



## Praising Student Work for Students of All Ages

Praising student work is an acquired skill. It is all too easy to fall into comfortable, but relatively empty speech patterns: “Oh, your work is so beautiful” or, “I like that way you did this.” Young artists must not create in order to make their work ‘love-able’ to adults. Your comments must demonstrate an active interest in the work they have done. The key lies in looking carefully at the student’s work and reflecting back exactly what you see no matter how obvious or basic your statement appears.

- For the student who uses a preponderance of only one color: “Blue (*or whatever color*) really attracted you for this work. You have used it so heavily in this one area.”
- For the student who presses hard (or gently) with the crayons: “Wow, your strokes here show real strength!” or “How did you ever manage to use the crayon so delicately?”
- For the student who selects unanticipated colors/shapes/lines: “Your choices really seem to work for you. My eye is really caught by this area. What does your eye see first?”
- When you have absolutely no idea what the picture represents: “There is so much happening in this picture. I can’t even begin to imagine what might happen next (*or before*).”
- If a student takes materials and manipulates them in some heretofore unimaginable way: “I have never seen stuff applied this way. How did your hands know to work this way!”

Frequently, I will tell all artists to ‘freeze’ in place, and instruct them to make a positive comment about a specific element in their neighbor’s work. **In my Art Room it is against the rules to ask if work is “good” or if I “like it.”**

***Take a few moments and a deep breath. Truly regard the artwork.***

***Make a statement on the objective nature of the piece before you. Rely on the color, shape, lines to start you off.*** Usually, the student will be so tickled that you have really considered the piece that s/he will give you more information from which to continue the dialog. You can even comment on which muscles an artist used to render the work!

Oakland Hebrew Day School  
5500 Redwood Rd; Oakland, Ca.  
510-531-8600



**Laurie Bellet**  
Art Specialist  
LBellet@OHDS.org