

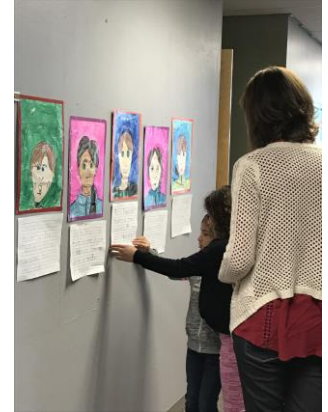
Portraits of Respect

Peak Expeditionary School

Wheat Ridge, CO



Staff and students at Peak Expeditionary School talk a lot about “CREW Core Values”. CREW stands for Courage, Respect, Empathy, and quality Work. Students spend a lot of time reflecting on how they are demonstrating CREW values and recognizing it in their peers. Connected with this, Peak’s principal created a school wide project focused on respect so that children would develop a deeper understanding of what respect truly means - especially since it is a hard concept to really verbalize in a deep way without oversimplifying it. Portraits of Respect is a three part project where students interview someone in the community who demonstrated respect, write a reflection on what they learned from that interview, and then create an artistic portrait of that person.



Every student, Kindergarten through fifth grade, chose someone in their life either from the school community, their family, or the wider community who they saw as demonstrating respect. Students interviewed peers, grandparents, fire fighters, veterans, teachers, parents, older siblings, preschoolers, and community partners. The community impact was powerful. Family members felt honored that they were being interviewed and elevated in that way, and students learned about respect from so many different voices.

Students then synthesized what they learned by writing the reflections and creating the portraits. The school hosted a “Portraits of Respect Gallery Walk” once all the portraits were completed so that all the family members and community partners that had been interviewed had the opportunity to see the final products students had created. It was a powerful community event to have so many diverse voices in the same space, elevated because of student’s recognition of them and how they live their lives. Many portraits and writing reflections remained displayed in hallway for the remainder of the year so that students can continue to reflect on and remember what they learned about respect.



This project was truly a whole-school and whole-community endeavor. The principal conceived the project outline, but every person in the school community was part of the implementation, from classroom teachers to support staff, the art teacher, students, families, and community members. Teachers and support staff taught students about interview skills and helped students write their reflections. The art teacher was instrumental; he had each grade level use a different medium to complete the portraits and taught students about facial proportions. Families and community members were also instrumental in this project in the way that they volunteered their time to be interviewed which provided the deep meaning of the project’s content.

Peak Expeditionary’s Family Engagement Liaison offers the following advice: “Don’t do it partially! Do every aspect of Portraits of Respect: interviews, art portraits, written reflections, and the gallery walk. The reason this project was powerful was because it was an opportunity to elevate the voices of our families.”

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community