

Students Share Their Passion for the Arts

Art4Fun supports Kamloops students

Two years ago, Taejha O’Hearn was a Grade 10 student with an idea. As a student at Beattie School of the Arts in Kamloops, Taejha has a passion for the arts. Taejha’s idea was to share this passion with elementary students who haven’t been exposed to the arts. As Taejha put it, “I love teaching, I love kids, I love the arts.” This motivated Taejha, along with other members of the Beattie student leadership group (also known as the Connections Crew), to create a proposal for an after school arts program for elementary students. Two years later, Beattie student leaders delivered Art4Fun, an after school program for students from nearby Stuart Wood Elementary. They provided instruction in drama and guitar for four weeks, then jazz, painting and drawing for four weeks. Two more sessions focusing on voice, dance, and ceramics are planned for the new year.

Art4Fun is a result of the linkage between the Connections Crew’s proposal and the [After School Sport and Arts Initiative](#) (ASSAI). The ASSAI, which is funded by the [Province of BC](#) and delivered by [DASH](#), supports after school programs in 14 BC school districts, including School District 73 in Kamloops. It aims to provide high quality sport and arts programming for students who do not normally have the opportunity to participate in after school programs. For many of the Stuart Wood students taking part in Art4Fun, the chance to play a guitar and perform in a drama studio was unique – something they would not otherwise have been able to experience. Angela Ippolito, a Student Leader for the guitar and dance portion, said she was thankful for Art4Fun and how valuable it is, especially for students who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford guitar or drama lessons. Art4Fun is offered at no cost to participants.

Sherry Stade, SD 73’s [Health Promoting Schools](#) Coordinator, described the process that Beattie Student Leaders undertook to plan Art4Fun. Under the guidance of Jody Oetter, coordinator at Beattie, they started out in the spring with a process of backward design. First they figured out the big idea: what did they want the elementary students to learn? Then they planned how they would get there, from what activities they would lead to how the room would be arranged. The Student Leaders received training in the [HIGH FIVE](#) Principles of Healthy Child Development and learned about effective teaching techniques and lesson planning. When October arrived, they were ready to go.

The result has been “magic,” as Sherry Stade described it. A number of Student Leaders remarked on how engaged and enthusiastic the elementary students were. The Student Leaders talked about the strong connections they developed with the younger students and the positive impacts of the program for both groups. As Angela Ippolito described, the high school and elementary students were “learning from each other.” What were some of the things the student leaders learned? “Keep a positive, fun atmosphere,” “avoid elimination games,” “patience is really important,” and “be yourself.”

Sydney Griffiths, the principal of Stuart Wood Elementary called Art4Fun a “win-win.” The student leaders gained valuable communication and presentation skills and were thrilled to share their passion for the arts. The elementary participants received an introduction to new art forms, got to know high school role models, and had a safe, social, active, and fun option for their after school hours. To get an idea of what Art4Fun looks like, check out this [inspiring video](#) made by the Art4Fun student leaders.

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