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A first for the arts

Castaic charter gets ready for inaugural arts festival, featuring hundreds of pieces from students

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Santa Clarita Valley International Charter School middle and high school students shaved, sketched and cut brick-sized blocks of sandstone into personalized gargoyles.

The art project in Kim Adam's classroom was inspired by the charter school's spring field trip to Washington, D.C., where students were fascinated by the gargoyles they saw on buildings.

It's just one of the dozens of pieces of student art that will be on display during the Castaic charter school's first Festival of the Arts on Saturday.

"We're an international school, and you really have to start with your community," art facilitator Adam said.

The event will include a series of displays, including sidewalk chalk art and student performances from plays, such as "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

The festival caps off a semester's worth of student-enrichment programs at the school, which focuses on project-based learning.

Recently, the school hosted its first Identity Coffee House, which displayed 200 pieces of art from eighth- and ninth-graders and allowed students to share how they combine subjects like math, art, history and English to show the relationships between the disciplines.

For example, teachers had students come up with stories and personalities for each of the elements of the periodic table: Gold was turned into an extravagant celebrity. Students and teachers say the method of combining subjects brings the lessons to life.

"These skills are so much more transferable than memorizing the periodic table like we used to do," English facilitator Cheryl Sena said.

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