

Clarence Bee Article – March 2017

The Arts as Core Curriculum

The Clarence Central School District has a strong commitment to the arts as a major element of our educational mission. Providing opportunities for students to build their talent and creatively express themselves through music, visual arts, dance, and dramatic performance is an essential part of the educational experience in the school district.

Two recent events highlight the importance of the arts in the lives of students and demonstrate the power that artistic expression has on learning. The first example is our annual high school musical. This year's production was *Phantom of the Opera*, and every aspect of the show provided opportunities to enhance student learning. Putting on a show as complex as *Phantom of the Opera* represented significant artistic, musical, and technical challenges. Our production staff helped the students meet every challenge successfully, and the result was a series of stunning performances that rivaled a professional theatre experience.

Over 140 students participated in the musical, either as part of the cast, stage crew, pit orchestra, costume and makeup crew, or as student directors. Each of those students was able to develop their talent, grow their understanding, and demonstrate critical thinking and collaboration as part of a team. The high school musical is the ultimate performance assessment. It provides an opportunity for students to effectively transfer their understanding, knowledge and skill in an applied and authentic context. The students who participated have developed skills that will last a lifetime.

The second example is the creation of the *Faces of Clarence* multimedia photo collage at CHS. Students from the Advanced Photography and Sculpture classes, along with the National Art Honor Society, shot over 130 photographs of students from each of the elementary schools, the middle school and the high school. The art students spoke with each of the photo subjects before snapping their picture, helping the photo subjects to emote something about their personality in a facial expression. The art students then transferred the photographs onto plexiglass panels, making the images translucent, and allowing natural light to shine through. The plexiglass image panels were arranged in a three-dimensional collage that is displayed in the high school art gallery in the main foyer. The overall result is a beautiful and creative sculpture that captures the raw emotions and passion of *The Faces of Clarence*. The project was made possible by a generous grant from the Clarence Schools Enrichment Foundation.

At Clarence, we know students involved in the arts exhibit greater confidence, focus, perseverance, and most importantly, improved academic performance.