

West Plains Elementary (WPE) Art Stream for 4th graders, Fall 2007
Teaching Artist's report
Pat Hight

This Art Stream focused on native plants of the Ozarks Prairies.

Our field trip was to Tingler Prairie south of West Plains, Mo. The students had two different sessions. Rhonda Rymer, biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation, taught one session on plants of the prairie and wet mesic prairie, and BWEF staff and volunteers taught the other session on transition from prairie, to upland woods, to riparian corridor, and tree and plant identification.

Students were required to journal and draw in both sessions.

Back in the classroom the students did more work with illustrations of Missouri Native Plants and drawing trips to the school's outdoor classroom. Most students were ready with drawings when BWEF staff and volunteers arrived to begin the linoleum print process.

There are several differences between some previous WPE Art Streams and this fall's project. In the spring Art Stream we switched from animal to plant subject matter, and allowed a choice of ink colors. The switch to plants as subject matter had to do with accessibility and likelihood of actually seeing the subject matter on our field trip. This fall we allowed both choice of paper color and ink color. White paper and black ink were the only option for students in our first several printmaking classes.

This change to more color really increased students excitement about the work and produced a less formal product that was more fun to print and that produced a much more visually varied result. The printing process with paper and ink color choices was messy, loud, fun, and resulted in prints that were in some ways more bold than the black and white prints.

Art Stream projects are very popular with students and teachers. Students are proud of their work and happily take home several prints and their carved plates. Students' essays about their field trip show good retention of lessons taught and enthusiasm for being out of doors at one of the best restoration sites in this part of Missouri.