

Autism, the Art Classroom and the Spectrum of Friends Club

Dr. Nadine Gordon-Taylor

This presentation is for the participants of the NAEA Conference. Identifiable images of students have been removed to protect their privacy.

This presentation will:



Watercolor with Salt – Outlined



Under the Water: Life in the Ocean

Offer you practical advice for working with students that have social cognitive deficits - autism - in a high school art class

Discuss creating a Spectrum of Friends Club in your school (for any level – elementary and middle school as well)

Share aesthetically pleasing and skill development art lessons

Advice

For Art Teachers Teaching Special Needs (Autistic)
Art students:

- 1. Create a Spectrum of Friends Club or Spectrum of Friends Art Club. If you have autistic students in your school (either mainstreamed in your art classes or in a separate art class like this program) and you have them interact with club members, you will see something amazing happen. The club benefits everyone and helps create unique collaborations resulting in engaged students, projects that flow, and new friendships.**

2. Autism is called a “spectrum” because almost no two students are alike. If you come to a Comprehensive Skills Class (our name for the autistic special education class) with preconceived ideas – they may limit you. These special kids may surprise you. I have students whose art skills range from low elementary to second level high school.



100 Plus Line Assignment

3. Even if you have no formal training, you can teach autistic students. Read, go to local workshops and conferences, and learn from experience, not just from research. Try out all types of projects no matter how simple or complex. Trust in your own intuition. Create projects that you think they will enjoy.



Class Yearbook/Scrapbook

4. Whenever possible, work from your existing art curriculum – these students are capable of doing many of the same lessons you use with your other classes.



Negative/Positive Space Cut Paper
Designs

5. **Be open to finding ideas for projects everywhere – not just from “Googling” sites specifically designed for students with learning disabilities. You can find ideas from:**

Commercials on TV
Art supply catalogues
Collage art catalogues
Your regular art curriculum
Visit to Museums
Your local hardware store
Talking with other teachers, etc.



Laminated, woven placemats with their favorite foods
glued on.

6. Create projects that are relevant to your students needs but at the same time address the art curriculum. Every project you create needs to reinforce art concepts. Even though some of the students you will be teaching are very limited, when creating your curriculum keep in mind the following:

- the elements and principles of design (some of these students know the concepts better than my regular studio classes!)*
- interdisciplinary projects based on collaboration with another teacher/s*
- cognitive/motor skill reinforcement*



The 100 plus Line Project
Interpreted Differently!

7. Always be ready with more than one project. Let student's work at their own pace.

8. **Parents of special needs students need to know you are doing something relevant and that you are helping their son/daughter. Clarify your goals and objectives via info sheets sent home attached to the back of the art work and/or keep a website of student's work and lesson objectives. Happy parents will actually contact your principal to tell them how impressed they are!**

9. **Never lose your patience and don't take anything personally. Although this is good advice for any class, you need to have a sense of humor and lots of energy!**

10. **Be flexible, be generous with praise, and enjoy these amazingly unique and warm students.**



Organizational skills?!



When the **Spectrum of Friends** club members found out that the autistic students had art twice a week during 7th period (when most students in the school are free) they came to me and asked if they could come work with the students and help out.

The Spectrum of Friends Club and the Art Department

For students with Autism Spectrum Disorders or SCD's (Social Cognitive Disorders), a fully integrated social group that feels physically and emotionally safe provides a positive, success-oriented experience and instills a sense of hope, optimism and motivation to grow.

The club members meet every Friday after school in their classroom to talk, play games and just hang out.

For students with Autism (who often feel isolated and separate),
the **Spectrum of Friends Club**
offers a sense of normalcy, acceptance, and collaboration. The club helps these students feel part of the school community.

The Autistic students benefit from working with mainstream students during art class- these unique collaborations foster social skill training, language development, visual thinking skills, and authentic connections

--Students Learn:

more about their new friends (students with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental learning challenges) who are different from themselves and they learn to respect those differences

Students Feel:

they are doing something good for others and in return feel good about themselves.

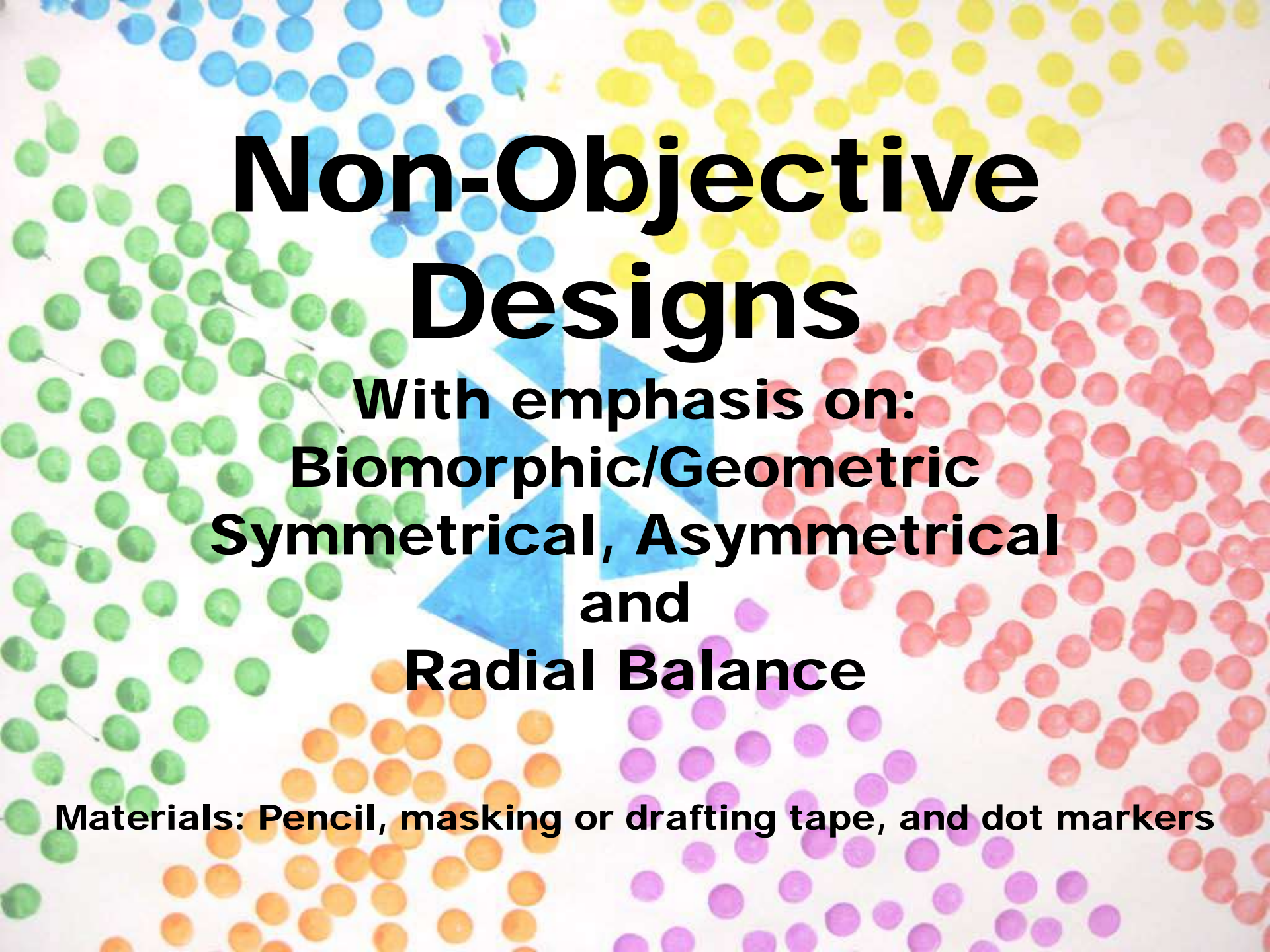
--Students See:

how the students they are helping stay much more in the present moment, how nothing matters but what is happening now! They don't worry about a year from now or what happened a week ago!

Using an organized peer group (a collective) is an effective means of mediation and a powerful facilitator in forming higher psychological functioning in children with disabilities. The benefits for the art class are happier students who are able to sustain their attention longer.

The club members are allowed to help the students.
Sometimes they are just there for support and other times they demo for them what to do next.

Every student has different needs. The goal is to have them feel successful and proud of what they have created.

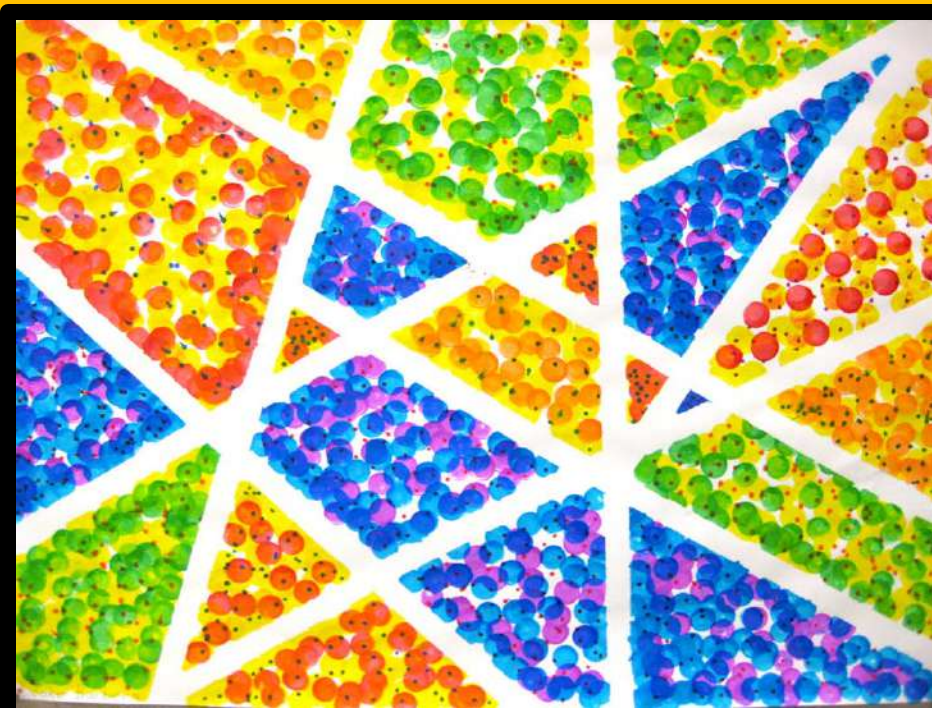


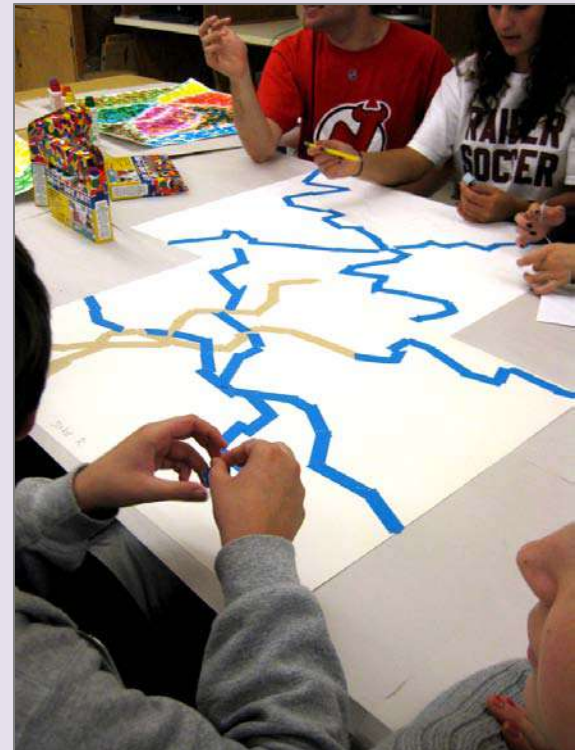
Non-Objective Designs

With emphasis on:
Biomorphic/Geometric
Symmetrical, Asymmetrical
and
Radial Balance

Materials: Pencil, masking or drafting tape, and dot markers

The project was also about complementary colors, patterns, and visual movement.

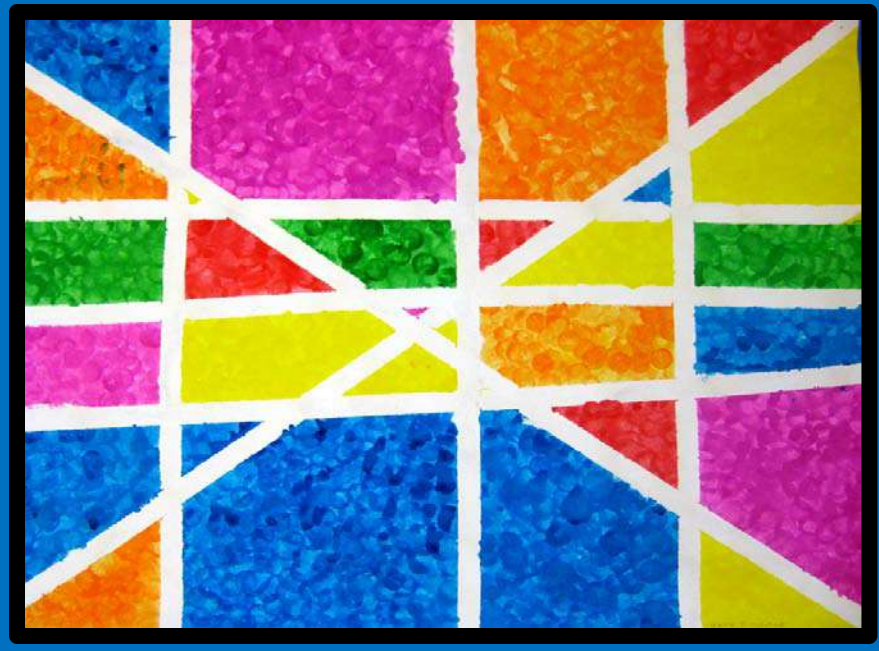
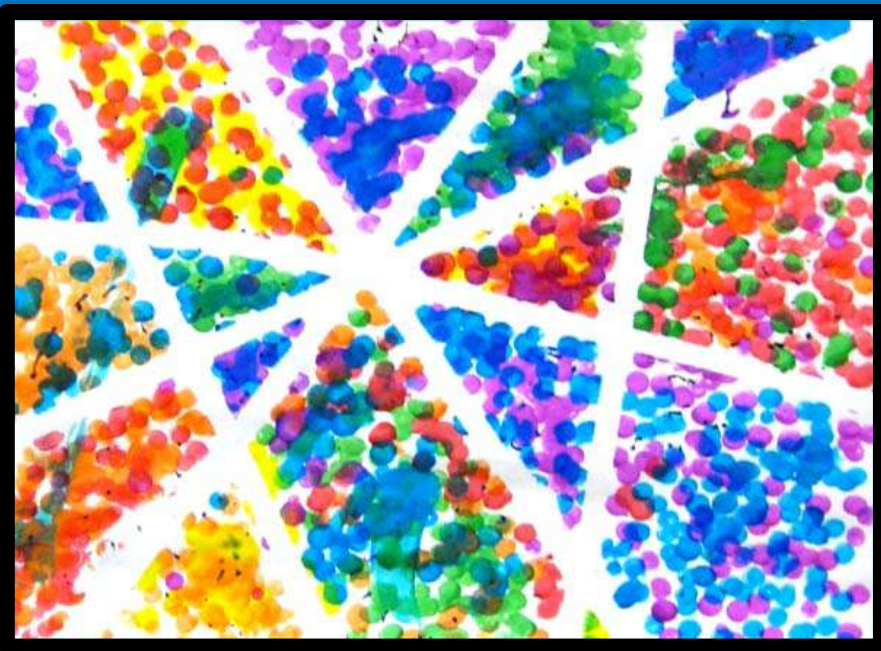
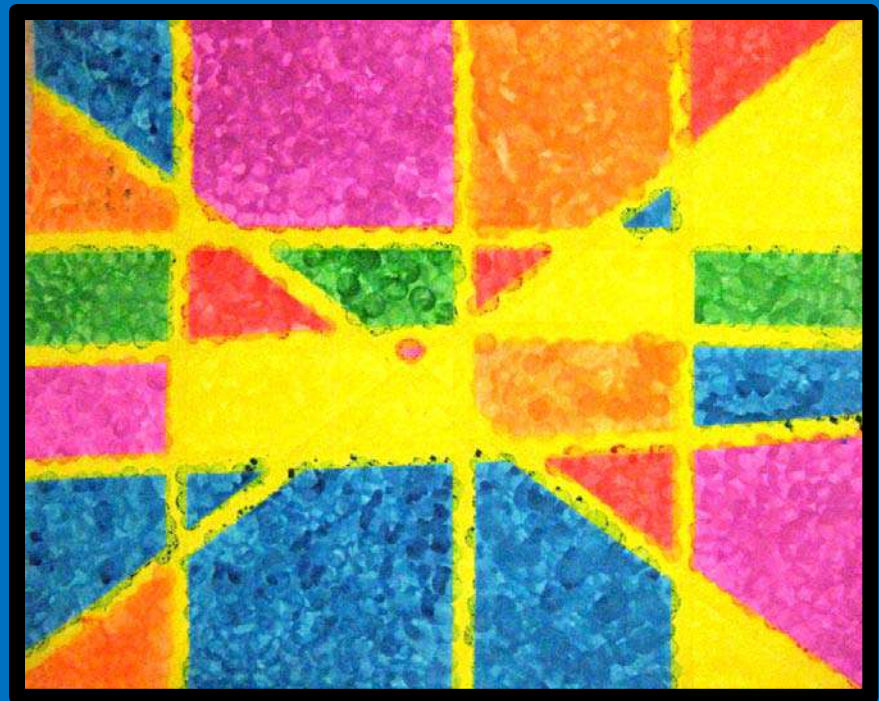


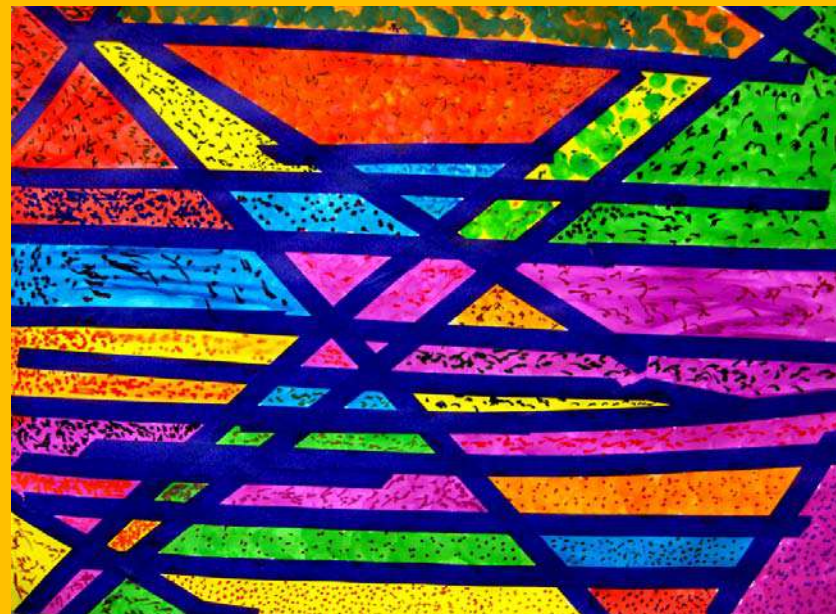


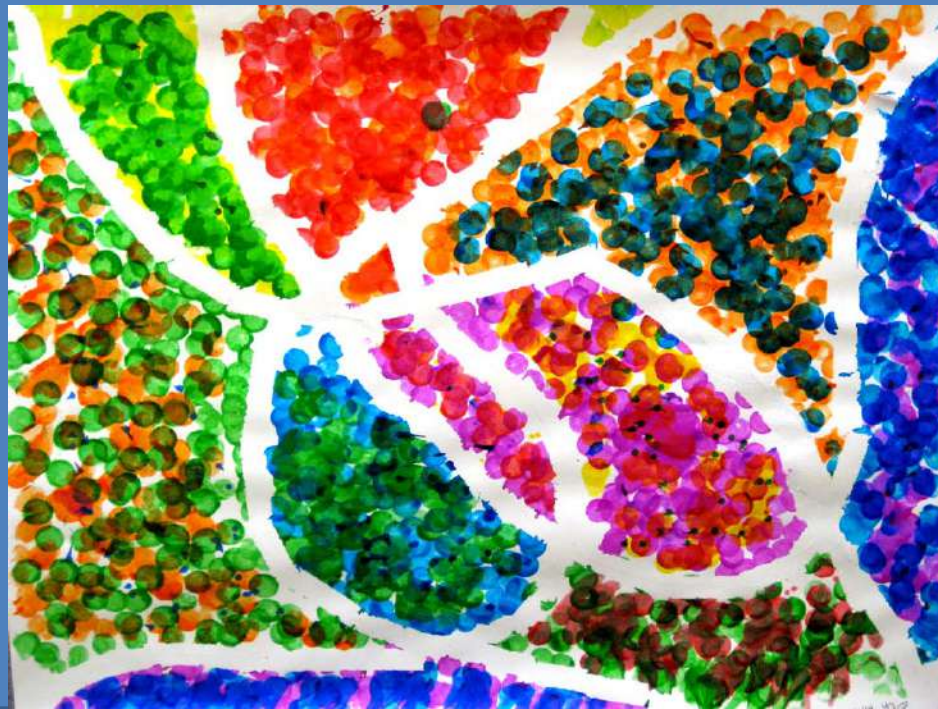
The project was also about layering color over color and transparency.

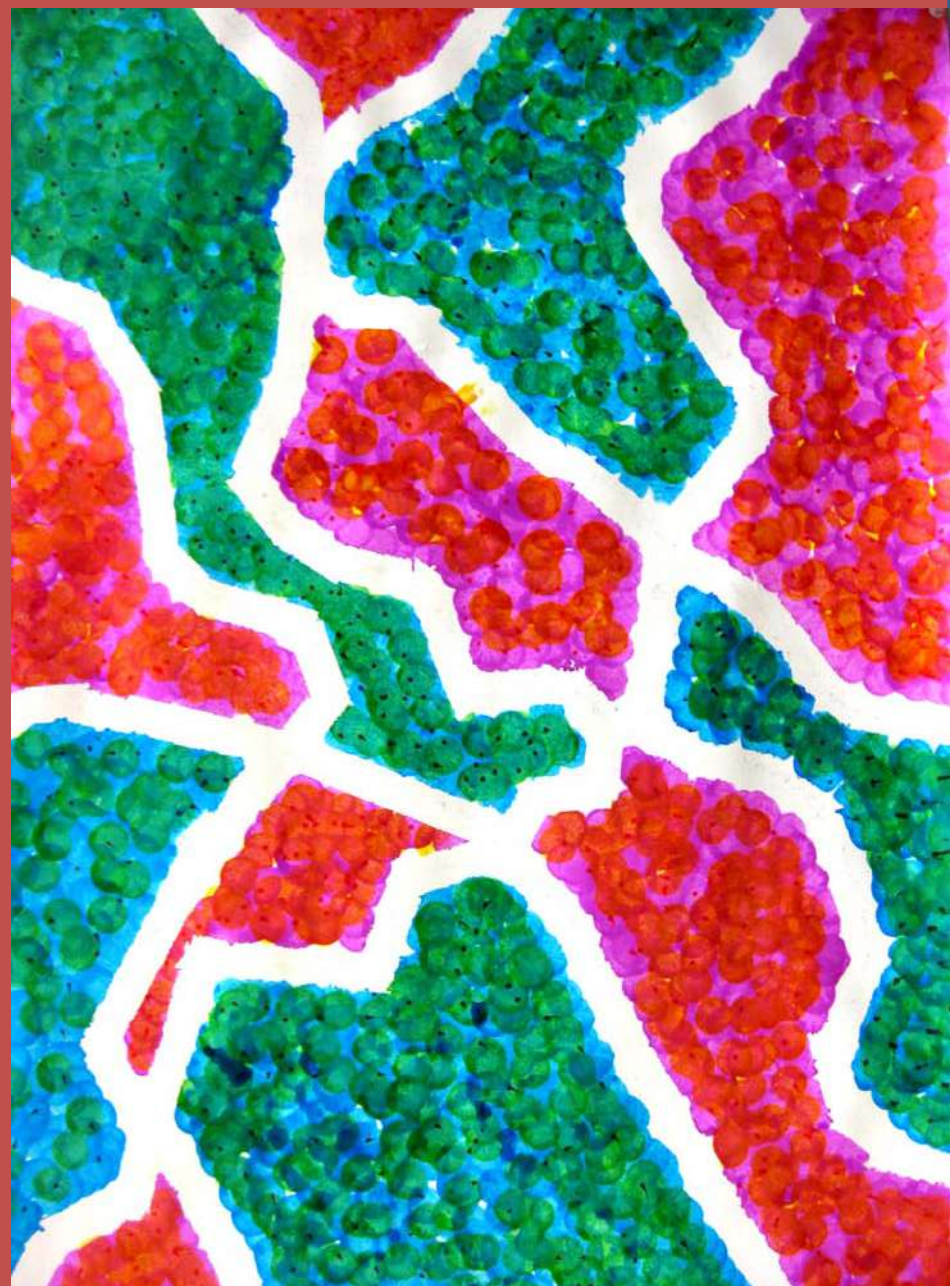




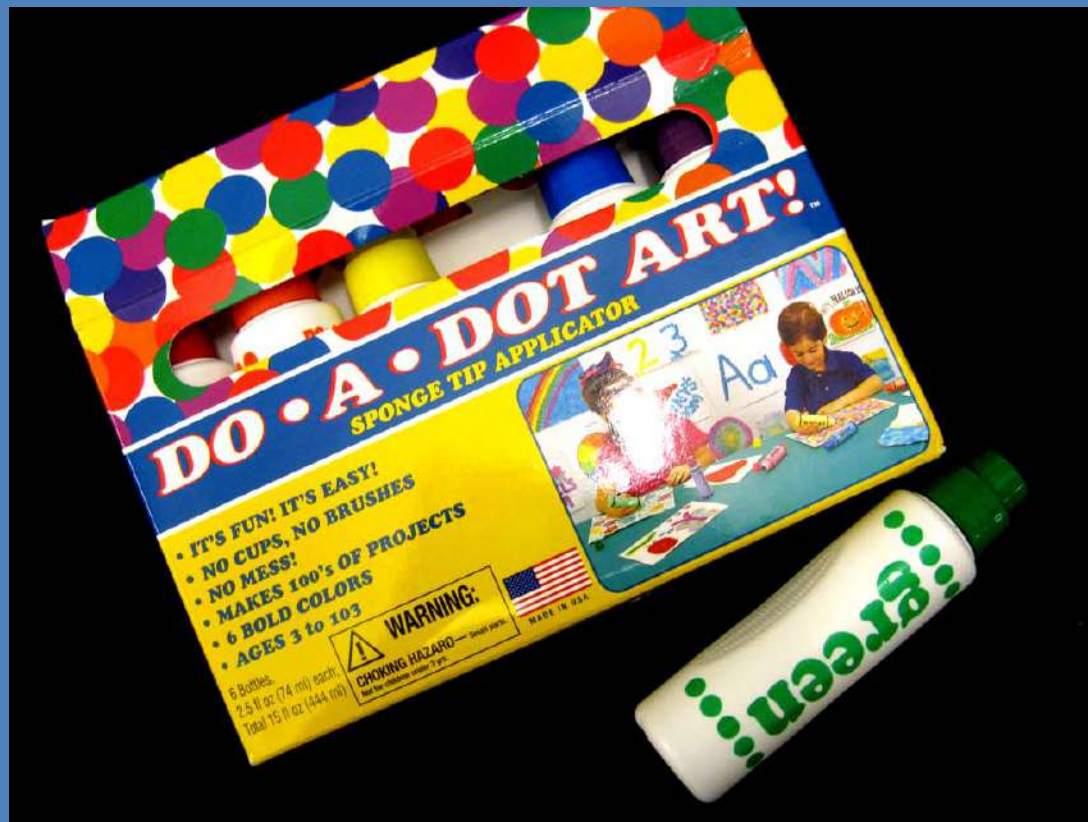




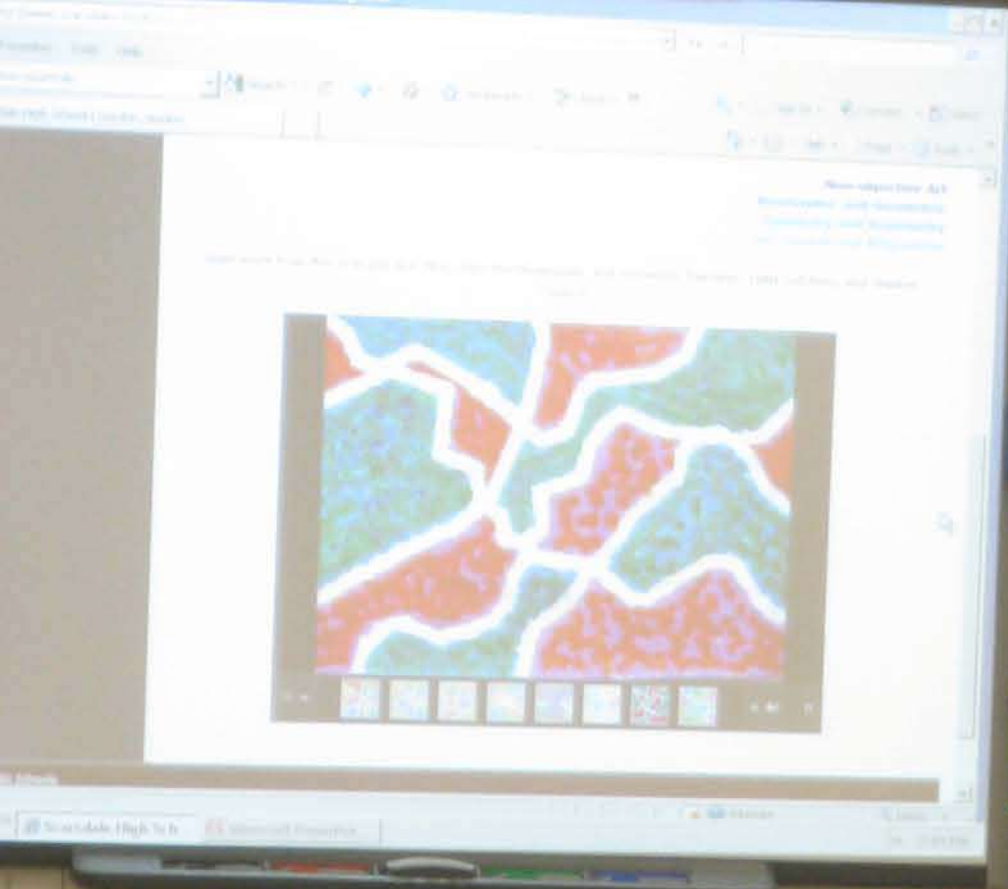




Although thick markers are better, most students can use thin markers to make dots.



For some students it is easier to hold thick jumbo markers than thin ones. Look through the elementary art catalogues from Sax and Dick Blick for great ideas and fun materials.



Today we are learning about

Non-Objective Art

Non-Objective Art is art that has no objects in it that you can recognize. It is only made up of colors and shapes. Today we will be creating in class a

Geometric

(circles, squares, triangles, rectangles – shapes with straight lines)

marker painting with

negative space lines.

(negative space is what is in between objects)

Vocabulary:

Non-Objective Art is art that has no objects in it that you can recognize. It is only made up of colors and shapes.

Color - primary, secondary, complimentary, analogous, symmetry,

Pattern - repetition of a shape

Movement - takes your eyes on a ride

Transparent - you can see through it

An example of a non-objective painting is

Victor Vasarely's
painting called "Vega-Nor."

Rangoli Art, Mega Stencils, and Radial Balance





Rangoli is an art form originating from India to decorate floors.



As you trace, you move the stencil around a central point on the paper.

All students (no matter where they were on the spectrum) loved stenciling no matter how complex the stencils were. They were engaged throughout the entire class and often asked to do it again.





Although the Rangoli stencils need to move around a central point to create radial designs, the student in the middle of this picture student did it her own way and was so happy with the result that she did a second one.

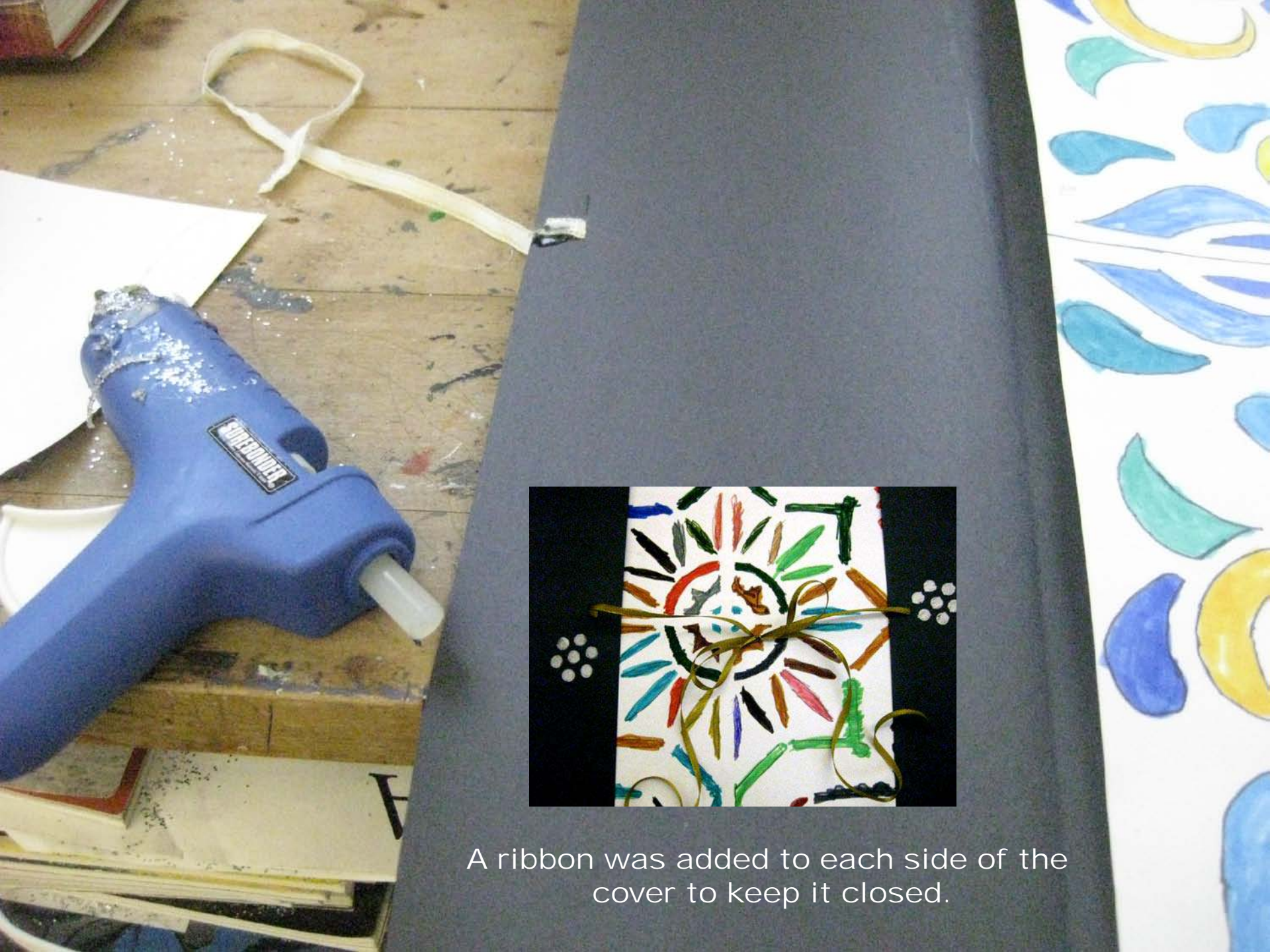


We made a decorative cover
to finish the piece off. A
motif from the original
image was repeated on the
sides of the cover.

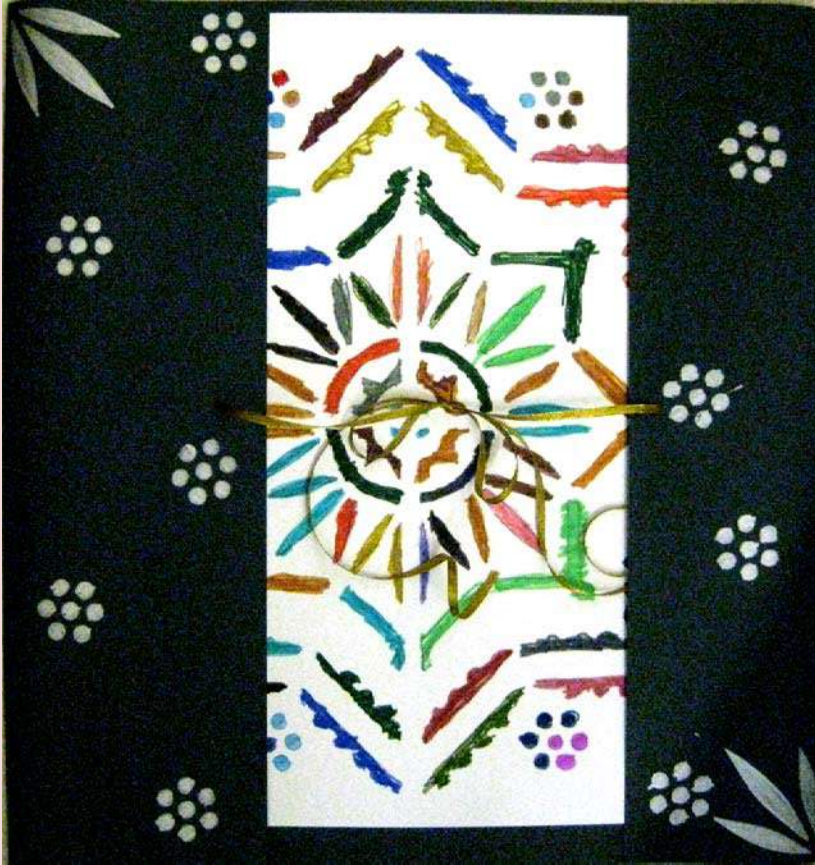


Students discuss which section or motif they want to choose.





A ribbon was added to each side of the cover to keep it closed.



Finished pieces.

Shadow Puppets

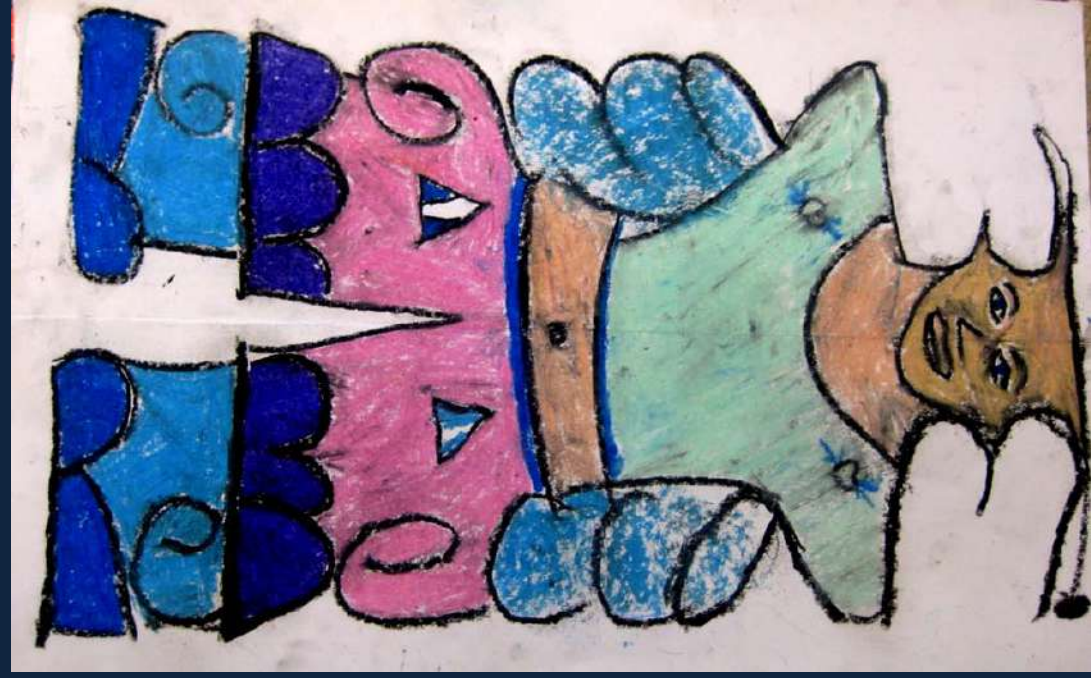
An Indonesian scholar visited my school district and shared his knowledge about Wayang Kulit shadow puppets with many of the district art classes. The Comprehensive Skills Art Program did a modified version of the Shadow Puppets. The sparkling results were based on their names! The project was adapted from an elementary art project.



First you fold a piece of white drawing paper in half. With the folded side down the student writes their name horizontally across the folded paper (they can either print or write in script). You fold the paper back over itself and rub the craypas so it transfers to the other side. Connect all the letters with a black craypas to form the shape of a funny character. Then students fill in the final shape with what ever color craypas they like.

What name do you see below?





When the craypas image was finished, it was traced onto a piece of black tag board and the students cut it out. Arms were added separately and attached by club members or myself.



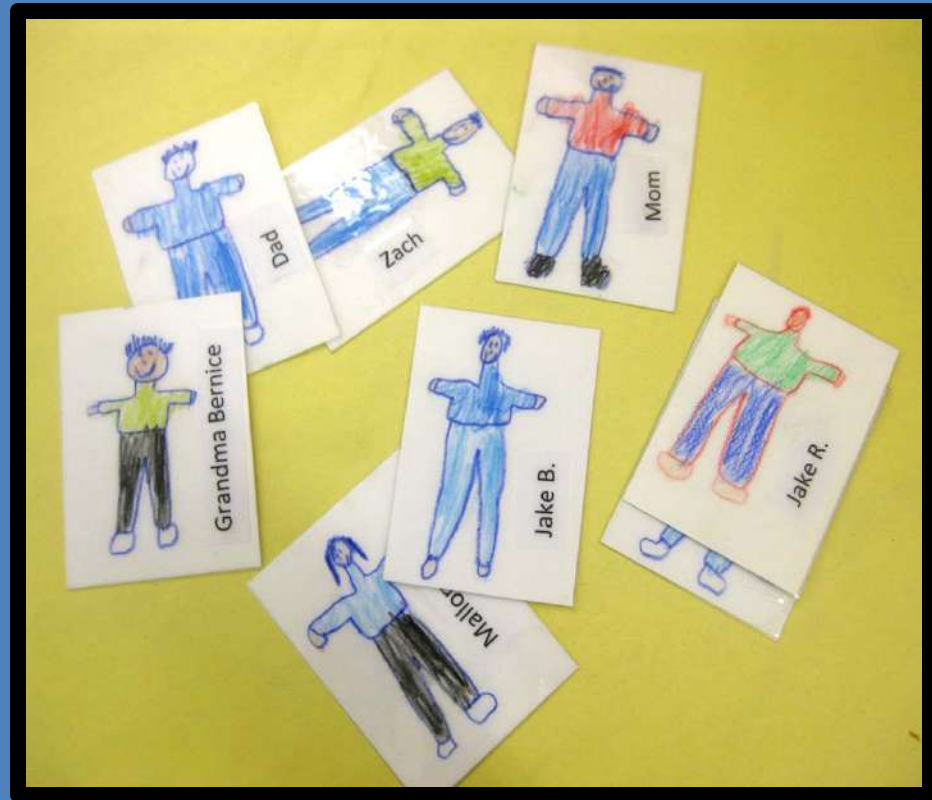
Metallic markers, glitter, and gemstones were added.
Attention was paid to patterns and symmetry.



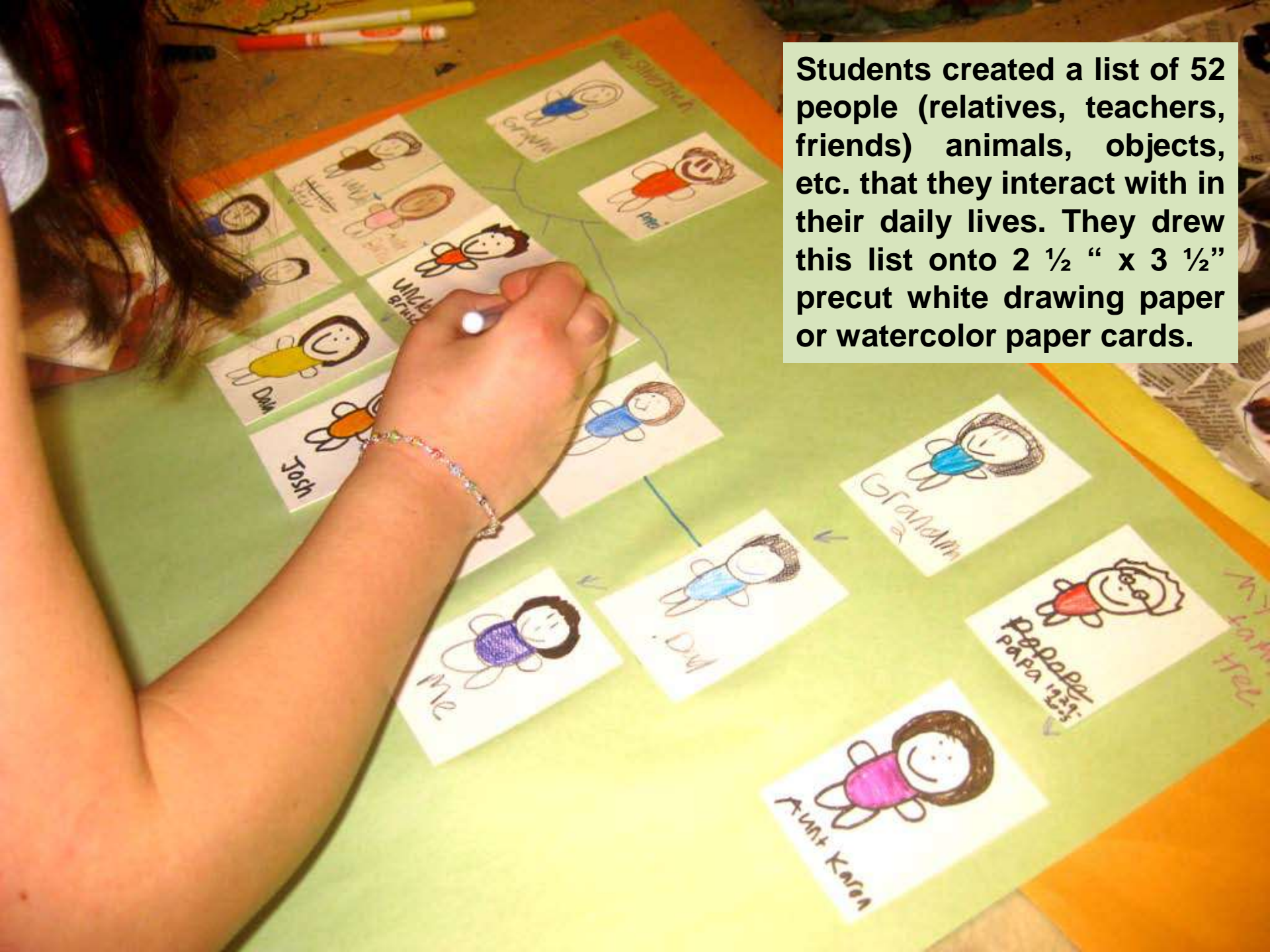




"52 Special People and Things that Are Important to My Life" A Memory Card Game



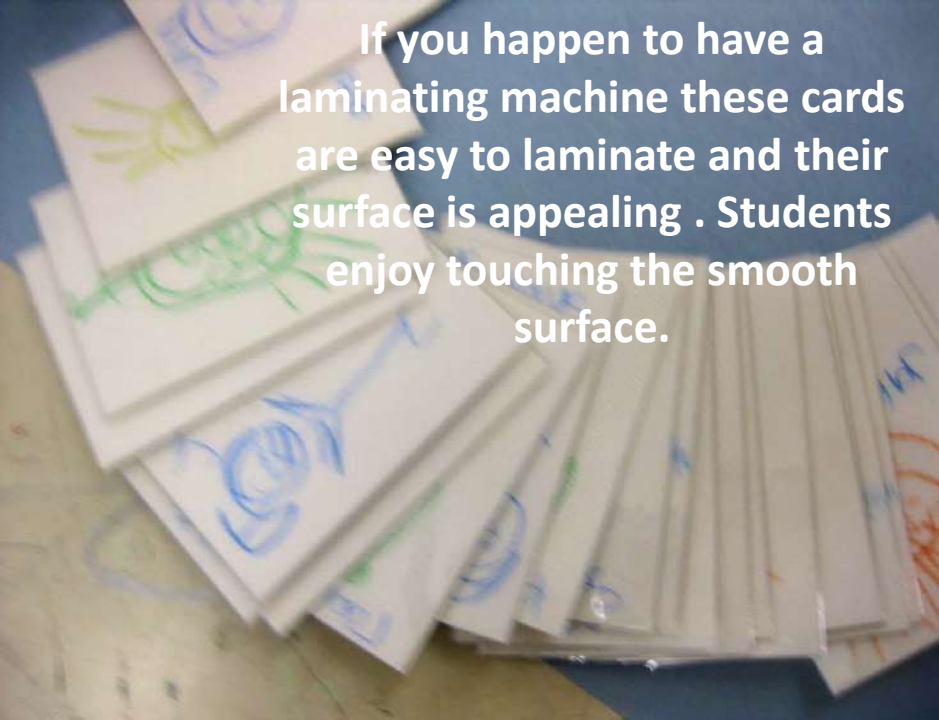
Students created a list of 52 people (relatives, teachers, friends) animals, objects, etc. that they interact with in their daily lives. They drew this list onto 2 ½ " x 3 ½" precut white drawing paper or watercolor paper cards.





The cards were turned over and with the help of the club members, the four different suits (clubs, hearts, diamonds, and spades) were added to the back.

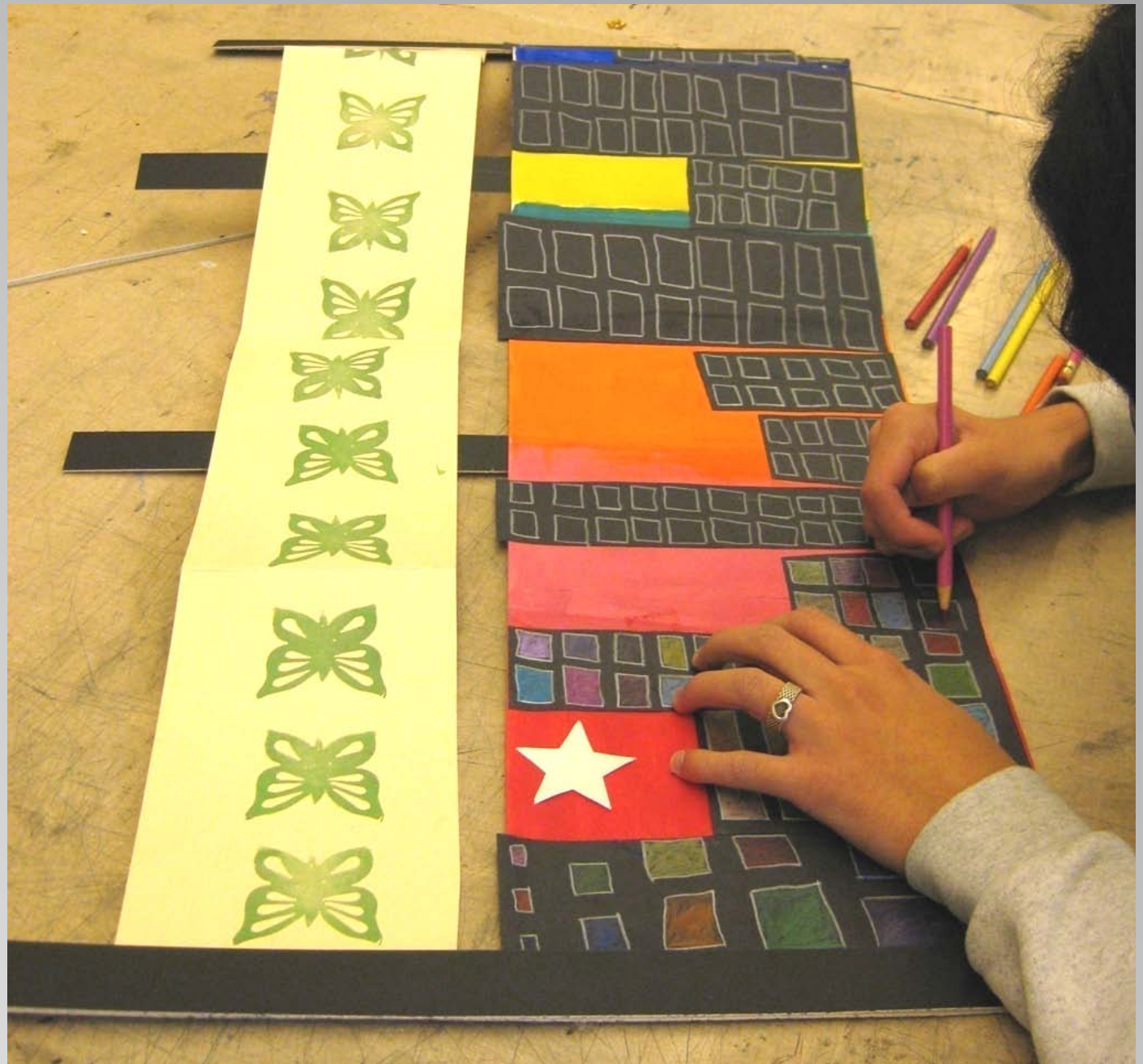
If you happen to have a laminating machine these cards are easy to laminate and their surface is appealing . Students enjoy touching the smooth surface.



The special ed teacher was doing a unit on the city. I adapted a book project I did with another class to create a standing city with dreams floating above the buildings.



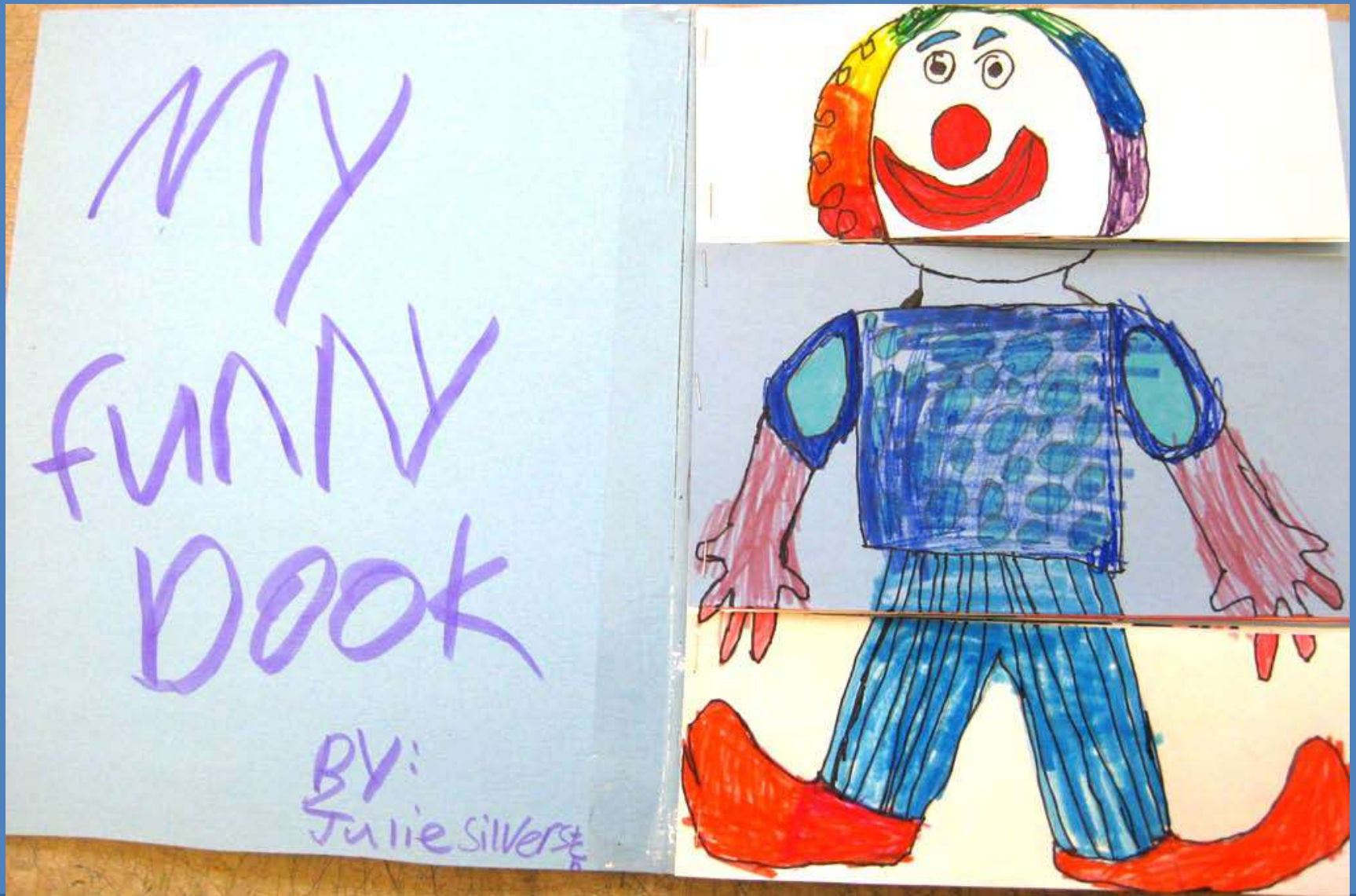
We used stamps on the top piece of oak tag paper and precut black construction paper rectangles formed the buildings in the city. These rectangles were glued onto a sheet of folded paper that had been painted with colored tempera paints. Windows were created with white colored pencils to which some students added colors. Card board strips were added to the back so the buildings could stand.



The classroom teacher loves to display all the finished pieces before the go home.

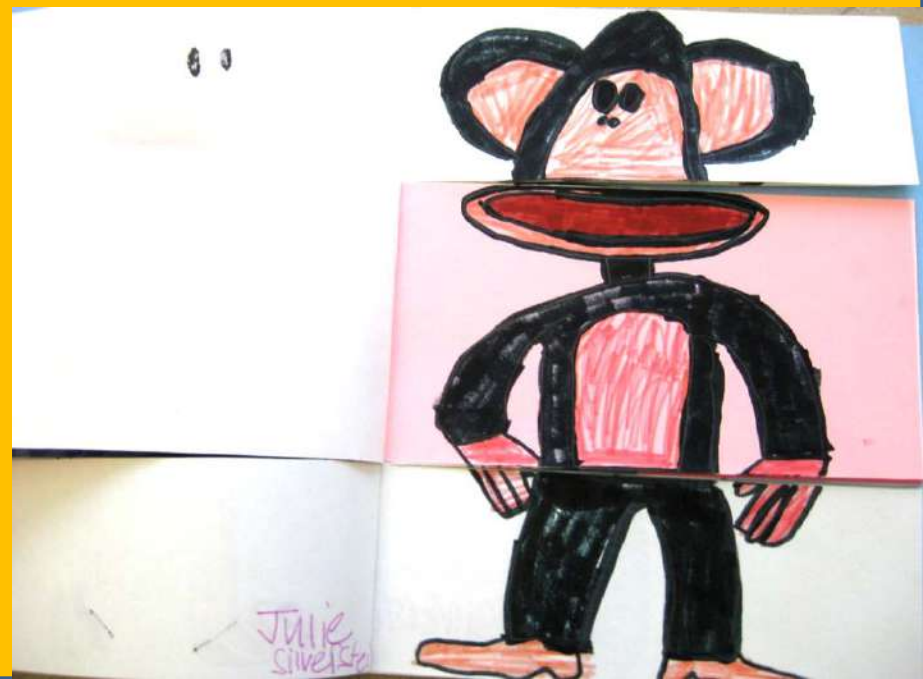


Fun, Funny, or Flip Books

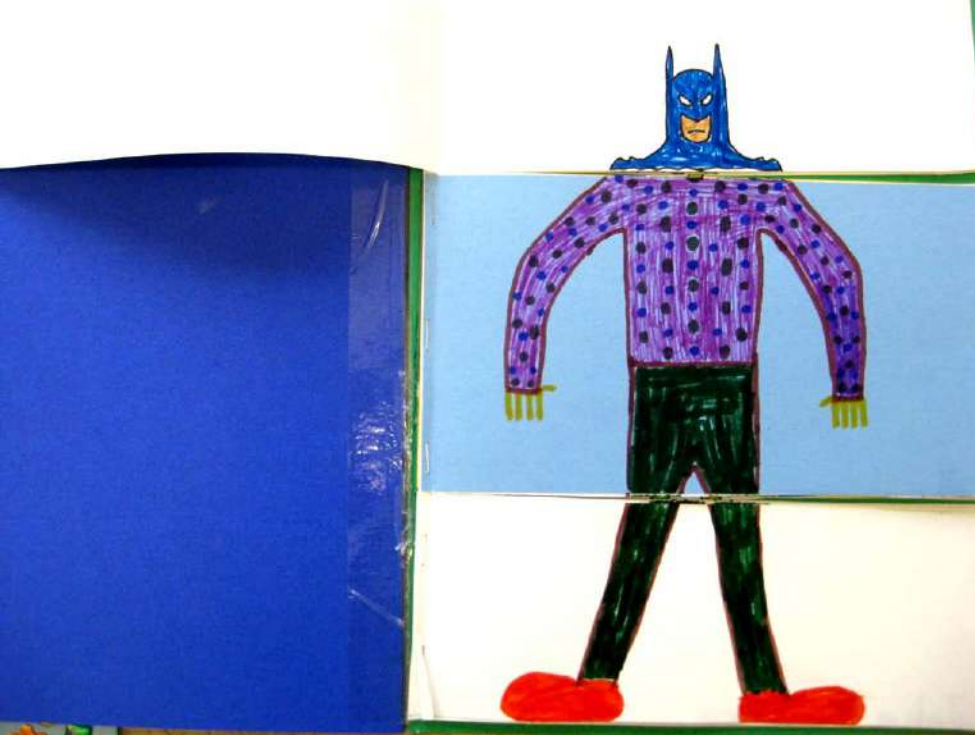


Students drew images of clowns, doctors, nurses, firemen, superheroes, and their favorite cartoon characters to represent various professions. They could get images off the computer or use the images given out.







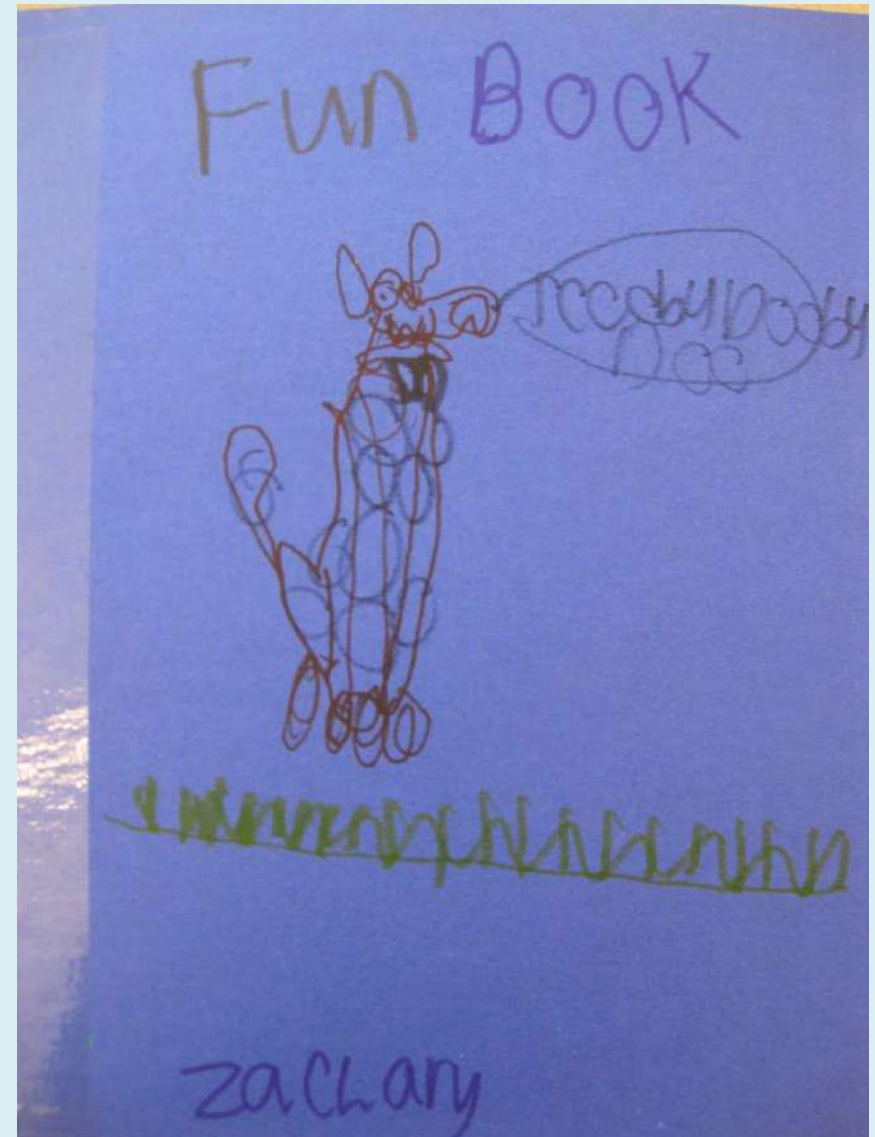
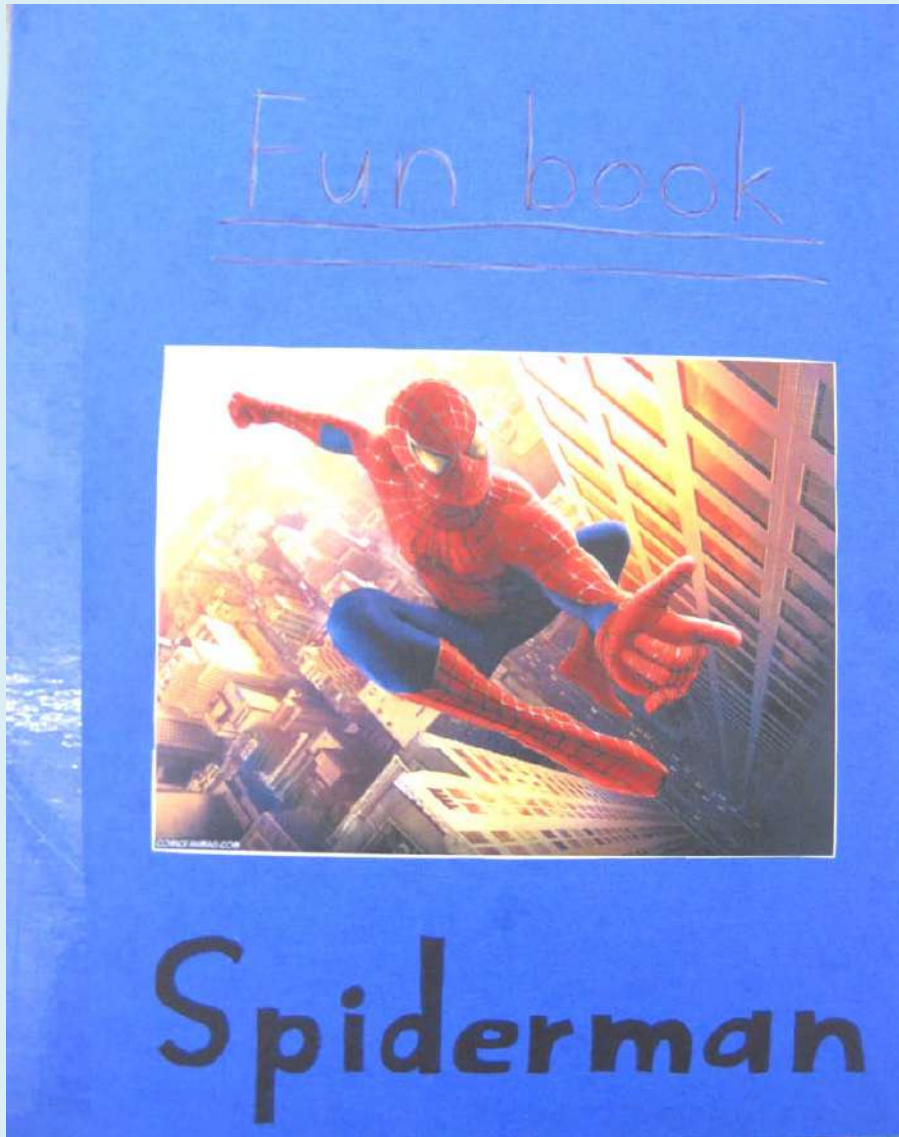






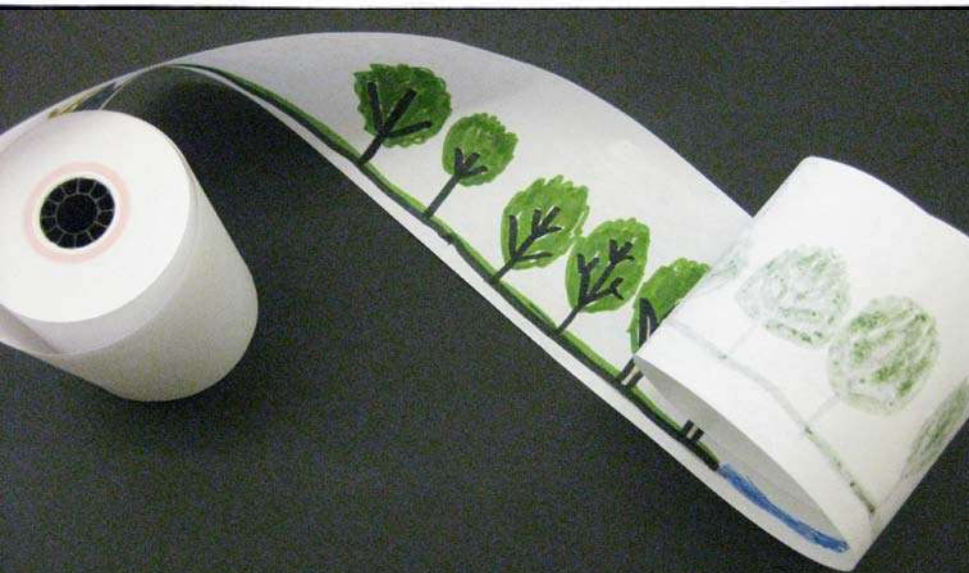


Pages were stapled together with tag board covers and decorated.



Parents actually e-mailed the head of special ed, and the principal how excited their son/daughters were with this project.

A Book for All Reasons: A Day in the Life of...Or Cash Register Receipt Paper and Finishing Early











Creepers



Caveman



Headless Specter



Jaguar

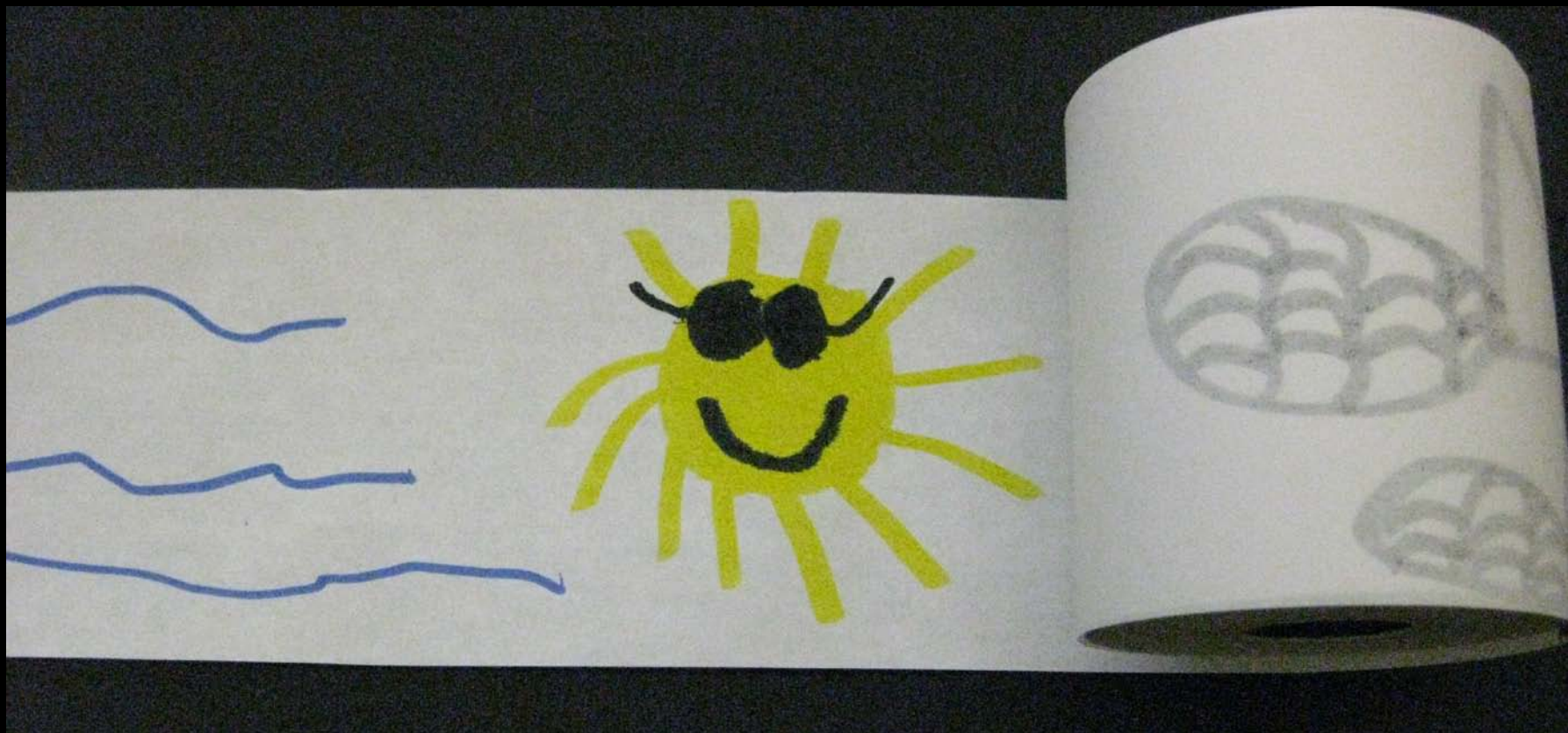


Mona
Tiki
Tia



Hawaiian Witch Doctor





Bahamas

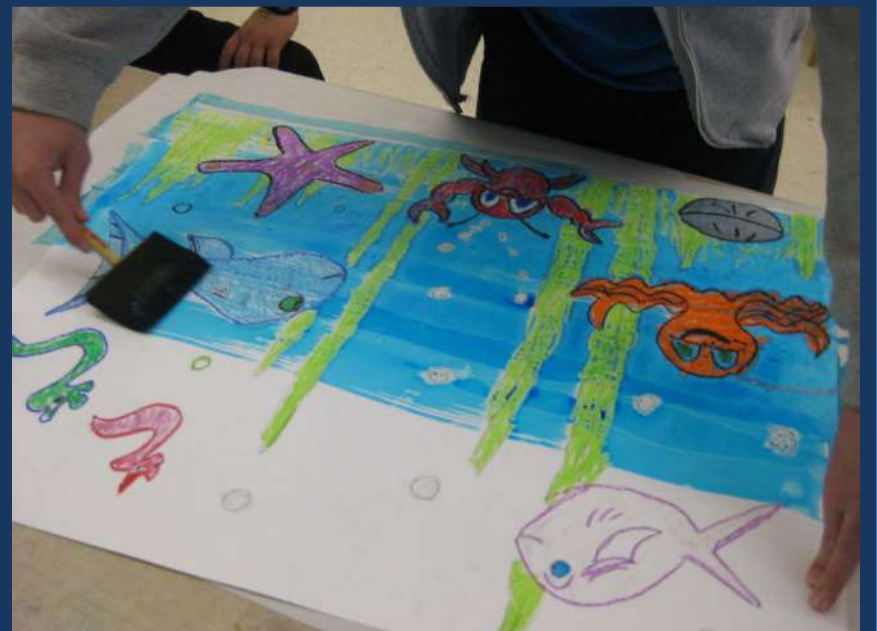




Under the Sea

Craypas/Liquid Watercolor Resist





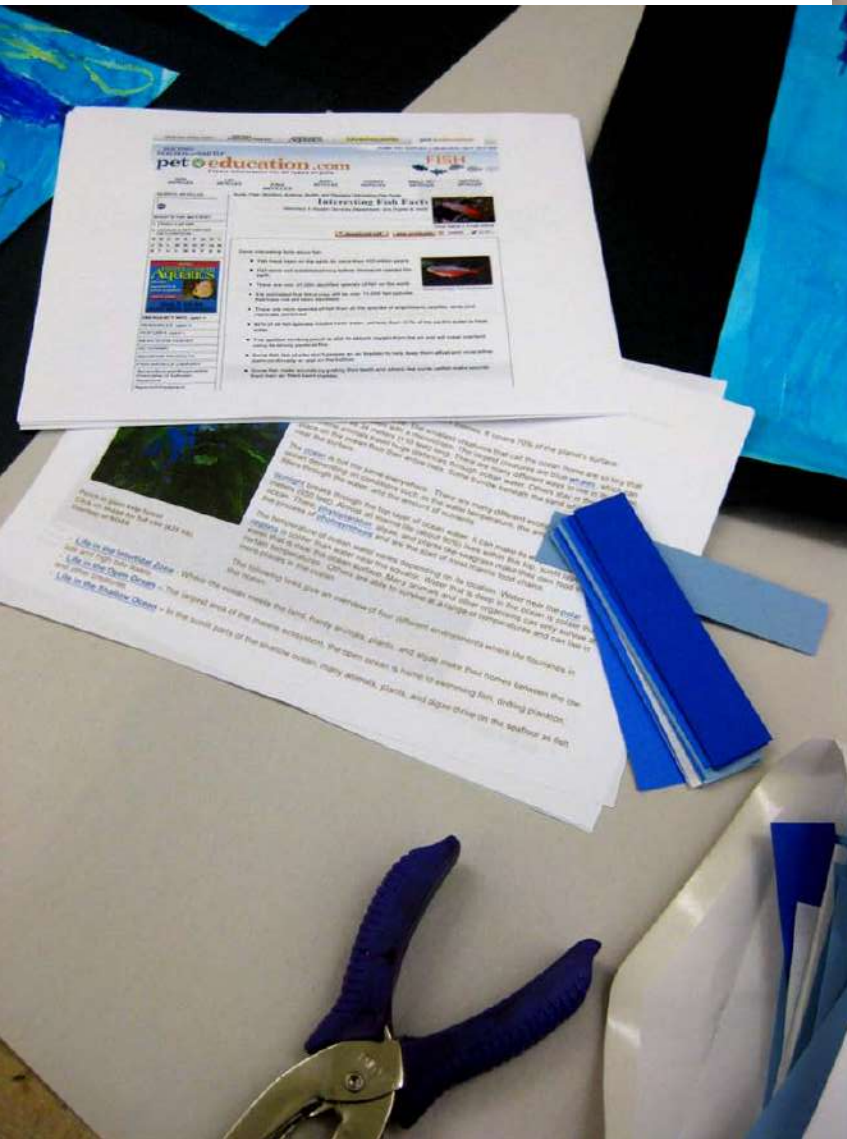




Even when the project deals with an interdisciplinary topic such as science or social studies, it is still always an art project and deals with the elements and principles of design and aesthetics. These students are aware of and appreciate beauty.







There are actually three species of Sea Lion in the world, but purple head is large than all into one category.

Among the two hundred or so species of seals, the green Mony Seal.

There are two species of seals, the green Mony Seal.

Sea turtles are reptiles that live in a marine or brackish environment.

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Seahorses are found in some warm waters, among them the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans.

The clownfish is a type of fish that lives in salt water habitats.

Lobsters are seized by examining the first set of appendages behind the walkways.

Seahorses are members of the pipe fish family.

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Seahorses are members of the pipe fish family.



Whale The biggest animal in the sea

Barracuda A fish with sharp teeth

Clown Fish A fish who is orange and white

Tuna A fish that tastes good

Dolphin Another fish that is intelligent

Sea anemone (Clown Fish) live in them

Real A creature that is not a fish

Starfish It is shaped like a star

Angler fish A creature that lives in the dark

Sea urchin A fish that is a sea urchin

Shark A creature that eats fish

Stingray A creature that is sharp and flat

Eel A long creature that gives a shock

Squid A creature that is related to snail

Swamp fish A fish with a swampy habitat

Porcupine fish A fish that puffs up

Tentacle A creature with long tentacles that it uses

Lobster A creature with big claws

Sea turtle The animal that has a big shell

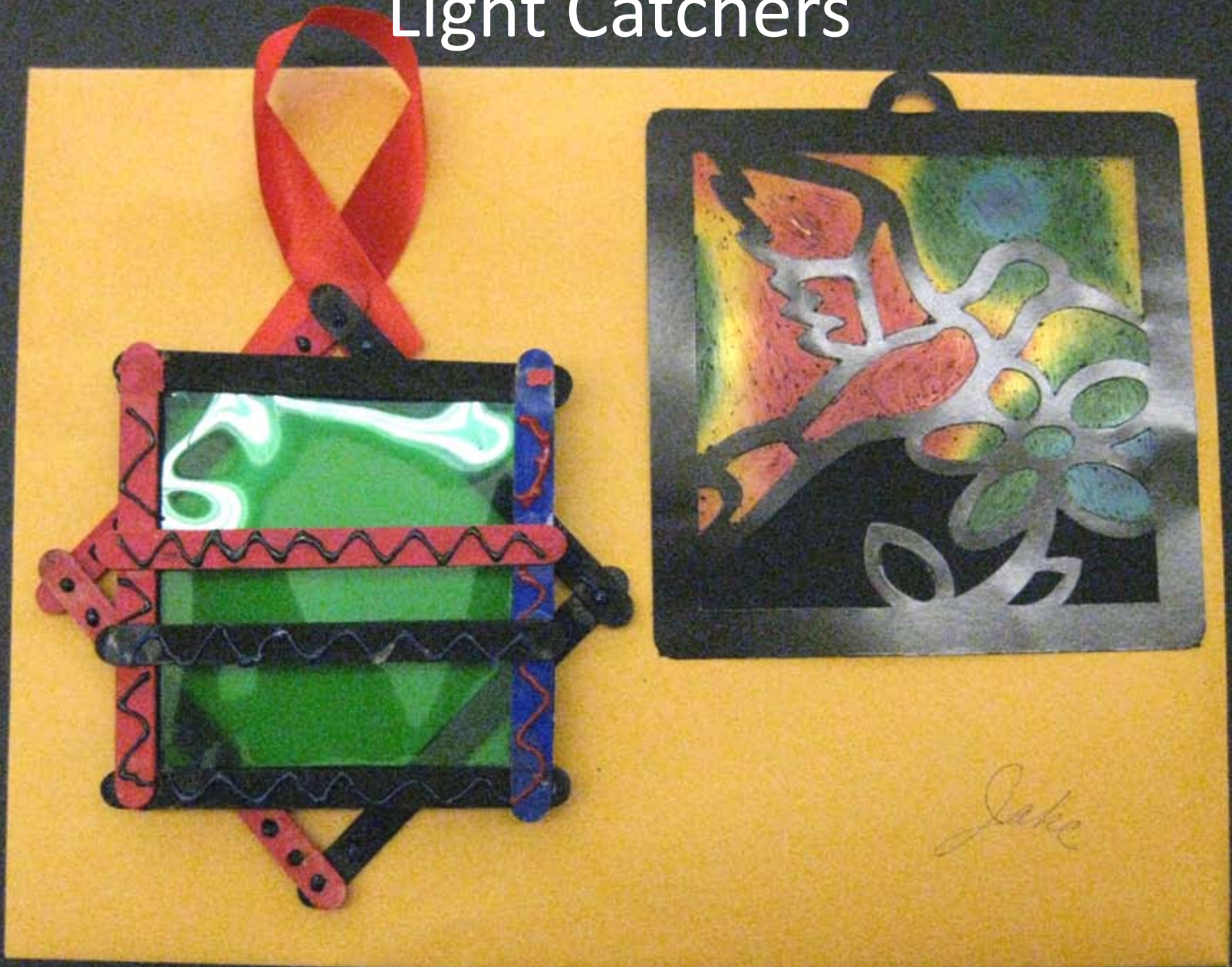
Octopus An eight footed creature

Crab A creature that can move sideways

Flounder A flat fish

Seaweed A plant of the sea

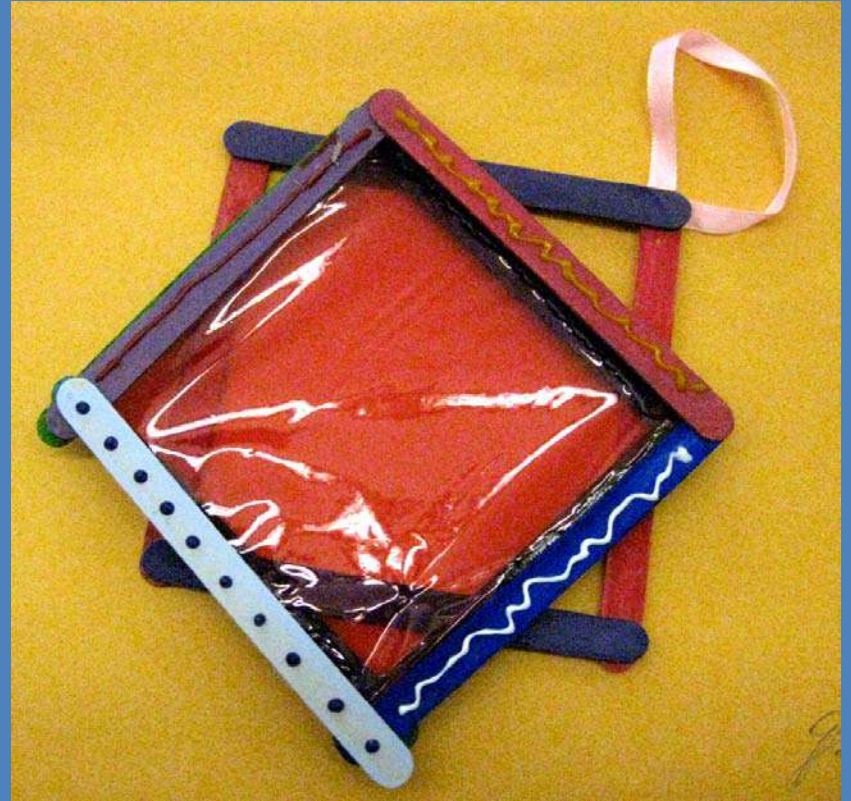
Light Catchers

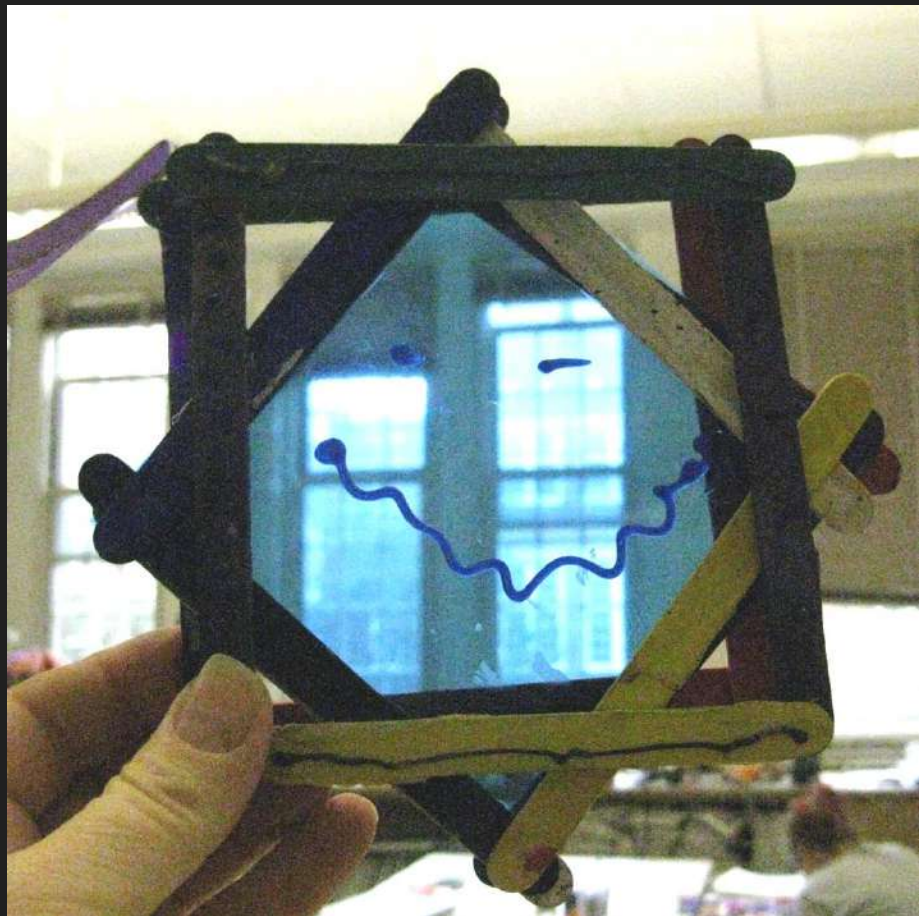


Homemade VS Store bought



**Students decorated the Light Catchers
with "Puffy Glue."**





Light Catchers

This packet contains two light catchers. I hope you will be able to hang them in front of a window with a suction hook to experience the glowing colors. The colors will change at different times of the day. When there is bright light passing through the colored gels the colors become intense and “hi-key.” When the sun goes down the colors will become more moody and “low key”.

Students created these structures to experience what light does to color. We talked about how light passes through the color and is picked up by the rods and cones in their eyes.

Stick and Paint Light Catcher:

Students painted Popsicle sticks different colors with tempera paint. They then assembled the sticks either in a pattern or randomly. The sticks were glued together with a colored gel placed in between.

Scratch Light Catchers:

Students scratched away a black coating that revealed beautiful transparent color. We held them in front of a light and it the color was radiant. Students experienced created both a commercial product and one they made themselves.

We discussed which one they liked better and why.



Bifurcation







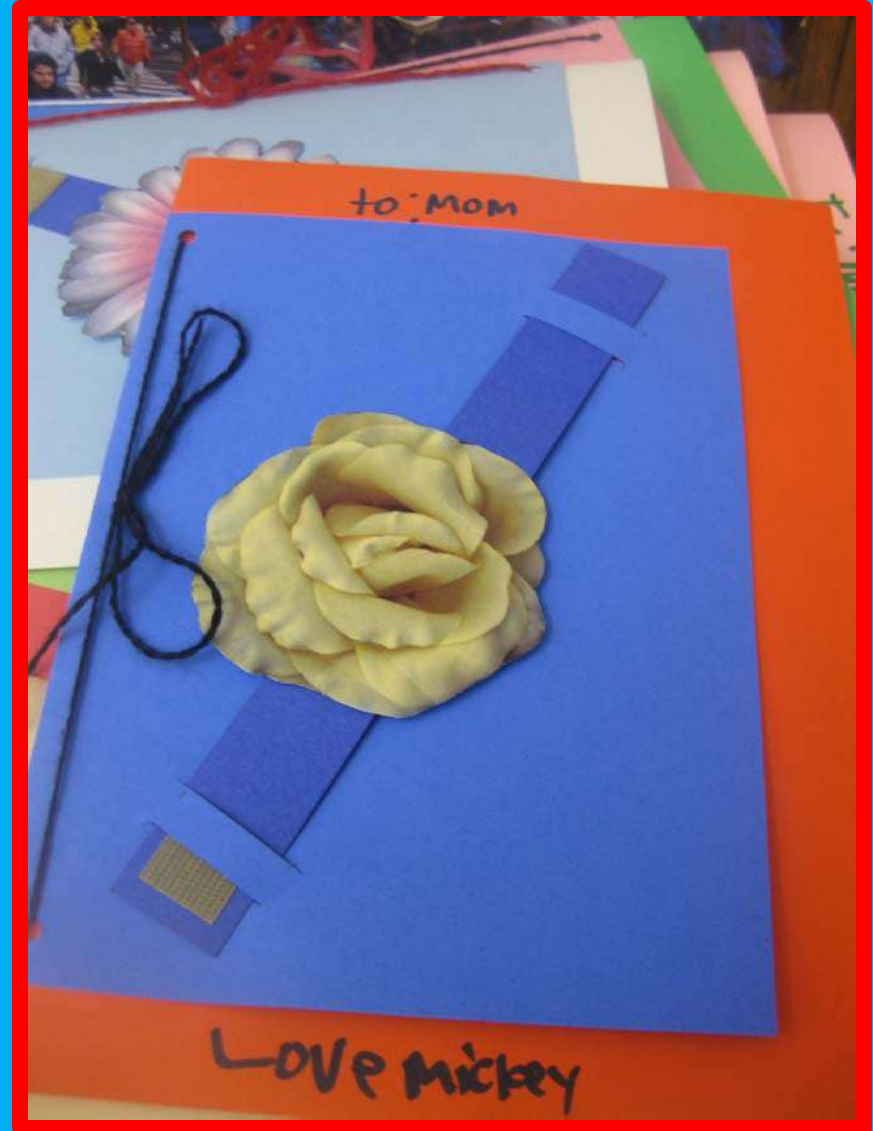


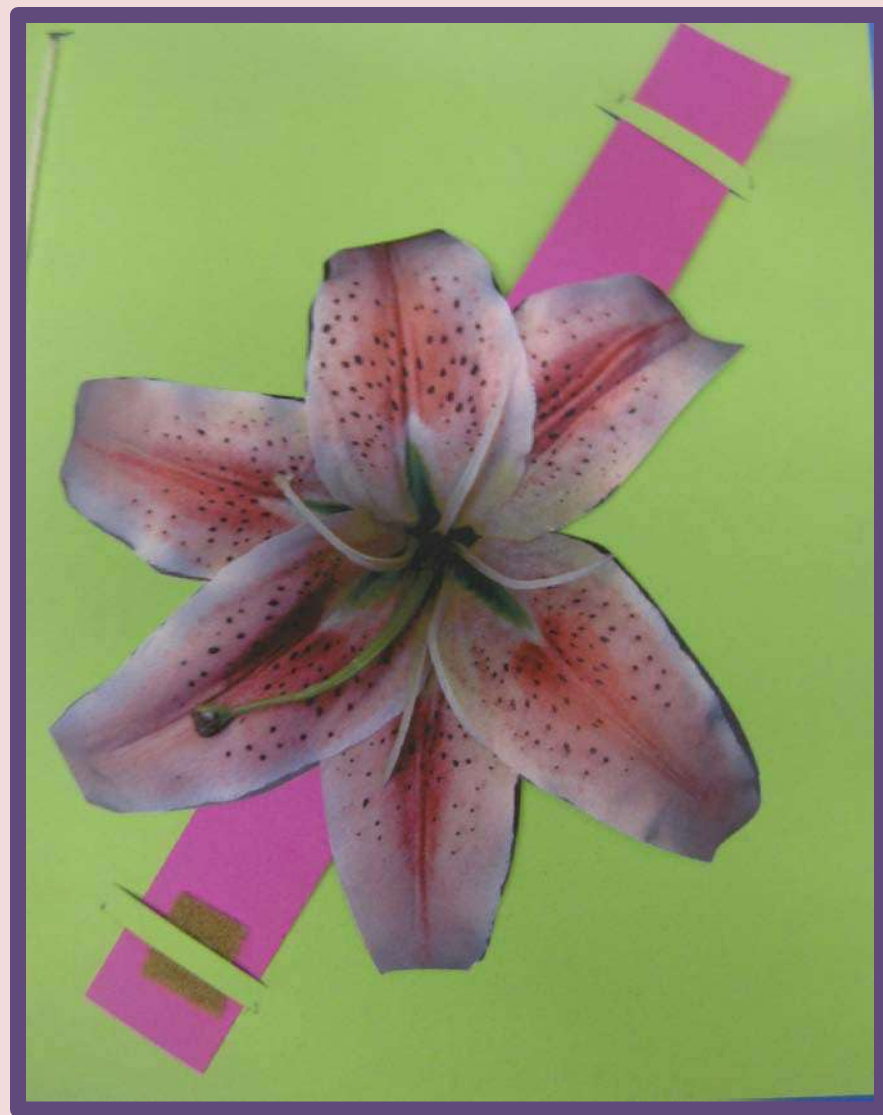






Remembering Mom and Beauty: Wearable Art for Mom





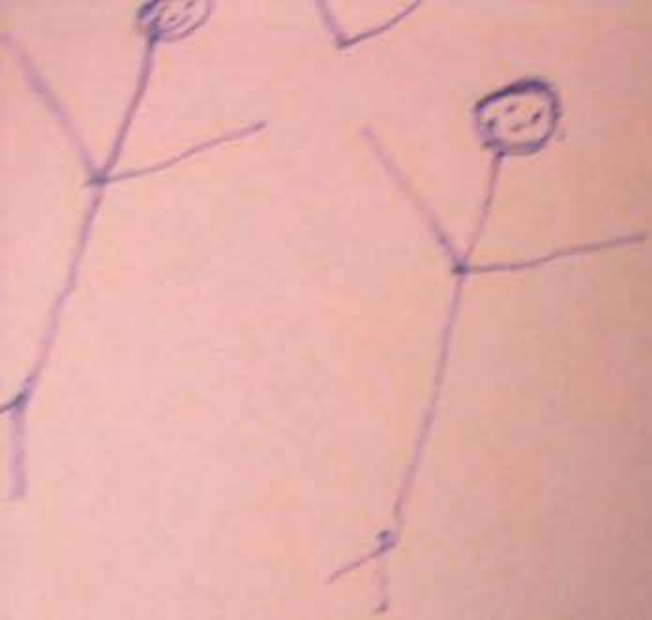






Dear Mom Happy Mother's Day
I love you so much thank you
for everything !!! I am so
happy that you are my Mom
XOXO Love Dani.





Dear Mom,

Happy Mother's day, You
are the best mom in the world. Every
you come home from work, I always
you hugs and kisses because I love you.
I help you do errands like Grinstead
Rabuzzi and bank. I go out with you
dinner, I help you do core. We went to
Florida, and Vermont. We were w
on the High School track. We went
on the biking trail in Vermont. We
some chocolates. Sometimes, you h
with my homework. And you also c
me, I love you mom. You are so sp
and nice to me!



Love,
[Signature]

Mom



Dear Mom,

Happy Mother's Day

You are the best m



Ever!

Love, J

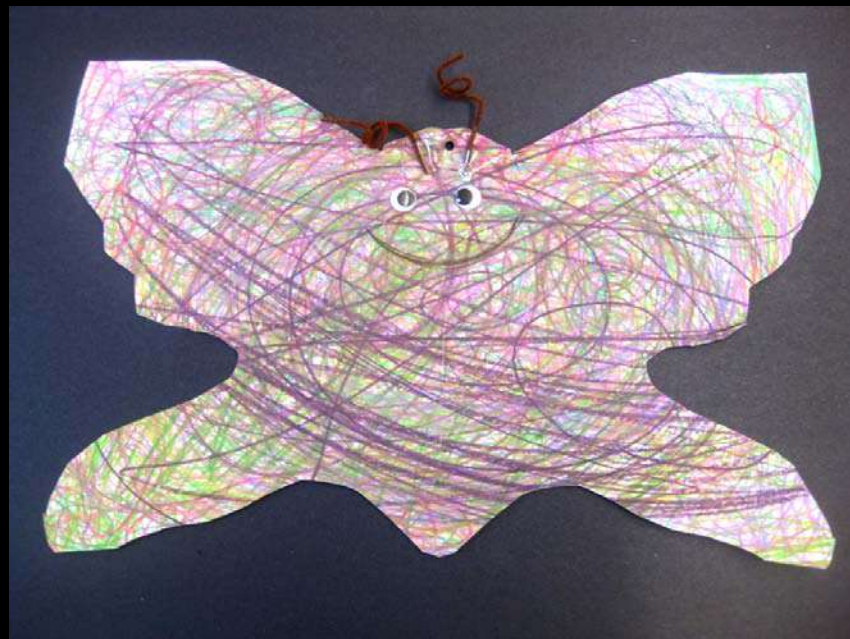
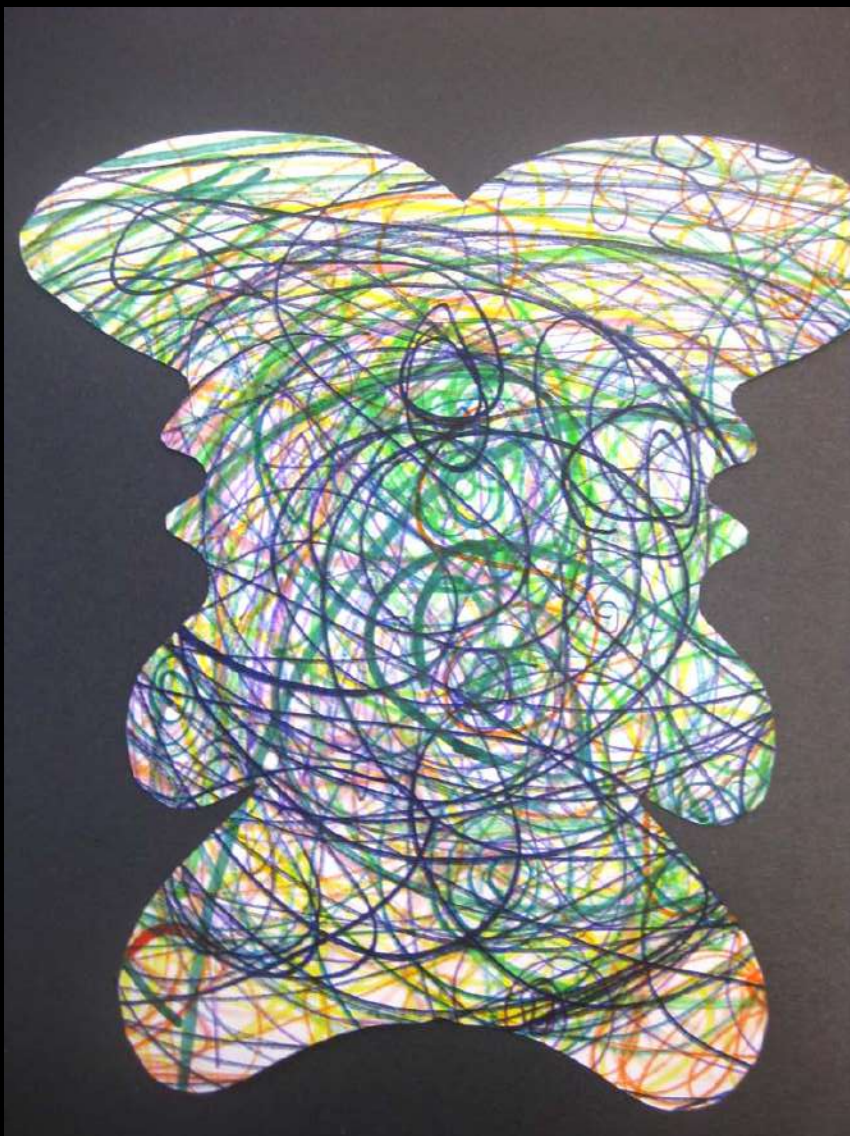
Butterflies

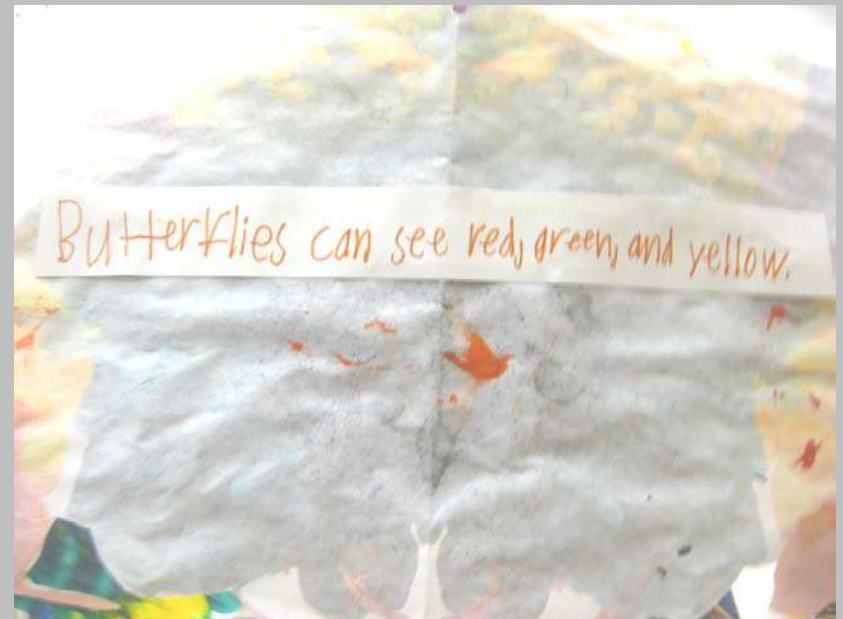


In this project students created symmetrical butterflies out of white paper and tempera paints. They loved to squeeze or pour the paint onto the paper, fold the paper and push the paint with there fingers from the middle of the paper out to the corners, then open it up to see the amazing results. When dry the butterfly was cut out. String and google eyes were added last.























Thank you

Dr. Gordon



What we have covered:

It would be so beneficial for your school or art department to create a Spectrum of Friends Club.

Autistic students know what is aesthetically pleasing. Don't forget that when focusing on skill development.

Remember the parents.

Focus on design principles even when executing projects for other subjects.

These kids are special in the good sense. Cherish the experience.