



The Art of Folding Paper
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4th Grade
High Tech Elementary Explorer

In this project students answered the essential question, “What can we learn from the art of folding paper?” Students learned tangible, social, and culturally relevant skills through creating origami which allowed them to work with their hands and have fun. Through origami, fourth graders explored essential social emotional skills like communication, collaboration, patience, feedback, and perseverance. They also dove into symbolism in Japanese culture and history of Japanese Americans, ultimately creating a display of 1,000 paper cranes to honor Sadako Sasaki’s story. Finally, using their geometry, communication, and writing skills, students worked together to publish a how-to book with over 50 different folds.

Teacher Reflection

This was an incredible project to start the year with. Students were engaged and working with their hands from day one. They faced the challenge and frustrations that origami presents head on and are now experts at using those skills in everything they do. It is also a project that lends itself perfectly to differentiation with the myriad of different types of folds. Not only did our students latch onto the challenge of learning and teaching difficult folds, they surprised us with their engagement and excitement about learning the history and symbolism of origami. One class ended up focusing on the message of hope and resilience, another focused on pushing through, and a third zoomed in on the message of using the tools around you. It was so cool to see the ways each student, and each class, adapted this project and its questions to fit their needs. Finally, we were blown away by the commitment and excitement our students had when it came to folding our 1,000 paper cranes and publishing our book.

—Shira

Student Reflection

This project has been hard but fun. It is cool to see what folds look like once you are done. My favorite part of this project has been learning how to make an origami cat for my final fold that I will teach others. This has been my favorite part because cats are my favorite animal. I tried a few different folds to be sure I found the right fold because some were too easy for me and others were too hard. I knew I had found the just right fold when it was challenging but I could do mostly all of the steps.

—Isla H