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Subject: Gratitude
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MG

Dear Members of the Trust,

I wanted to reach out and thank you for your contributions to our Underground Railroad project last spring. It was one of the most successful collaborations I have ever been involved in. Students really enjoyed learning how to use the sewing machines to make mock quilts in the shape of pillows.

They read and learned about the history of the enslaved in their social studies classes and in the library. They recreated symbols found on Underground Railroad quilts in art and technology. And they put it all together in art and STEAM class! It was amazing watching them teach each other, troubleshoot problems and work through challenges. In addition to all of the teachers we had collaborating, we were lucky to welcome many family and community volunteers to assist!

Like any first iteration, there were some hiccups! We found the use of the Cricut for the symbols to be too time consuming and detailed for 80 kids. So, we pivoted and used fabric markers instead. However, students reported (verbally and through the survey) that they did not like the appearance of the fabric markers on their creations. Our plan for next year is to use adhesive fabric.

Another challenge was that the art teacher, followed by myself, went down with Covid during the height of the project. We were each out for several days and that presented quite an obstacle at the end of the year when we were literally running out of school days to finish. But, with some creative scheduling and flexible teachers, we got it done. Every student left with a sewn and stuffed pillow with meaningful communication symbols and more importantly a real understanding of the communication struggles of the enslaved. And, they left with some basic sewing skills!

All in all, this project was a monumental success and I am so grateful to the Trust for making it possible. Please enjoy the pictures and student feedback attached.

Thank you very much!

Beth Graham

