English 6 Enrichment

English Enrichment provides students with the opportunity to learn, read, and write within a variety of genres throughout the school year. It allows for extension of activities and skills taught in English class, as well as additional creative writing units and projects that do not fit within the time constraints of the 42-minute period and school year.

Units include:

- **Team Building Activities:** In September, I start off the year with activities to get to know the students. We also do team building activities to foster a team atmosphere, since this is our sixth grade theme.

- **Blogging:** This unit allows students to create their own individual blog through Blogger, one of the Google Apps. Students examine blogs to learn about what they are and how they are written. They then choose a topic that they are interested in for their blog, design a blog, and learn about how to write posts and add different features to their posts.

- **Reading like a Writer:** During this unit, we examine short stories to identify best practices used by authors and identify how they construct stories. We focus on literary terms, how stories are constructed, and qualities of writing. The format of each lesson includes reading a short story with a focus on one skill, then trying out that skill in their own writing in their Writer’s Notebook.

- **Raising Awareness Projects:** During January and February in English class, we complete a research unit called “Raise Awareness Research.” Students choose a global issue that impacts the world and research: background information on the issue, how the issue impacts the world, and what people are trying to do to solve this issue. They then write a research paper on their topic. To support and extend the learning we do in English class with this unit, we will do a project in Enrichment. Students must come up with a way to actively raise awareness about their topic, beyond simply writing a paper in English. We will examine ways other students in the world have raised awareness about issues important to them, and then students will come up with their own ideas. They may work individually or in small groups/partnerships.

- **ELA Test Taking Strategies:** At the end of March, we spend about two weeks preparing for the ELA examine by discussing the types of questions they might see and strategies they can use when taking the test. Our lessons in Enrichment will support and reinforce the strategies we discuss in class.
• **Journalism Unit:** During this unit, we will examine different types of newspapers (online and print) and learn about the main types of articles that we see. Students will then work in small groups to create their own “VMS Newspaper.” Each student will have a different type of article to write in order to create a whole group newspaper.

• **Independent Writing Unit and Reflecting Back on Sixth Grade:** During this unit, the students will try out the different types of writing that we read or learned about this year (Writing to Entertain, Inform, or Persuade). Students will try out each type of writing and then choose one style to focus on and publish. The only requirement for each type of writing is that the topics have to be somehow connected to sixth grade (ex: Informing about Middle school or A fantasy story with a character who is in sixth grade.)

**Math 6 Enrichment**

Currently, our ninth period math enrichment is used as an extra class to help students who struggle with math. It is an opportunity to review the material we are currently learning in class as well as work on basic skills, such as multiplication, fractions, decimals, etc.

In general, we review that day’s lesson or do a preview of the next day’s lesson. We practice basic math facts. Additionally, this class satisfies AIS requirements for these students. This class assists students with grasping the challenging topics that are part of the sixth grade Common Core curriculum.

**Science 6 Enrichment**

Within the regular 6th grade science curriculum, students learn about basic physical science, astronomy, meteorology, and geology. Science enrichment offers the opportunity for students to review these topics from a more global, ecological perspective.

Topics Include:

The Metric System

- Scientists need to think, and work, globally. This means that all of the experiments that we perform, and all of the data that we collect, must be done using the metric system
- We will do several hands-on activities in which students measure distances, volumes, weights, and temperatures in metric units
- We will also practice how to convert between different metric units
Water as a Natural Resource

- Life is very diverse. But all living things have one common need: clean, unpolluted liquid water. Water is our most basic natural resource.
- We will do web activities on how much water people use.
- We will perform hands-on activities on the different phases of water and how, using energy, we can purify or distill water.
- We will do research on places where water has become scarce, and the consequences this has had on local people.

Waste Management

- Besides water, other natural resources include minerals, such as metals, and various hydrocarbons. These are used to make all of the stuff that we use in our lives. When our stuff gets old, or obsolete, we usually toss it in the trash.
- We will watch videos on what happens to trash as it travels from waste bins to landfills.
- We will do web research and watch videos on various recycling efforts from around the world.

Energy Use

- Our most threatening environmental issues are related to our consumption of energy. Energy is required for electricity, transportation, and heating.
- We will keep journals on the amount of energy each of us seem to use in a day, and compare that to national and international averages.
- We will use library books, and the web, to research how people around the world use different forms of energy.
- We will perform a hands-on activity on generators. We will discuss how, with the exception of photovoltaic solar power, all electricity is generated using generators.
- We will watch videos on how people around the world are attempting to be more energy efficient.

Fossil Fuels as a Natural Resource

- The majority of the energy that we use comes from fossil fuels. These include oil, natural gas, and coal.
- We will do web activities on how fossils fuels are created.
- We will do hands-on activities in which students will see why fossil fuels are so valuable.
- We will use books, and the web, to research why fossils fuels are considered a nonrenewable resource.
Renewable Energy

- If energy was cheaper, renewable, and non-polluting, it would solve most of our environmental problems.
- We will use books, and the web, to research different forms of renewable energy.
- As groups, we will complete a project on different forms of alternative energy and make presentations.

Climate Factors

- We will discuss the difference between climate and weather, and why both are difficult to forecast.
- We will discuss the various natural phenomena that influence climate, including latitude, elevation, wind patterns, ocean currents, and proximity to large bodies of water.
- We will perform a hands-on activity on how the Sun’s radiation doesn’t affect land and water in the same way.

Climate Change

- Of all the global challenges scientists are asked to address, climate change is the biggest.
- We will research natural climate change, including celestial cycles, variations in solar activity, changes in ocean currents, and the natural greenhouse effect.
- We will watch videos, and do web activities, on why the vast majority of scientists link our warming climate to human-induced greenhouse effect.
- We will examine the evidence that points to this conclusion.

Ecology and Extinction

- Why should any of this matter to you or me? Because all of us are part of a global ecosystem that we depend on to survive.
- Students will complete a web activity on how sensitive many species are to slight changes to their environment.
- As a class, we will read the book “World Without Fish.”
- We will discuss the value of many, many different species. And we will complete a web activity on how all of these species are interdependent.
- We will discuss the effects of human activity on the global ecosystem.

Social Studies 6 Enrichment

In social studies enrichment, our main focus is current events. Current Events provides the opportunity for students to make connections between the social studies curriculum and events happening around them every day. In addition to exposing students to a variety of news sources, this course of study will engage students in research, reading, writing, debate, and media
production. Students will collaborate in an online community with their peers to share, summarize, comment on, and debate the news of the day. Students will also develop their media literacy skills by comparing and contrasting legitimate and less trustworthy sources of information.

In addition to current events, social studies enrichment offers the ability for some project-based learning that, while important and compelling, is outside the current NYS SS standards for grade 6. For example, in grade 6 SS; we take a Big History approach to our study of the past, present, and future. During the regular SS class, this means examining long time frames, and exploring human existence in the context of a bigger picture. Big history requires a multidisciplinary approach that includes a wide array of physical and social sciences. Enrichment allows for connections between science and history, that we don’t have time for during the regular course of grade 6 social studies. An example of a Big History Activity we have worked on in enrichment involves examining geologic time scales to gain a better perspective on where we came from. Imagining geologic time is a very abstract and complex concept – especially for 6th graders. We began uncovering the layers of this mystery by listening to JFK’s famous speech at Rice University where he explains 50,000 years of human history condensed into half a century. In order to place it on a scale that makes sense, we then compared the geologic time scale to a football field. Students were given an event important to human development over the past 2 million years to do some research on. We then placed all of these events “on a football field” to gain a perspective of not only where humans fit into geologic time, but also where the events they recognize fit in. Students come away with a greater understanding of just how short we’ve been on the planet, and how the events that make us who we are, connect to the beginnings of our universe. While it is not essential for 6th grade social studies students to have a concept of geologic time, it enriches their ability to see how events that took place long before they were born influence them every day.