

# K-8 Arts Integration Exhibit Showcased at the Sorenson Center's Wilkerson Gallery

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The Creativity Unbound exhibit showcases student creativity and artistic expression.

Creativity Unbound, a K-8 student art exhibit in the Lyndsey Wilkerson Gallery in the Sorenson Legacy Foundation Center for Clinical Excellence at Utah State University, opened on February 9 to an enthusiastic crowd. The exhibit showcases student creativity, artistic expression, and arts-integrated learning from elementary and middle school classes in northern Utah.

"Each student brings a special lens through which they see the world," says Aurora Villa, director of Arts Are Core in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services and endowed director of the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Endowed Program for Elementary Arts Education at USU. "The arts give children a voice, and displaying their work in the gallery allows the community to hear what they have to say."

Now in its fifth year, Creativity Unbound was created to showcase exemplary student artwork as well as to support the teachers who mentor the young artists. This year, 16 elementary and middle schools, encompassing public schools in Logan, Cache, and Box Elder school districts and several charter schools, were invited to participate. Art teachers from each school selected 10 to 20 pieces from their students' projects. A total of 288 pieces—ranging from sketches and paintings to ceramic sculptures and handmade tunnel books—are on display in the gallery.

"It takes a team to put it all together," says Villa. "We had three elementary education students help us install the show. We also had each of the two-dimensional pieces professionally matted, which pulls the artwork together and really solidifies it."

Like any professional art exhibit, the opening night of Creativity Unbound is the highlight of the annual project. "This year we had to ask people to wait a little because it was so full," says Villa. "The whole place was packed with people. We served cookies and played jazz music in the background. It was a real opening. Having the children's artwork in a professional gallery makes the whole experience very special for them. It's an honor for the students, their families, and their teachers."



Student-created paper sculptures of birds are favorites at the exhibit's opening night.

Mindy Lines, art teacher at Nibley Elementary for grades K-6, says the opening night changes her students' perception of themselves. "In the years that I've participated in this show, I've seen students who really didn't think of themselves as creating anything special suddenly recognize that they are artists when they see their work on display."

Visitors to the exhibit may note the subtle connection to math concepts (shapes and patterns), social studies (maps), and science (habitats and biomes) in the artworks. This is because arts integration—helping students explore science, math, language arts, and social studies concepts

through the arts—is a strong component of many of the artworks on display.

“Integrating core subjects shows the students that art can really be a part of everyday life and can bleed into many other things,” says Jessica Stott, participating art teacher from Bear River Charter School in Logan. “Art can be used to help them understand the world in a unique way.”

A seemingly simple integrated science lesson that examines Utah habitats, for example, requires a lot of higher order thinking, which is one of the purposes of integrating art with core curriculum. “The students are simultaneously bringing artistic skills and science skills together,” Villa explains. “If they’re creating a landscape, they need to understand foreground, middle ground, and background, which are art concepts. But they also need to know what you find in a mountain desert landscape, what animals live there, and what colors you would see there. Is there sand, mountains, trees? Learning through the art form is what helps students solidify the curriculum content and learn it at a deeper level.”

Villa believes that the importance of displaying children’s artwork in a professional gallery cannot be emphasized enough. “Part of my goal is to advocate for the arts,” she says. “The more we showcase children’s art and teach the importance of arts education, the more support we get from the community. Showcasing it in a venue like the Wilkerson Gallery is one of the best ways to accomplish that mission.”

The Creativity Unbound exhibition is free of charge and open to the public until April 12. For more information, visit the Arts Are Core [website](#).