

## **MidAtlantic Fiber Association Grant Application 2015-Final Report Avon Grove Charter School**

### **Associate Member: Avon Grove Charter School**

#### **Description of project goals:**

AGCS strives to meld all aspects of our curriculum to provide a more cohesive learning experience for our students. For this project we will connect the MicroFarm and the Art program. Our Farm shears 10 Shetland and Soay sheep each spring. The shearer will shear at least one sheep during each class period and multiple classes will come outside to watch and learn about the process of shearing. The shearer is experienced in providing instruction and information.

Currently that fleece is being underutilized. Students can certainly see it and touch it and teachers can explain the uses for fleece/wool however nothing is created with the fleece. We would like to bring in a felter to teach workshops during our 4th art classes as well as provide instruction in the fiber arts to all of our art teachers. Felting is an easy way to use sheep fleece without the expense of the equipment to card and spin it into yarn. The students will then create felted fiber art projects in art class that they can keep or donate to sell as a fundraiser for both the MicroFarm and the Art programs. Currently the Fiber Arts are not highlighted in the art program but AGCS certainly has the resources at it's fingertips! Art teachers can expand their offerings and ultimately students will learn the value of using natural and, in this case, easily available resources to create both art and usable creative items. We would love to see an accomplished Fiber Art student create a piece of clothing in the coming years!

The project would eventually reach all students in art classes as each teacher would have access to fresh fleece each spring and, because they participated in the workshops, will be able to teach Fiber Arts every year to every class as part of their curriculum. Ideally, the project will also reach our community when students display and sell their work at school events.

AGCS of course provides funding for all of the core curricular needs of the school and teachers. This grant will provide the initial funding for workshops and a spring sheep shearing. In order to keep the Fiber Arts as part of the art curriculum, the school will fund sheep shearing and classroom materials in the future.

The success of this program will be evaluated through the pieces the students create. Art teachers don't look for perfection but for interest, creativity, use of materials, and conscientious attention to the piece. We hope to find that students choose to continue making felted pieces throughout the school year to sell at our school's spring Green Gathering. Continued interest in the arts is an ultimate outcome for any art program. As the program is expanded beyond the initial

workshop participants in grades 3-6, teachers will again look at their standards as a measure of program success. A student who chooses to engage in the Fiber Arts with the same passion that we see for sculpture, photography, graphic design, or metal art is a true measure of success.

**Photos:**



**Actual Outcome:**

The MAFA grant allowed us to hire a fiber artist to come in and do a demonstration for all of the 4th grade art classes about types of wool, how to card and spin, how to felt, and what can be made with felted wool. Each of the art teachers sat in and learned how to felt so they were able to integrate into their curriculum. As a result, the 4th grade and a high school art class created felted art work that was displayed at Arts Fest last year. As an extension to the event the students learned how to dye the wool with natural resources. Since the teachers learned from the fiber artist, they were able to do the demonstrations themselves this year and a new group of kids learned about fiber art and felting. Students were exposed to an authentic learning experience while our teachers expanded their repertoire of art skills. The Avon Grove Charter School is appreciative of the support from MAFA, because it afforded us the opportunity to incorporate our micro farm resources with our art curriculum.



Student artwork-Grade 4

**Proposed Budget:**

Sheep Shearing and shearer demonstrations for students (Full School Day)	\$400
Workshops during art classes: 6 classes @ \$50 each	\$350
Workshop instruction materials: 6 classes @ \$10 each	\$60
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$810</b>

**Actual Budget:**

Sheep shearing demonstration-Full Day	\$325
Wool workshop for six classes	\$350
Wool workshop materials for six classes	\$120
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$795</b>

**Differences in budget:**

Overall, our proposed budget aligned closely with our actual budget. Our shearing demonstration ended up costing us \$70 less because it took less time to complete the process than we intended. The shearer charges us an hourly rate to shear all of our sheep. The workshop fee of \$350 remained because this was the agreed upon payment prior to the event. We did see an increase in cost for the instructional materials for the workshop, which ended up being double. Our instructor brought additional brushes and carding resources for our teachers to use with their classes. We ended up with a "savings" of \$15!

**Advice for other project directors:**

The funding from the MAFA grant has allowed us to take a small idea and turn it into a powerful learning experience for our staff and students. We had been searching for a way to blend our shearing event with an task that students could use the wool. We stumbled across MAFA and the opportunity for the organization to fund a project for us.

We brought the idea back to our team of teachers and the art teachers suggested they get involved. From there the project took a life of its own.

My advice for other project directors would be to involve members from all aspects of your school and community when developing a project. Our art teachers came up with the wool painting idea and made it their own. Without their input the project may have stalled or even fizzled. We were also able to build a strong relationships with local community members (shearers and felters) who have since participated in our annual Arts Fest and Bingo in the Barnyard events.

We were very fortunate to involve many members of our school and local community in the shearing and wool event. It took many people to develop and create the event for our fourth graders. However, having so many people involved created some confusion when adhering to the grant deadlines. We should have done a better job of assigning roles for follow up, paperwork, photographs, etc. We highly suggestion having one person to serve as the main contact and be responsible for streamlining the grant process.