

LAW STUDENT TEACHES ART TO TEXAS STUDENTS

Valparaiso University third-year law student Justin Vining discovered his passion during a high school art class more than a decade ago, and this week he shared that passion with elementary students in Wylie, Texas. "It's awesome," Vining said, about the opportunity to teach via live videoconference from Valparaiso's School of Law. "It's really humbling and validating at the same time." During the 30-minute videoconference, facilitated by Valparaiso University School of Law's Information Technology staff, Vining demonstrated works of his art to a group of second through fourth graders, speaking directly with students and answering questions. He described his particular style in shapes, color and balance, and how the inspiration for a major portion of his works came from a life-altering event in his youth. "It was a sad time," said Vining, who grew up on a farm in the small town of Etna Green, Ind. "In high school my family had to sell our farm, and that's when I started painting images of a farm house. It started as a sad image, and over the years it has grown into a more simplified, whimsical version of that house, a happier picture." Vining's paintings feature modernistic, flowing landscapes with houses, barns and trees in bright hues and deep contrasts Vining also has painted cityscapes of Lafayette, Indianapolis and Valparaiso, where his art is displayed in various galleries. The video lesson came to fruition, Vining said, after teacher Aimee Nichols (at Dodd Elementary School in Wylie) found his art via Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/justinvining>) and became an instant fan. "I'm planning an entire week's lessons around Vining's work," said Nichols. "I thought it would be great to study the work of someone creating art today. I think the kids would really relate to him." That's when Vining brought up the idea of a live videoconference from Valpo to the Texas classroom. "I think it is amazing what those students are learning," Vining said. After receiving his undergraduate degree in art education from Purdue University, he taught art to elementary school students in the Indianapolis area. "I taught for three years and we never were able to study a living artist." Vining said his interest in art has its roots in high school. He began painting after taking a required art class for his academic honors diploma, and his teacher motivated him to pursue a career as an art educator. After the videoconference, Vining reflected on his past and the future possibilities of the Texas elementary school students. "I have no idea what kind of impact today will have on those students," Vining said. "But I think it was a great opportunity for them to talk with someone who is chasing his dream." Vining came to Valparaiso's School of Law (www.valpo.edu/law) in 2007 to challenge himself intellectually and prepare for a new path in life, and he plans to pursue his artwork full-time after graduating in May 2010. More information on Vining and his artwork can be found at <http://www.justinvining.com>.