

Building an Interdisciplinary Theme in an Interdisciplinary School

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Exploris[™]
Middle School

Overview

- School history and basic philosophy
- Planning
- Themes
- Student voices

Exploris™

Middle School

- Established 1996
- Charter School
- Middle Grades (Sixth through eighth grades)

- Integrated curriculum
- Adolescent Centered
- Collaborative teaching and learning
- No textbooks
- Ongoing formative assessment
- Weekly service commitment

Mission:

“To create a challenging and supportive learning community that engages each student in understanding and building a connected, just, and sustainable world.”

What does curriculum integration mean to us?

- Acknowledgement that everything cannot be “discovered”
- Mathematics as a separate subject
- Block of time called “theme”
- 90 minutes plus time in the morning
- Process based, not content based
- Big ideas, essential questions, culminating activity

Process

- Extremely messy and inefficient
- Takes into consideration
 - Teachers' interests and skills
 - Students' questions
 - State requirements
 - School matrix
 - Current world or local events and issues

Grade Level	Questions	Global Concepts and Focus Areas
6th	<p>Where am I?</p> <p>Who am I?</p>	<p>Similarities, Differences & Connections</p> <p>Place & Population</p> <p>Sustainability and resources</p>
7th	<p>What made me this way?</p> <p>What made this society this way?</p> <p>What is my role in society?</p>	<p>Change over time</p> <p>Human Systems of Exchange</p> <p>Sustainability and resources</p>
8th	<p>Where am I going?</p> <p>What will the world be like?</p>	<p>Human Rights & Responsibilities</p> <p>Chemistry – Human and Scientific</p> <p>Sustainability and resources</p>

Theme elements

- Projects (individual, small group, culminating project involving all students)
- Includes all disciplines
- Reaches a variety of learning styles
- Involves community interaction
- Often includes civic action of some sort

From ***Taking the Next Step***
A Blueprint for Educate Together
Second-level Schools

“Curriculum should be restructured around four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.”

“...education is about becoming a Learner rather than a Knower”