

Kilns and Firings

Here are some bargaining points to use for getting your kiln.

1. We live in a 3-D world. While most of the work the students do in school is two-dimensional, clay is a three-dimensional medium. That special quality stimulates other areas of the students' brains and different ways of knowing.

2. Ceramics have been created by nearly every culture on earth. This allows for a broad inclusion of art of other cultures into the art curriculum. During the Olympics, I showed my students pictures of historic Greek amphoras depicting athletes as motivation for a variety of art lessons.

3. Clay easily connects to other subject areas. When a fifth grade class researched animals and their habitats, we made the animals in clay. The classroom teacher finished the project using shoeboxes for dioramas.

4. Clay projects are one of the few elementary art projects parents will keep forever. Parents of children I taught over twenty-five years ago tell me they treasure the clay objects their children made and still display them in their homes and offices.

5. To bargain for my first kiln, I proposed making a school-wide ceramic mural in which every student would glaze one tile. I was giving back to the school while getting a kiln in return.

6. The cost of a kiln is about the same as a computer and printer. With proper care, a kiln will last a lifetime. How many years before a computer becomes obsolete and needs replacing?

7. The kilns I have in schools have been placed in the boiler rooms. They do not need a venting system (an additional savings) because the room has its own air supply. It's also away from students (a safety feature). Check your local/state codes.

Note: Resist buying or accepting a free or used kiln (such as one from someone's basement or garage). Moving an older kiln usually breaks fragile elements, the most expensive part of a kiln. They also often do not have current safety features.

