



2018 AMNA Nomination

Prepared By: Owner

Arts Educator Award

Nominee [Vern Gray](#)
Artist Type Visual Arts
Organization/Business Croxford High School



Photo

Nomination

Vern Gray, Art & Media Instructor for grades 9-12 at Croxford High School has been connected to APL since he began his teaching position in 2014. Vern has given his time and resources to partnering with APL to have his student's work exhibited in "The Den" (a room containing teen literature at APL) year-round. Vern graciously organizes, curates, and frames his student's work to be hung at APL, changing the exhibits monthly. He also dedicates time to promoting his student's work using his own social media and website resources, as well as developing posters for exhibits. Vern also actively organizes and contributes student work to APL's annual High School Art Gala and encourages his students to attend the evening in celebration of their work, as well as other artistic teen programs offered by the library. Vern is committed to developing fundamental technical ability as well as creative and contemporary concepts in his student's work. It is evident in the quality of student work, and APL receives many compliments and often sales from library patrons who appreciate the artwork without the knowledge that it is student-made. Being a highly skilled, educated, and academically trained artist himself, combined with his passion Vern is able to mentor his students to the highest standard, incorporating university-themed art theory and exercises into his teaching practice. He also exposes students to and instructs students in a wide array of media, from acrylic painting to chalk pastel, digital art to photography and everything in-between, producing artists who are versatile and prepared to take their artistic exposure and passions with them when they graduate. APL is so grateful for the opportunity to nominate Vern Gray for the 2018 AMNA Arts Educator Award!

Questions

Impact

How do you feel arts educators impact their students' lives and why is it important for them to impart their knowledge and experience to others?

I think that art serves many different purposes for students. While I have a curriculum to teach students, I am also very aware of who my students are. Some are in art because it is a passion and they intend to continue in arts careers. For those students, I have to be very intentional with my instruction to help them gain the skills and knowledge needed as future professional artists. I try to inspire these students by being a role model and artist. I share my successes and my failures as an artist with them so that they understand that art is truly a continuous



2018 AMNA Nomination

Prepared By: Owner

Arts Educator Award

process. For a great deal of students, art is a place to relax and get a break from the traditional and digital learning that takes place in school. Art is often what gets some students through school. My role as an art educator is to teach students about the important role that art has had in our past and will have in our future.

Above & Beyond

How do you feel (or can you give examples) of how you've personally gone above & beyond in connecting with your students and helping to nurture their artistic skills?

In addition to making relationships with students in my class as I work directly with them, I also try to inspire them outside the classroom. I have led several trips to Europe to learn from art and architecture first hand. This past year, I organized and led the WH Croxford Fine Arts Trip to New York City. This experience allowed students to photograph the city, experience the art, and attend live theatre performances and workshops. The connection with students in travel situations has always been incredibly rewarding. I see my role as a mentor and role model - helping to shape the artistic skill and vision of my students

Challenges

Can you please provide an example of one of your greatest teaching challenges? Ex) A student that struggled but ultimately succeeded, implementation of a new program, mastering a new skill or trend, etc.

I think that I might just be embarking on one of the biggest challenges I have experienced in a while. This year we are implementing three different fine arts academies at WH Croxford High School. I will be planning and teaching the Visual Arts and Media Academy. The Academies were pitched to future grade ten students in the spring with excellent enrollment results. The VAM Academy will see grade ten students immersed all year for half of the day in art and media, alongside all of their English Language Arts. This program is exciting and is the result of a few years of discovering who we were as a fine arts team at WH Croxford. I am excited about the challenge of implementing this new program.

Motivation

How do you feel (or can you provide an example) you challenge students to push the boundaries in exploring their artistic fields? Ex) New teaching techniques, student challenges/goals, collaborations, etc.

I have always encouraged my students to embrace art in the classroom as though they were artists. We learn the techniques and habits of artists. In my new Visual Arts and Media Academy, students will have the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the world and work of artists. As I journey through the life of an artist, I share every experience with my students.



2018 AMNA Nomination

Prepared By: Owner

Arts Educator Award

Lessons Learned

What one thing would you like to share with/teach others? Ex) A motivating quote, a life strategy, a person you admire, etc.

"The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web." Pablo Picasso I feel that this quote has always been very motivating to myself and to my students when I share it with them. Artists must be this way. While we create and interpret, we must also look closely at the world around us, to see the small things and the things that others may not have stopped to notice.

Additional Links

<https://vgrayarts.wordpress.com/>

<https://twitter.com/VGray65?lang=en>