

Mural project opens avenues for discovery, service

May 04, 2012 2:30 AM Fran Simon
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Navigating scaffolds, Tulane students painted about 1,000 square feet of wall space at Benjamin Franklin Elementary in New Orleans. The design and colors for the mural were developed in collaboration with students attending the school, who were the university art students' "clients" for the project.



Tulane students in an art service-learning course paint a mural at Benjamin Franklin Elementary in uptown New Orleans. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

"I like teaching this class because it involves skills that are among the most practical, employable skills for students. It shows them they can get an art degree and not have to go into retail or food service after graduation," says Adam Mysock, professor of practice in the [Newcomb Art Department](#).

The Tulane students in the Mural Painting [service-learning course](#) met with "focus groups" of the elementary school students to ask questions such as, "If you could paint your room with any design, what would you create?"

They went on a fact-finding mission to determine which color palettes attracted the younger students, who, surprisingly, gravitated toward neutral colors as well as crayon-box brights.

“I never thought that an art class would encompass as many different aspects as this one does,” says Emilie Grodman, a neuroscience major who is taking the course as her first service-learning class. “Business ? aspects of budgeting, marketing ? and psychological aspects, as well as the art and creative.”



Benjamin Franklin students helped pick the mural's colors.

The mural, which should last 20 years, according to Mysock, provides talking points for lesson plans at the elementary school, including animal imagery for science lessons and geometric shapes for math classes.

“Our goal is to create a space that says, as soon as you go into the space, that here is a community that's dedicated to quality of their environment,” says Mysock.

He led the painting of another [mural](#) at the school in 2009.