



Above: One of the students created a work with play dough and toys.

A student drew the image of a *dabai* (a nickname for medics in protective suits) on a face mask.

Left: A student depicts a Meituan deliveryman sleeping beneath a bridge in his drawing. — Ti Gong

Delivering utmost thanks with artworks

Zhou Anna

Students from Nord Anglia Chinese International School Shanghai recently created 14 artworks in a mark of gratitude to local deliverymen, providing a warm follow-up story to a video made by Shanghai Daily in mid-April, when many couriers worked long and hard amid the city's COVID-19 lockdown.

"Doing this project certainly opened up a different perspective for them," said Joanna Hctor, the school's international deputy head of secondary and art teacher, alluding to the students.

She was so moved by the video that she showed it to her students.

Hctor and her husband are both teachers from Ireland. They decided to broaden their professional horizons by working abroad after their country was hit by an economic downturn.

In 2013, they moved to Shanghai with their 6-year-old daughter Laila and began working at a bilingual education institution. Since then, their family has had two new members: 4-year-old Hugo and 15-month-old Louis.

For Hctor, one of the most

important aspects of education is teaching children to view the world through different lenses, and the Shanghai Daily video of the deliverymen provided her with a unique chance.

"It was a perfect opportunity to teach students about empathy, compassion and to celebrate and appreciate all that is good about humanity," she said in an interview.

Hctor revealed that the idea was initially inspired by an article sent by the head of secondary Kevin Dumble — titled "Lockdown Getting You Down?" — from the WeChat account Lifelineconnect.

The article suggested things people could do to stay positive during the lockdown, and one of which was that when consuming sensational stories — which tend to go viral — it is important to remember that the world is not simply black and white, good or bad.

The article also quoted Fred Rogers, the well-known American television host, as saying: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me: 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

"That just really kind of stuck in my mind," Hctor noted.

Therefore, she realized that in a way the video helped complement her teaching philosophy. So, after showing the video to her students, she asked her class to spend a week creating art pieces as a tribute to these people who persisted in their work during such tough times.

It took the students a while to digest the video.

"I don't think they had really thought about what the lives of deliverymen would be like," Hctor observed.

"Living in Shanghai, everything is at your fingertips, and everything is at such a fast pace. You don't really stop to think of the actual process through which it (a parcel) went through to get to your front door."

She also mentioned some of the students' concerns, such as rumors about deliverymen charging exorbitant fees.

However, Hctor saw it as an excellent opportunity to open up another discussion with the students. She told them that some people do take advantage of difficult times, but they are only a small percentage. People need to look at it from a different, broader perspective.

"The video gave us ample discussion points, and we talked a



Joanna Hctor

lot about different things that it linked up with lots of different discussions we may never have had before viewing this, which was great," she said.

Seven days later, Hctor received the students' amazing artworks.

These works were presented in a variety of ways. Some created images of those who continued to work during the lockdown, such as deliverymen and medical staff, on paper or face masks, with pencil or colored pen, while others completed the assignment with the help of editing software or by handing in photographs, play dough and toys.

Hctor explained that through these submitted assignments, she could decipher how well her students had understood the subject.

One of the works that particularly impressed her was a simple drawing of a Meituan deliveryman sleeping beneath a bridge. The student brightened the atmosphere with yellow lines.

"You lights up the city. Thank you," the student wrote at the top of the painting.

"The student wasn't just creating work for the sake of work," Hctor pointed out. "He read about it and tried to depict the hardship that the deliveryman was going through."

Hctor said the students had attempted multiple ways to express their gratitude to delivery personnel, including giving them some items when receiving parcels.

Nevertheless, there were obstacles to that. Due to the lockdown, they could not communicate with the deliverymen face to face, so they finally chose to show their appreciation through art.

The students were also delighted to have their artwork appreciated by those who needed some encouragement.

"The students just wanted to say: 'Thank you,'" noted Hctor. "And they realize how hard the delivery personnel are working, and that what they're doing is selfless."