

# Creative minds designing custom tiles to leave their mark at Dartmouth High

## Art students embark on semester-long project

By **CHRISTINA STYAN**  
Special Writer

DARTMOUTH — When students of the Unified Arts Program have finished designing 340 ceramic tiles for a “Leaving Our Mark” display, they will have started a new tradition at Dartmouth High School.

Unified Arts Department Chairperson Judy S. Cronin received a \$4,200 grant from the Mass. Cultural Council Creative Minds Initiative for the ceramic tile project.

“Each tile will symbolize the personalities of each art student and the individually designed tiles will grace the plain halls of the school,” she remarked.

The Mass. Cultural Council grant program, Students and Teachers working with Artists, Scientists, and Scholars (STARS), supports creative learning residencies for three days or more in the arts, sciences and humanities. The funding pays a small stipend for the “cultural partner” who is closely involved with the teacher in planning sessions.

Chosen as the cultural partner for the DHS tile project was Dartmouth resident Nancy Hayes, a ceramic sculptor who is working cooperatively with Ms. Cronin and art students in grades 9-12. Ms. Hayes brings the clay and her expertise to teach the students about the entire ceramic process.

“The artist comes into the classroom and this makes it different. We encourage students to put who they are as individuals into their

unique abstract design. The finished tiles will really be plaques,” Ms. Hayes explained.

– Tentatively, the plan is for the tiles will be displayed in the high school lobby.

“I want the students thinking about themselves but realize they will show as part of the community. When they are done, the project will unify them but everyone will be different,” the artist suggested. “These students are doing a real good job, learning from one another, but not copying from each other. They are the soul of the school,” she commented.

– In completing this project, students are also exploring the connection between the arts and sciences. “They learn about mixture of raw materials to create a desired effect. It is about chemistry, because reference is made to the elements and atomic weights from the periodic table,” noted Ms. Cronin.

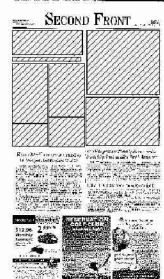
Some students stay after school to complete certain techniques such as making slips, which are clay mixed with a colorant which is applied to green ware or bisque ware to add color to a piece. The tile needs to have a glaze applied over it to become impervious to water.

“We are crossing the boundaries, going outside the art room” by combining math and science, added Ms. Hayes.

Students may choose from nine colors to finish their 8-inch tiles. Working in tandem, Ms. Cronin and Ms. Hayes circulate among the students to offer one-on-one advice, pointing out certain principles of design which might help make a more interesting tile.

Dalton Ripley’s main hobby is video games, and he pointed out the various colors he will use in the triangle, yellow red and some blue. “I chose a design symbolizing one of my favorite series,” he noted.

Wandering around the classroom Ms. Hayes saw one student with a blank square piece of clay. “If you don’t have an idea just start the process,” Ms. Hayes advised. Some students



were searching for designs on their cell phones or reworking their balls of clay while waiting for inspiration to arrive.

Molly Brown used the tip of a wooden barbecue skewer as a stylus to create her design, while another artist Hannah Lamarre inscribed a message on her tile.

The tiles should all be fired by May 12, when the high school hosts a district-wide art exhibition. According to Ms. Cronin, dedication of the tile wall will be a major part of the 2011 Annual Art Show.

She is very excited to involve her students in this first-time art project. "Other district schools could also apply for this grant. My goal is to do this every year; there is so much blank wall space," she noted.

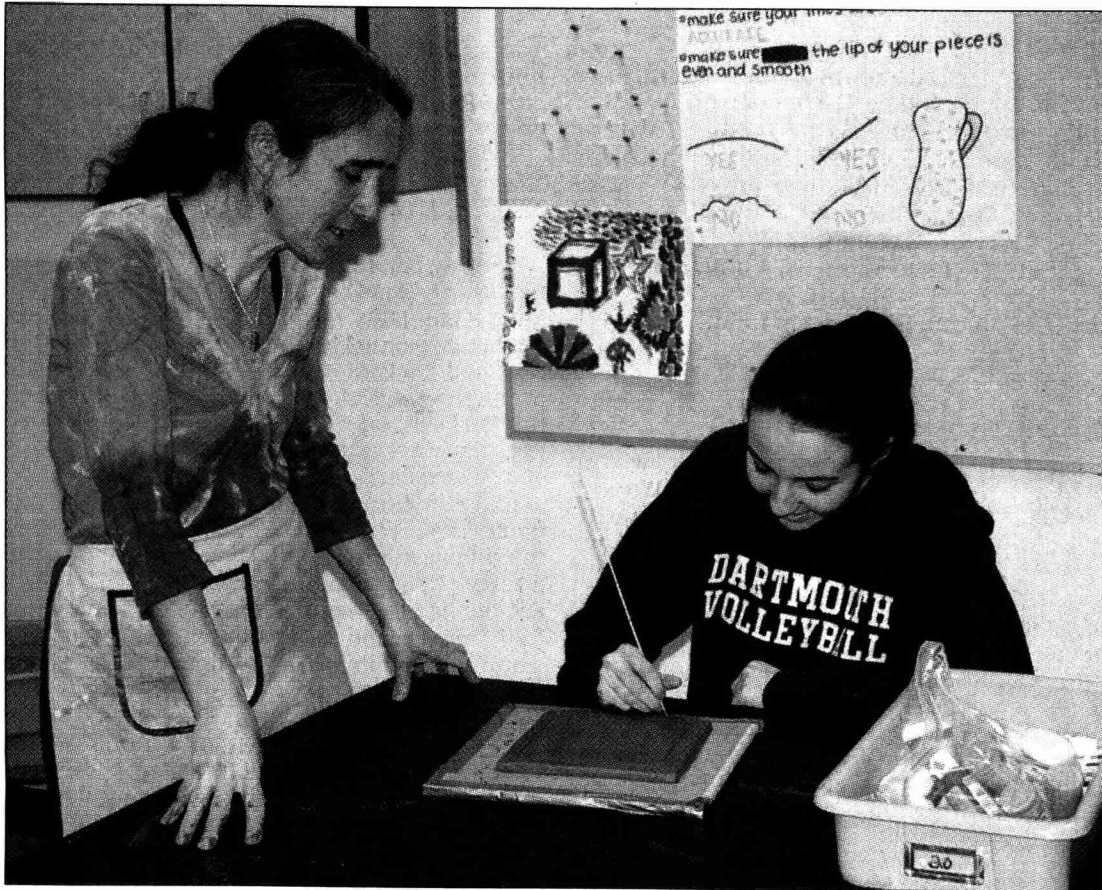


PHOTO BY CHRISTINA STYAN/The Chronicle

**ART PROJECT:** Dartmouth ceramic artist Nancy Hayes offers DHS student Molly Brown some tips on designing her tile, part of the "Leave Your Mark" project going on at the high school.



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA STYAN/The Chronicle

**HARD AT WORK:** Dartmouth High students Andreia Pereira, Blake Ferreira, Kerin Gaydou, Jocelyn Fumo and Erica Medeiros work on their tile creations under the watchful eye of ceramic artist Nancy Hayes. The art project was funded by a grant from the Mass. Cultural Council.