

Expanding the curriculum



Stephen Milligan | The Tribune

Brian Cole shows off some of his art students newest sculpture projects exploring textures and other new techniques. The display is just the first tangible evidence of George Walton Academy's new art curriculum.

Crafting future artists

GWA | Private school expands art course offerings past basic survey, adds new techniques

By **Stephen Milligan**
stephen.milligan@waltontribune.com

In elementary school, art class is primarily a survey course, allowing students to experience a variety of artistic techniques and styles, jumping from molding lumpy bowls out of clay to painting sloppy portraits destined to grace the fridge door.

By the time an art student reaches high school, however, it's expected they will get a chance to dive a bit deeper into favored disciplines rather than sticking to a general overview of the arts.

George Walton Academy struggled to meet some of those students' needs, however, until recently. Art classes primarily stuck to a survey model, with stu-

dents following their muse into certain disciplines mainly through independent study projects.

"We already had a really strong art program," Brian Cole, art teacher and director of the department, said. "But we've had some students come through and do independent studies in sculpture and other work and it just needed to be a part of the curriculum."

At last, Cole added, it will be, as GWA is overhauling its entire art curriculum to offer a number of new disciplines to students interested in more than the basics.

"I've been department head for six to seven years, but this is the first time we've been given carte blanche to give the students what they need," Cole said. "Addings these specialties is about enriching the program."

First-year art students in high school will take a basic survey

course, with a chance to devote short periods of focus to drawing, painting, ceramics, photography and sculpture over the course of the year.

But under the new curriculum, second-year art students and beyond will have the chance to take full courses in one of those disciplines, rather than just a few weeks in a wider class, as well as other specialties such as print-making, graphic design and even marketing for art.

"We have the flexibility now to do independent work," Cole said. "We've offered some of that here, but now the students will be able to focus on one discipline for a whole year."

Already, the first of those new class offerings is in place this year.

"I have my first full-year sculpture class," Cole said. "We have 10 people in that and it's going

great."

And Cole said the expanding curriculum was about more than just new classes.

"We're putting in a sculpture building," Cole said. "By next year, we'll have everything really up and running there. We're also hiring another art teacher next year. We're really growing into these changes."

Most of the art curriculum changes won't fully go into effect until next year, when Cole has time and resources to really allow students to branch out into preferred disciplines.

But Cole is quite excited about the potential for the art department at GWA and hopes to see students truly embrace the options they will have on hand.

"There's a place here for a full fine arts family," Cole said.

Christina Bailey
Faith Academy of Loganville

Pilgrim students learn to give thanks for opportunities at Faith Academy

Thanksgiving is next week! Images of Pilgrims



come to mind. The Pilgrims were seekers. They were seeking religious freedom. They sailed to Holland and spent 10 years there before a group of them became disenchanted with the society. So they boarded the Mayflower and set sail for America. They continued to seek. They desired a change, a fresh start.

Many of our students can identify with the Pilgrims. For various reasons, they too are seeking a change from their current school en-

vironment. They are seeking a fresh start.

The goal at Faith Academy on a daily basis is to intentionally seek opportunities to help our students. As a staff, we were curious. Were our expectations producing the desired outcome? We sought feedback from our current students in the form of a question, "Why are you thankful for Faith Academy?" These are a just a few of the responses we received:

"As graduation approaches this December, I think about the many reasons I am thankful for Faith Academy. I came here at a difficult time in my life. The

teachers and staff worked with me through every step, celebrated all of my accomplishments with me, and showed that they cared about my success. I could not be more proud to graduate from this school." Emily W.

"I am thankful for Faith Academy because they turned my life around. I went from hanging with the wrong people and getting low grades to all As and graduating early. I also got the chance to earn college credits." Shannon S.

"Attending Faith is one of the best decisions I have ever made. I love the unique school approach. The teach-

ers and staff are always kind and happy. I have seen and experienced the love of God that they show. This school is absolutely incredible!" Kelly B.

"I am thankful for Faith Academy for giving me the opportunity of a fresh start. For seeing me as the student I knew I could be. For giving me the means to dream, with no judgment of the past, only a belief in me and a bright future." Trenton C.

"I am beyond thankful for Faith Academy because they provided a second opportunity for me. When I wanted to give up on my education and drop out, Faith opened my eyes to a new way of

learning." Brooke I.

"The staff genuinely and whole heartedly welcomes you with open arms and not only tells you but shows you that they care about you and your education. They will work with you and help achieve your academic goals. Faith Academy has supported me physically, mentally, emotionally but most importantly, spiritually. The staff is so patient, encouraging, loving, compassionate and kind." Lourdes O.

We too are thankful for our amazing students! Happy Thanksgiving!

Christina Bailey is the assistant administrator of Faith Academy. Her email address is eagles@faeagles.net.