

## Wood Students Find Creative, Beneficial Uses for Land Plot

Sixth graders at Wood Middle School (WMS) undertook a novel assignment in their math classes earlier this month: Coming up with a use for a 900 square foot plot of land and then building a model to scale of their idea. Each project had to benefit the Alameda community as a whole.

The resulting proposals included a drop-in space for the homeless, an orphanage, an animal shelter, community gardens (including a “U-Pick” style plot), a skate park, and several sweet shops. All were on display last Wednesday during a free “Gallery Walk” for the public during which students were available to discuss their projects.



Top floor of an orphanage with bunk beds



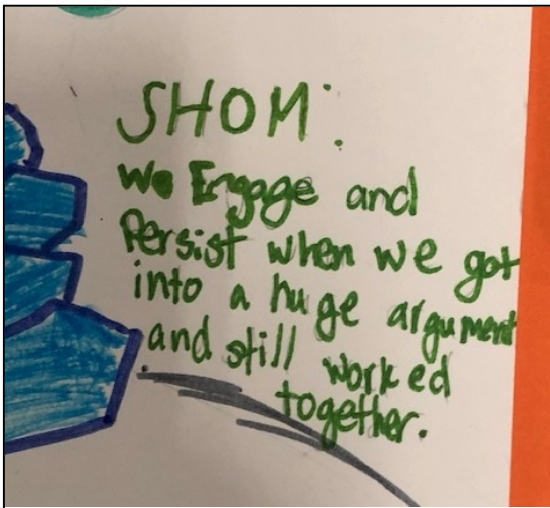
A skateboarding park for the community

“The project gave students a chance to practice using math concepts such as ratio, scale factor, estimation, measurement, geometry, and problem solving,” Brown says, “as well as 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. It was fantastic to see how creative and enthusiastic the students were!”

WMS math teacher Kasey Brown devised the project after 6<sup>th</sup> graders visited the Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco last fall, which has on display numerous models that Walt Disney himself built – including for Disneyland and Mickey Mouse.



A community garden

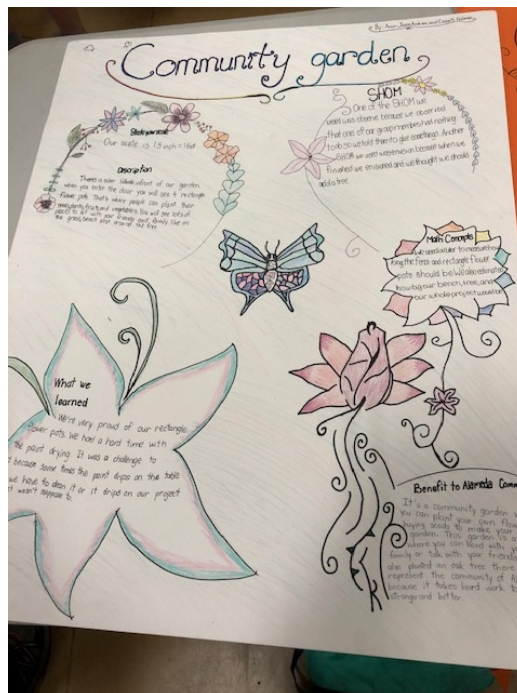


Detail from a poster

In addition to the actual model, the students created posters explaining the math concepts they used and the Studio Habits of Mind (SHOM) they learned. Such habits help students reflect on their own work by being mindful of such steps as Engage and Persist, Envision, Develop Craft, Observe, and Stretch and Explore.

“This kind of project represents our vision to make learning integrated across disciplines, engaging, and purposeful,” says WMS Principal Cammie Harris. “It also gives students a voice in the process.”

“We were delighted to be invited to participate in the gallery walk at Wood Middle School so we could see student projects and talk with students about their visions of a better community,” says Superintendent Sean McPhetridge. “This is the kind of integrated school work that engages students and staff, and we were impressed by Wood Middle School students working together in this kind of project-based learning.”



Poster describing community garden proposal