



THE DEVELOPING ARTIST PROGRAM

[The Developing Artist](#) program began as a Greenwich Alliance Reaching Out Grant at Eastern Middle School in 2016. The program has since been implemented at Eastern, Central and Western Middle Schools, the Boys & Girls Club and has exhibited at numerous locations throughout Greenwich. Michael Manning and Ben Quesnel, program coordinators, state “the support from the schools and arts community has been overwhelmingly positive, demonstrating the strong commitment for this endeavor.”

The goal of the program is to give students a broader understanding of what it means to be an artist and to expose young artists to the possibilities of pursuing a career in this field so they may see themselves as artists, innovators and creators. This is achieved by bringing a diverse group of [professional studio artists](#) into the schools to share their work, practices, and experiences with the students. Students have also been able to visit artists’ studios, galleries, museums and organizations that support and develop the career of professional artists.



The past 4 years have seen a consistent, strong lineup of artists and committed connections to the professional studio arts community. Michael states, “We work hard to find artists that have interesting and relatable practices for our students. We seek artists who use materials or conceptual ideas that will challenge how our students understand or interpret what art is and what art can be.”

Sessions with artists have exposed students to architecture, creative drama, weaving, spray-paint demos, special effects makeup artistry, environmental installations, stop motion animation, sculpting, portraiture, collaborative murals, “recycled” works of art and the creative practice of graffiti. Even during the pandemic, the program creatively inspired and connected the community in a town-wide event, *A Walk with Chalk - making connections one line at a time.*

Michael and Ben added “Luckily, we have been able to adapt our program to accommodate remote learning throughout the pandemic. We host virtual studio visits for

our students, and we record and edit the artist interview footage so we can develop an ongoing archive for future use. The grant also provides artists funds for their work and participation, which is more important now than ever, and allows artists an opportunity to work with our great students.” In addition to organizing weekly visits to museums, galleries and artist’s studios conducted through Zoom classes, Michael and Ben have been busy preparing for upcoming projects like [Arts Day 2021](#).

Ben, who is also an art teacher at Eastern, says, "As a teacher and an artist, I always want to know that I am doing everything I can to give my students the best possible art experience in the classroom. Sometimes lack of funding can be limiting but grants like the one provided by the Greenwich Alliance for Education have allowed us to develop an enriching program that provides our students with opportunities that we would not be able to do otherwise. It makes me feel like we are doing something significant for our young aspiring students, and that is why we do it.”