summer activities. These new paint colours were then used to collaboratively design a record that represented each team. Learning teams also spent time storyboarding and filming an introductory video for students that highlighted both their creativity and sense of humour!

Learning teams consisting of both teachers and full-time artists then spent time planning this year’s delivery of the Alberta curriculum through music, dance, dramatic arts, visual arts and literary arts. This planning approach considers the art form first and foremost, which becomes the catalyst for creativity, discovery and excellence. A focus on skill development and application rather than curriculum retention remains at the forefront, providing students with the opportunity to become engaged thinkers, ethical citizens and embody a forward-thinking entrepreneurial spirit.



First Days

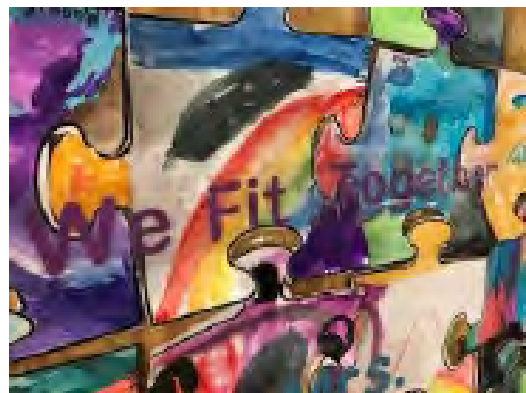
The first ten days of school were spent getting to know the students, while providing them with engaged learning opportunities to practice our school pillars. This encouraged the development of student connections within their cohort groups and helped establish routines and expectations.

Students were given the opportunity to share their learning at a school-wide, virtual Sharing Assembly held on September 10th, which further nurtured and fostered the overall school spirit.

It was evident at this assembly that *The Art of Growing* was well underway! The following highlights these early days of learning and what each grade chose to highlight at the Sharing Assembly.

Kindergarten/Year 1

The Kindies and Year 1s explored community building and the Circle of Courage in the classroom. Through a collaborative, visual art puzzle-piece project, they learned to share ideas, listen to others and understand how they all fit together. This activity also allowed them to identify what it means to be a supportive friend and resilient learner. They learned watercolour techniques, while making self-portraits inspired by Calgary visual artist Mandy Stobo. They continued to build confidence and independence through movement activities.



During the Sharing Assembly, Kindies and Year 1s spoke about the Circle of Courage and what it means to them. **Here are some of their responses:**

“We show belonging by being kind and playing with other people.”

“We show generosity by helping people when they fall.”

“We show mastery by demonstrating our best.”

“We show independence by fixing problems by ourselves.”

Year 2/3

Year 2 and 3 students were fully immersed in the Circle of Courage through a variety of books and activities such as collaborative paintings, dramatic skits, and artist studies. They also explored creating self-portraits, inspired by Mandy Stobo. Without using mirrors or reference photos, students focused on their own personal vision of themselves as individuals. They attempted to capture their own uniqueness, while celebrating the diversity and harmonious existence as a community of learners. Establishing this foundational sense of belonging in the classroom first, allows for the subsequent development of the additional Circle of Courage values, which are generosity, independence and mastery.

During the Sharing Assembly, the 2/3s demonstrated their exploration of the Circle of Courage through a pre-recorded video, showcasing readings from their personal writing samples. These identified what “The Art of Growing” represented for each individual. **The following is a selection of excerpts captured from these students:**

I grow when...

“I give love.”

“I make new ideas.”

“I make mistakes.”

“I listen.”

“I exercise.”

“I sleep.”

“I practice.”

“I keep going when things get tough.”

Year 4/5

Through a short exemplar of contract learning, Year 4/5s began the year producing an old-time medicine show. Students created entertaining performances, exploring various biomes, interspersed with sales pitches about their respective biome homerooms. This Arts Immersion learning opportunity allowed students to work together to establish a cohesive classroom entity, while also learning classroom rules and expectations.

The CAA pillars and guiding principles were explored in depth through sessions called Homeroom Olympics, in which the 4/5 classes competed against one another as they built relationships and developed team pride within their homeroom groups.

During the Sharing Assembly, the 4/5s performed a montage of their creative medicine shows, highlighting a variety of Arts Immersion learning through their set designs, props, costumes and script writing.

Year 6/7/8

Developing new connections and engaging in the Circle of Courage through Arts Immersion based activities, including drama, dance and drawing was the focus for these students. Building routines and establishing strong work habits has been integral in these first days of learning. Students in 6/7 focused on what it means to grow and cultivate knowledge, creating graffiti art that exemplified their reflections on this topic. Students in 7/8 wrote poems about what it means to grow.

During the Sharing Assembly, the 6/7 group shared their graffiti art in a video montage that incorporated words like success, treasure, appreciate, practice, teamwork, roots, independence, friendship and experience, representing their ideas of growth. The 7/8 group exemplified growth one doodle at a time set to fast motion video, overlaid with recordings of them reading their poems.

Year 9/10/11

Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 had the opportunity to visit Connect Charter School's camp in Sibbald Lake for a series of day trips. This Arts Immersion, outdoor learning opportunity allowed students to participate in arts and nature centered workshops, exploring the pillars of Calgary Arts Academy. Led by our team of artists, students were able to explore dance, drama, visual art and music, surrounded by the natural world. The positive feedback from this experience has been overwhelming, both from our students and educators. The benefits of being in nature were phenomenal, along with having the opportunity to work with different groups of people, which promoted belonging. Being outdoors also allowed for ample social distancing, which meant there could be more collaborative opportunities and human connection, which the students have missed.

Students developed movement sequences inspired by the natural elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. This allowed them to physicalize a concept and find ways to embody the natural elements through movement. There was a concerted effort to help students let go of their preconceived notions of what it means to dance, and instead embrace the accessibility of movement, unrestricted by technique.

The natural world was the subject matter for an outdoor illustration project, in which students were tasked with reconstructing textures and describing form with line. Students were encouraged to draw simple and quick illustrations of the nature around them, unencumbered by what they knew, instead only drawing what they saw.

In a rearranging nature sculpture activity, students learned about English sculptor, photographer and environmentalist Andy Goldsworthy, who produces site-specific sculptures and land art situated in a natural setting. Students were split into small groups and were instructed to use what nature provided to create ground sculptures, rearranging the natural elements available to them to create geometric pictures. The underlying goal was to make art accessible, only using what was naturally available. This activity allowed all students to feel successful at art, regardless of their technical abilities.

Students also explored composing natural soundscapes that emulated Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Students were broken into groups to practice their soundscapes and then performed them for each other two times through. In the first pass, the audience had to close their eyes and just listen. During the second pass, they were able to keep their eyes open and discover how the sounds were made. They then discussed the differences in their perceptions when their eyes were closed versus open.

The artists utilized the campfire to create a simple yet strong singalong activity that revisited past Jubilee and CBC songs. This allowed students to reminisce about CAA's important traditions that have been dearly missed during the pandemic and introduce these to new students. This activity was in many ways cathartic and healing, building connection and reminding the students of their resilience and the importance of the unique learning opportunities afforded to them through Arts Immersion.

During the Sharing Assembly, the 9s, 10s and 11s shared a video collage of their nature sculptures and their valued time at camp.

Natural Element Movement Sequences



**Rearranging Nature
Sculptures**

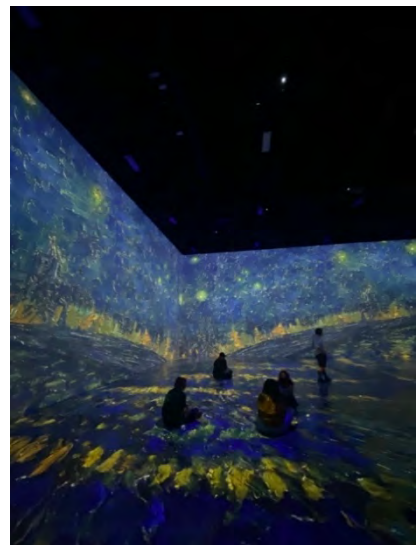


Campfire Jubilee

Beyond Van Gogh

Year 10 and 11 students in Visual Arts and Media Arts options attended the immersive Beyond Van Gogh exhibit at the BMO Centre at Stampede Park in September. Students expressed their gratitude for this school organized event, as they felt it may not have been an experience they would have otherwise pursued. Their feedback was extremely positive, describing the event as unexpected. It captivated their sense of wonder, as they learned more about Van Gogh through his dreams, thoughts and own words, set against cutting-edge projection technology, that wrapped the walls in light, colour and shape.

Freeing Van Gogh's masterpieces from their frames, opened the students' minds to new possibilities for exploring Arts Immersion, in a setting that integrated fine arts, literary arts, and music with state-of-the-art technology.



Contract Learning

Learning contracts are both a teaching strategy and an assessment tool used to encourage self-directed learning. They are a negotiation between student/teacher and in some cases parents, which helps define each party's responsibilities in learning. Students experience complete involvement in the learning process, beginning in Kindergarten. As students move through each year of schooling, there is increased opportunity for engagement. Home extension projects replace rote memory homework. Through contract learning students become masters of self-directed learning.

Our first learning contracts have been distributed to CAA families as our students begin their foray into this year's learning. The following outlines the learning opportunities, project goals, shared understanding and curriculum covered for each contract.

Kindergarten/Year 1

– Under Construction Contract

Throughout this contract, students will work to construct their world of Arts Immersion. They will collaborate with their class cohorts to learn about their communities. They will create colours, natural mosaics, and urban and rural dioramas. Students will identify and appreciate community helpers. They will learn how to build letters and construct words. Students will build counting skills and number sense as they begin the Jump Math program. They will build confidence in themselves by exploring how they belong in their community and develop positive relationships with their new friends. Ultimately students will be creating the framework for building their identity and collaborating with the Kindy and Year 1 team to assemble life sized statues, sculptures, and murals of themselves that highlights their relationship with others.



Students will create a display of their knowledge about citizenship and identity to create individual and group artistic representations of identity. These representations will reflect their unique talents, beliefs, passions and appreciation of themselves. The artistic representations will be on exhibit in CAA's hallways and a video tour of the exhibit will be made available for families.

Project Goals and Shared Understanding:

- Engage students in Arts Immersion learning in a collaborative manner.
- Explore the world around us.
- Recognize how we can express ourselves and make friends.
- Develop a sense of self.
- Build a foundation for a year of growth.

Kindergarten Alberta Curricular Outcomes will be accomplished in Arts, Math, Language Arts, Citizenship and Identity, Environment and Community Awareness, Personal and Social Responsibility, Physical Skills and Wellbeing.
Grade 1 Alberta Curricular Outcomes will be accomplished in Arts, Math, Language Arts, Social Studies and Science.



Year 2/3 – The Muppets Take Canada Contract

This Year 2/3 contract will allow students to explore the incredible geography of Canada and its dynamic communities through the art of puppetry, inspired by The Muppets! **The Muppets Take Canada contract achieves several goals:**

- Engage students in Arts Immersion learning in a collaborative manner.
- Develop skills as puppet makers, puppeteers and storytellers as we design and create puppet characters based on three communities in Canada.
- Interact with non-fiction texts to organize and convey information and ideas.
- Practice the art of performance through producing puppet shows.

Students will explore the physical geography of Canada and learn about three of its dynamic communities (prairie, Inuit, Acadian). Through the investigations of these communities, students will learn about the people in these communities and will develop their own puppet characters, who will become the tour guides for our Muppets Take Canada variety show. Students will also explore procedural writing, non-fiction and informational texts, which will help create puppet shows that illustrate daily life in these three communities.

Project Goals and Shared Understanding:

- Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.
- Manage ideas and information.
- Validate and accept the differences that contribute to the pluralistic nature of Canada.

Grade 2/3 Alberta Curricular Outcomes will be accomplished in Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Health and Life Skills.

Year 4/5 – A Night at The Museum Contract

The Year 4/5 Contract will encourage students to delve deeper into Canada’s rich history to discover a more complete and accurate understanding. They will consider what parts of history have been accurately portrayed and what requires more exploration. Students will consider why some historical events are only now being discovered, such as the tragic Residential school events. All of this and more will be uncovered as students dive into the narrative that is Canada and retell it as they see fit in their very own museum!

Throughout this contract, 4/5s will curate an art exhibit, showcasing artifacts that will include songs, statues, written poetry and visual artwork that represents Canada’s true history. Students will begin by exploring Canada’s Indigenous creation stories, followed by European settlement, confederation and more, understanding what stories and events transpired to create the Canada we know and love today.

Project Goals and Shared Understanding:

- Art is valued for different reasons (i.e., aesthetic, economic, symbolic, associative).
- A narrative such as Canada’s history, can be retold or interpreted visually.
- Canadian identity is a culmination of various people’s experiences.

Grade 4/5 Alberta Curricular Outcomes will be accomplished in Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Health and Life Skills.



Year 6/7/8 – Maze of the Mind Contract



The mind is complex; sensory input, cognitive thought and self-discovery help shape what becomes our concept of self. In this contract, students will learn about how our senses shape our perception and explore conceptual art, while learning about their five senses. They will consider the following questions. How do we negotiate our surroundings when our senses are limited? How can we be more aware of the challenges that face members of our society that are differently abled? How do we use our senses when exploring art? Is art one dimensional or can it be immersive and multi-sensory?

In science students will examine change through qualitative observations. Language Arts will engage the student in world perspectives, decoding opinions versus facts and strengthening their sense of global empathy. Discovering mathematical patterns through variables and constants, will help students recognize equations and preservations of equality in the world. Through historical thinking, students will begin to uncover how our perceptions are shaped by the world around us and what happens when those worldviews conflict with others.

Project Goals and Shared Understanding:

- Students will develop critical and creative thinking skills.
- Students will identify individually and as a collective, the importance of sensory stimuli through experiences.
- Students will gain a more cognitive understanding of mental health and how the brain affects activities of daily living.

Grade 6/7/8 Alberta Curricular Outcomes will be accomplished in Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Health and Life Skills.

Year 9 – Passing a “Stop” Motion Contract

In Canada, our environment and landscape are ever-changing. Cities are growing, land use is shifting, which is not always the best for the flora and fauna. In Alberta alone, we have plenty of creatures that don’t exist anywhere else in the world. Lobbyists are working hard with shifting government policies to support the land that we live on and the wildlife that we share it with, while also balancing human needs.



Through this contract, students will learn how to create and lobby for the passing of a specific ecological bill. Through the development of stop motion animation, they will document the journey of their bill from conception to implementation. Students will explore political processes, at-risk and threatened species, persuasive writing, as well as applying their math skills to the creation of stop motion animation.

Project Goals and Shared Understanding

- Students examine trends toward loss of diversity and examine related issues concerning environmental quality and the impact of technologies.
- Students will analyze the relationship between Canada’s political and legislative processes and their impact pertaining to governance, rights and citizenship.

Grade 9 Alberta Curricular Outcomes will be accomplished in Art, Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science.

The start of this school year was also cause for celebration with the installation of our new Outdoor Activity Centre at the Education Centre, which the students from all grades have been thrilled to utilize! We are extremely grateful to the Calgary Arts Academy Foundation and our many donors for making this project possible!

