



Kenai Peninsula Borough School District  
Golden Apple Award | September 14, 2020

*Ms. Krista Etwiler*

There is no official art teacher at West Homer Elementary; rather, classroom teachers deliver art instruction to their students regardless of experience. Ms. Krista Etwiler has been a leader in the school building in this curricular area by taking on the undefined role of Art Educator. On her own initiative, she supports

her peers in their professional development in art instruction, envisions and mobilizes school-wide art projects, volunteers to coordinate the Artist in Residence program, volunteers to plan the whole school Art Faire, and volunteers on the Site Council.

Principal Eric Waltenbaugh describes her contributions: "The projects she initiates at West Homer Elementary contribute to the vibrant creative school culture and enhance the overall educational environment. As part of the Site Council, she participated in the creation of the entryway mural in the foyer of the building that aligns with our mission statement. Also, as a Site Council project she spearheaded the creation of positive message posters that are displayed in all the bathrooms in the building. Each year she volunteers to coordinate our Artist in Residence program working tirelessly on ensuring all students and adults in the building benefit from this yearly experience. She seeks out and vets candidates, collaborates with artists to meet our needs, and coordinates with teachers. Every three years we put on an Art Faire and she takes it upon herself to coordinate this school-wide show for the community. She has an eye for making these experiences interactive for both students and the public, finding creative ways to engage families. One year she experimented with QR codes where students recorded their artist statements and so when parents moved through the displays in the school, they could access the student audio statements by scanning the codes with their phones. She also designed critical thinking sheets students and community used to explore and think about the artistic elements present in the student work.

After the City of Homer put in a cement retaining wall on Soundview Avenue facing the school, it did not take long for Krista to see the opportunity to collaborate with local agencies to garner support for creating an installation that fit with the school and involved everyone in it. In addition to the wall, she worked on a matching painted cement sign. In the process she discovered there was power to the sign and was able to get it lighted once again. And, in true Krista spirit, she took it one step further to get strings of lights to adorn the five spruce trees at the entry to our campus. On dark winter days, it is a joy to tum in to the school and see the festive lights and colorful sign.

We instituted a campus beautification day during the final short week of the school year where classes engaged in projects to beautify the school grounds. Krista got a number of classes involved in painting the concrete light post bases on the ground in various coordinated colors to match the building, retaining wall mural, and West Homer Elementary sign. Her efforts are visible throughout the West Homer Elementary building and grounds, and her energy and support of her colleagues in their art instruction has improved student skills, enjoyment, and understanding of the arts.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education is proud to recognize Ms. Krista Etwiler for her dedication to the students of the school district, past, present, and future.