

## Award winner helps students find artistic independence

By Meg Secatore

**A**rt is about choices, and Newton teacher Diane Jaquith wants her elementary school artists to have the same options that working artists enjoy.

"I teach art in a choice-based studio," Jaquith said. "We begin with group instruction and then students work on something of their own choosing." A typical project might be a sculpture created by a group of kindergarteners or a painting worked on over several sessions by a solo student.

Jaquith — who has taught in Newton for 12 years and previously taught in Boston, Lincoln and Beverly — was one of more than 50 educators nationwide who were recognized at the NEA Foundation's 13th annual Salute to Excellence in Education Gala on Feb. 8 at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. She received an I Can Learn Award for Teaching Excellence.

Jaquith was nominated by Kathy Douglas, a retired art teacher from East Bridgewater. The two are the founders of Teaching for Artistic Behavior, which is both a curricular approach and a community of practice for art teachers nationwide.

Their core principle: "We honor the child as the artist by providing circumstances for authentic learning in the arts."

"There's a lot of peer teaching going on and a lot of collaboration," Jaquith said of the choice-based studio style. "It gives students a lot of autonomy. They select their own materials and work at their own pace, which is something they can't always do in other classes. I find that it causes them to be very reflective about their work because they are very invested."

Teaching for Artistic Behavior has attracted an active online community of art educators, Jaquith said, and the group will soon launch a Web site, [www.teachingforartisticbehavior.org](http://www.teachingforartisticbehavior.org).

"Art is a very isolating field," Jaquith said. "All of the specialties are. With this online peer group, we can have deep dialogue that you just don't have time for during the school day."

At the gala, the NEA Foundation Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education was presented to football legend Tiki Barber. Accepting his award, Barber said: "As a product of a public school education, as a champion of literacy and as a parent, I know that a good education can make all the difference in the world. Every day, in 97,000 schools around the nation, our public school teachers are working smart and working hard to prepare young people with the skills and knowledge they are going to need to thrive and succeed in the 21st century. These champions of education deserve our attention, our praise and our thanks."

NEA President Reg Weaver praised "the level of talent exhibited by all the awardees."

Please turn to **Newton**/Page 24

12 February/March 2008

### Newton teacher is honored by NEA

Continued from Page 12

"NEA and its 3.2 million members congratulate the gala awardees and organizations for their contributions and the pivotal roles they play in advancing public education issues," Weaver said. "Efforts such as these are not only commendable, they are critical in making good on our commitment to providing great public schools for every child."

Jaquith has been active in her local, the Newton Teachers Association, for the last six years, serving as recording secretary and on the negotiating team for the NTA's last two contracts.

"It's very rewarding to be serving my colleagues this way," she said, noting that moving between the studio and the negotiating table exercises both sides of her brain.

"Dad was a lawyer and mom was an artist!" she joked.

24 February/March 2008