

Palatine High School Art Department Earns Distinction



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The Illinois Art Education Association (IAEA) has recognized Palatine High School with the Illinois Art Education Distinction award.

Palatine is one of only eight schools from across Illinois to be selected for the honor, which highlights schools with “rigorous art, design, and media education programs,” according to the IAEA.

While this is the first time the department has been formally recognized, Palatine’s art teachers have been teaching beyond the standard curriculum for decades, utilizing unique projects and thoughtful teaching tactics.



Art teacher K Lange works with students in Palatine’s Art in Contemporary Society class.

“I wanted to do something with my team that celebrated all the hard work we do everyday,” Russell Horvath, art department chair at Palatine High School said of applying for the award. “Most of the people in my department also have been here for almost 20 years.”

Horvath and others assembled photos, student art, and explanations onto a slideshow to represent the department to the IAEA. To qualify for the award, Palatine had to excel in six categories: Curriculum & Assessment, Authentic Learning, Showcase Student Learning, Connected Communities, Professional Development & Training, and Leadership & Advocacy.

Palatine High School has five art teachers, each teaching four to five classes throughout the day. Whether it’s crafting sculptures in AP 3-D Art & Design with Horvath or printmaking in Paint Draw Printmaking 2, students have a variety of options to pursue their artistic side.

One of the highlights of Palatine’s art department is the accessibility to take an art class, Horvath said. No matter the skill level, there’s a class and a teacher ready to help.

“Our tagline is ‘No experience necessary,’” Horvath said.

Teachers focus on the student, individualizing the process of artistic projects to ensure everyone is satisfied and interacting with art in a positive manner.

“I really like how he lets us involve our creativity into our pieces,” Callie Swierczek, a senior taking 3D Ceramics said of her teacher.. “Mr. Horvath sets out the basic guidelines but lets us go and create what we want to create.”

Swierczek also said her art class was a nice pause during the midst of college applications and tests, and looks forward to it every day.

The benefits of having a strong art program are plentiful: Creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills are heightened with education in the arts, and many students in art programs also increase their skills in social and emotional areas.

Palatine’s art department is the only one from D211 to be recognized this year, but Horvath praised all D211 art programs from his past experiences of being the D211 art department chair.

“The District 211 art programs are phenomenal,” Horvath said. “All the teachers work hard. All the programs are strong.”



A Palatine student works on sculpting project for his Art in Contemporary Society class.