

Where the wild things roam



Sicily Ranieri, 11, works on the newest mural at Hawthorne Elementary School Tuesday afternoon which incorporates artwork from the school's students.

DEIRDRE EITEL/CHRONICLE

Jungle mural unleashes kids' imaginations

By GAIL SCHONTZLER
Chronicle Staff Writer

Hawthorne School's latest art project has kids transforming what was an industrial-beige stairway into a wild jungle full of imaginary trees and fantastical creatures.

Anna Kaveney, 10, said she had fun painting her 14-foot-tall blue tree with purple polka dots. She even had fun climbing a ladder to reach the high parts.

But her favorite picture is another student's 8-foot Komodo dragon-like creature with knife-like teeth.

The jungle is also populated by children's whimsical drawings of spiders, snakes, butterflies, flying fish and all sorts of bugs.

Nine-year-old Grant Marshall agreed the whole project is "really cool. Everybody in the school gets to do part of it."

"I just love how I see all the creatures and monsters," said Sicily Ranieri, 11. "It's like an imaginary place that kindergartners to sixth-graders thought of."

She pointed out a creature that she and friend Eliza Spogis dreamed up by combining their favorite animals — "a big fluffy dolphin-elephant-turtle."

Loretta Domaszewski, a muralist, artist in residence and mother of two former Hawthorne kids, started the project two years ago, and now she's hoping to finish soon.

She plans to title it "Where imagination runs wild."

The overall effect is like stepping into the pages of a Dr. Seuss book or Maurice Sendak's classic "Where the Wild Things Are." Domaszewski has in fact painted one of Sendak's monsters at the top of the stairway, admiring the children's creations.

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WHERE IMAGINATION RUNS WILD

- Students at
- Hawthorne School
- are nearing
- completion of
- a two-year project
- to cover a school
- hallway with
- a jungle of
- imaginary
- flora and fauna

Mural/ from page A1

The mural is bound to attract attention, even in Hawthorne School, which emphasizes the arts and where every inch of hallway space seems to be filled with students' art works.

Domaszewski said she was inspired to create the jungle mural after seeing third-grade teacher Jamie Chapman's class art project.

Chapman asks her kids to draw an imaginary rain forest,

using art lessons on foreground, background, movement and the color wheel. She got the idea from a high school teachers' book of art lessons.

"I was blown away by the colors, the shapes — the magic of the whole thing," Chapman said.

She was sure third-graders could tackle it. It proved so successful, she has used the project for more than 13 years.

Now Chapman is getting an

added thrill, seeing her kids blow up their images from 12-inches high to 12-feet tall.

"Now as I walk here, I am in my children's artwork," Chapman said. "Wow. It's just amazing."

Besides learning about art, she said, students are learning bigger lessons.

"Patience and pride," Chapman said. "They are so proud of their work."

Student Sierra Fisher-Dykma wrote her own description on the wall: "A jungle full of inspiration, hope and peace to all."

Principal Robin Miller said she's excited to see the project getting finished.

"I get a great smile when I go through that hall," Miller said. "It's what makes Hawthorne unique and special."

Gail Schontzler is at gails@dailychronicle.com