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Healey School Focuses on Student Creativity with Receipt of Three Separate Somerville Arts Council Awards

Somerville, MA -- This spring, thanks in part to Somerville Arts Council grants, the Healey School has several creative projects planned that will help bring students together through art. As Healey School Principal Dr. Cobbs explains, “The entire Healey community is delighted to see the unique learning experiences our students will have this spring thanks to these Somerville Arts Council grants. While a great deal of time and attention has been given to the operational side of teaching and learning, it is essential that we continue to enhance and grow programming. The three grants received will support our students and families from pre-K to grade 8 and provide an integrated social emotional and art experience.” Assistant Principal Leslie Lartey further supported this sentiment, “Any opportunity to provide enrichment opportunities and supplement learning is a must. These grants allow us to have in place additional means to expand students’ development, while tapping into their varied interests and abilities pushes growth. We are grateful for any support that helps students and staff.”

Master puppeteer and Somerville resident Faye Dupras will run a six-week puppet workshop series called Imagination Station for each of the Healey School’s four pre-K and kindergarten classrooms. Fifty-six students are expected to participate in the workshops, which will be held remotely on Wednesdays. The puppet workshop series is made possible with SAC funds as well as funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s STARS Residency. Hosted by Dupras’s character Mrs. Flutterby in the world of Cozy Corner, and with the help of puppet Rory and friend Trudy, Healey students will explore themes of empathy, embracing differences and fairness. In each 30-minute story workshop, students will be the experts and have a chance to give Rory advice on how to be a good friend. Students will sing songs and explore and discuss their feelings together. As Dupras explains, the inspiration behind this workshop series is that “Friendship is an infinite resource; when we open ourselves to others it enriches our lives.” The lessons students learn in the workshops will be reinforced through coloring pages, maker videos and arts and crafts projects that can be done using common household materials.

With the Collaborative Art Installation, Healey School students in grades 3-6 will create a vibrant, semi-permanent artwork. Students will be introduced to a specific, easily accessible artist’s works in class with art teacher Mikkel DellaCamera, and then they will create an original, collaborative work inspired by or in the style of that artist. The focus will be on artists who use bold patterns, palettes, and motifs. Materials will be available for students to take home and create their artwork in their own time. As project coordinator and



Healey PTA Vice President Nancy O'Connor explains, "While the school community has been physically apart this year, this project will help bring students together through art. With the added stress and anxiety of the pandemic, this year more than ever students need an outlet for creative expression to work through their feelings and process their emotions." In coordination with DellaCamera and the student artists, local Somerville artists and Healey School parents Ben Kauffman and Ben DiSarcina will arrange the students' individual works together into a visually compelling final piece. This final group piece will then be affixed to plywood, weatherproofed and displayed outside on the Healey campus, enriching the physical space and providing easily accessible art for the wider community.

An Artist-in-Residence and Poetry Slam Showcase is the focus of the third SAC grant at the Healey. Every student in teacher Emma Daniels's seventh grade English language arts class will work with her and award winning spoken word poet Andrine Pierresaint, who was the 2017 Louder Than a Bomb Grand Slam champion. This is the second time that Pierresaint has been a poet in residence in Daniels's classroom. As Daniels explains, "Before her workshops, students saw [poetry] as a dead medium. They couldn't see themselves at all in the work. Andrine, like many of my students, is Haitian American. She makes poetry come alive and inspires students to explore their artistic identities." The students will read and examine Kwame Alexander's novel in verse, *The Crossover*. They will then use this as a jumping off point to embark on a series of five poetry-writing workshops with Pierresaint to create their own poems around the theme of forgiveness. Each workshop will provide students prompts, structures and individual check-ins about their work in progress. A fourth session will be a performance workshop that highlights public speaking best practices, such as attention to volume and diction. The final session will be a poetry slam livestream of the students' original work performed for other Healey students, their families, and artists.

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