

SEE ART COME TO LIFE

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PLEASE CONTACT:

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World Studies and Art come alive at master weaver Chapuchi Ahiagble's loom

Ghanaian master weaver Chapuchi Ahiagble is originally from Denu, Ghana.

Ahiagble “was born a weaver” and sat down at his first loom at the age of 9. Under the careful tutelage of his father Gilbert “Bobbo” Ahiagble and his uncles near the town of Agbozume, Ahiagble mastered the traditional art of weaving Kente cloth. The vibrant designs are woven in four-inch-wide strips, which are then sewn together to form the completed piece.



From behind his traditional loom, Ahiagble’s students will see how the fascinating demonstration of a traditional craft relates to their classroom studies.

“In World Studies, we were studying Africa and he showed us how his community could thrive with many folks unable to read and write; they would interpret the various symbols within the tapestry.” At the same time the seventh graders were learning about Africa’s history and culture, they were also exploring its art. “In Art, we were working with African symbols using stencils, cloth, and dye,” said Sarah C. “The weaver told us how these symbols were used in everyday life—not really for art work but to serve a practical purpose.” As students tried on traditional Kente dress, Ahiagble described the myriad of meanings behind different symbols and patterns. While some are purely decorative, the patterns woven in the cloth can also be used as powerful and even dangerous political statements, as well as representations of religious beliefs.

The fourth grade studied West African culture in the fall and students were delighted to see an artisan at work up close. “This event enhanced our appreciation of what makes cultures unique,” said fourth grade teacher Laura Myers. “It is beneficial for the girls to interact with people of cultures they are learning about. The questions they asked showed genuine interest. They were fascinated with the complexity and speed of the weaving process.”

Both Middle and Lower Schoolers alike were engrossed by the process of weaving. “I thought it was interesting how he used his toes and a rock to weave,” said fourth grader Sarah M. “I also liked learning about what the symbols were and what they meant.” Seventh grader Sarah C. went on, saying “I was struck by the rhythm of the weaving—the loom at work—and I could just imagine him sitting there weaving and singing for hours.”

Ahiagble has demonstrated his weaving at numerous venues in the United States, including at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Smithsonian Institution. His gentle spirit and warm sense of humor contributed to this special opportunity for students to connect with an artisan, providing a deeper appreciation of the region they were studying in both World Studies and Art.



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