An Interdisciplinary Unit By the Egret Team

Theme: Community
Thrive or Just Survive?

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Creating a Community of Learners
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The Unit Calendar

A Letter to the Parents of the Egret Team

EEDUC 6137 Integrated Thematic Unit Team Egret

Community – Thrive or Just Survive?

Dear Parents:

The Egret Team would like to introduce you to our first Interdisciplinary Unit for the year. Each year we integrate fun and exciting units into our curriculum where students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the world in which we focus on a theme.

This year we have chosen (with student input ☺) a team-based unit whose objective is to explore the importance and meaning of *community*. To this end we have planned many exciting activities. Within the theme of community, people are brought together to share ideas and work together for common goals with emphasis on communication. With this in mind, our team has decided to launch a school newspaper, and we will begin with our kickoff engagement activity with a field trip to our local newspaper, the *Spring Valley News.* The World History class will be coordinating the field trip to *Spring Valley News* and be inviting a local reporter to share his work experience with our class! In addition, the **Math** classes will be exploring common Geometric features and taking a look at Stretching and Shrinking ideas using the Wump family for graphing exercises and hands –on activities. Students will also take a look at the make up of their community and explore the changing faces through data collection and analysis.

In **Social Studies**, students will take a look at how news has been reported through- out history and the effect it has or hasn't had on shaping history. In addition to in keeping with the theme of community, the Social Studies class will also delve into our local history with a web quest which will bring then to the four corners of Massachusetts and places in between.

In **English Language Arts** students will be contributing articles on our school community and other happenings on our team, including an editorial on our team's trip to the newspaper. In English Language Arts students will be contributing articles about our school community and other happenings on our team, including an editorial on our team's trip to the newspaper. In

addition, students will publish reviews on writings by Massachusetts authors and poets. As students explore the nature of the various relationships within communities of the past and present, they will examine the role of various media, as well as other influences which shape community values, awareness, and culture.

In **Science** students will investigate the various species of plants and animals which exist within our community. We will classify the organisms, examine cells, investigate and reflect upon the impact that environment has on each of the species and develop a food chain model.

We are enclosing a permission slip for you to sign, and an opportunity for you to be involved as a chaperone on our trip. Our culminating activity will be the official rollout and distribution of our newspaper and an open house coffee in 4 weeks, at the end of October. We hope to see you there- details with time and place to follow. Check the Egret's website for additional information as well.

Thank you and we look forward to an exciting year!

Sincerely,
The Egret Team

Engaging Activity

Field Trip to Local Newspaper Offices and Printing Facility

An Engaging Activity

What makes communities thrive? Involvement! One aspect of being able to contribute and respond in community is communication. That is why the Egret Team is going to the press!

The Egret Team is going on a field trip to explore the field of journalism. We will be visiting a fully operational newspaper plant, equipped with everything from reporters, photographers, graphic artists and ad-sellers to printing presses, color processing labs and distribution machinery! ***The Eagle Tribune*** on Route 114 in the North Shore has graciously agreed to give us the full story.

Students will tour the plant, talk with reporters about getting stories, and find out about what happens when that special news story hits --talk about taking notes! We will also visit the composing room, learn about detail imaging, and meet with photographers and investigative journalists. We will even learn about the color processing, and find out just how many times a newspaper goes through the press to get a color picture dark enough as we talk with the people whose job it is to create the colors. We will learn about the distribution of the paper, how inserts and bundling take place to create those huge stacks delivered to stores and front doors. If a student has a paper route, this could be the plant that packages those papers as well, because ***The Eagle Tribune*** acts as a press for many of the local papers including the ***Salem Evening News***, and many smaller community papers.

To complete our tour, we will meet with the Editor of ***The Eagle Tribune***, who will let us know the nuts and bolts of writing, editing, layout, and publication. Students will be able to ask questions throughout the tour. They will also be taking notes and thinking about what job they would most enjoy as we prepare to publish ***The Egret News***!

Final Project

Egret News

The Official Newspaper of Spring Valley Middle School

January 1, 2007
Volume 1, Issue 1

EGRET NEWS

Spring Valley Middle School
Team Egret – Grade 8

Inside This Issue

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What is Community?

In Greek it's "κοινότητα." In Arabic it's written "المُجْتَمَع." In Russia, they write it "общество."

Dictionary.com defines Community as *"a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage."*

We on the 8th Grade—Team Egret will explore community in terms of people working together to a common end. As we explore the concept of community we plan to focus on one of the most common forms of communication in a community—the newspaper.

Students will work within their own community, Team Egret, as they explore communities in Science, Social Studies, Math and English Language Arts. Students will make connections between these curricular areas and the related arts.

Students will begin their exploration by visiting a local newspaper office. We will be joined by a popular local reporter and explore news reporting through out history, from the town crier to internet news.

Capping off this exciting unit, students will roll out their first issue of the VCMS school news. Students will showcase their first issue with individual spotlights on personal contributions to the team, school, town and broader community.

The VCMS School Egret News – A Paper by Kids for All!

Students are expected to participate in at least one aspect of creating the school newspaper. This participation may include writing assignments, editing assignments, sponsorships, layout and production. Students will have an opportunity to sign up for the area of production that interests them. Teachers may also find assignments for particular students to broaden their choices of topics. Students will write all articles, save special features that a teacher may write. Students will edit the articles for content, grammar and accuracy. There will need to be a special group of students that go out into the community to solicit sponsors that will hopefully help defray the cost of production and circulation, in exchange for a mention on the sponsor page. Then there will need to be a dedicated team of students to layout the copy and print. All students will be encouraged to contribute to "Student Writing" pages.

So What Will the Teacher do?

I'm glad you asked. Teachers will be available to facilitate the action. There are deadlines to be met and we as the teachers of Team Egret will help keep our news and production staff on course to a successful launch.

There will be a series of days where time will be set aside from class to work on the paper. This may be a time where Mr. Bowler takes the sales team out to solicit sponsors, or a time where Ms. Boal meets with the editorial staff to go through the articles for mechanics and fluency.

Ms. Anagnostaras and Ms. Holmes will be available to the field reporters to assist in fact checking and content. They will also head up "Operation Thrive" which assists students in finding opportunities to play an important role in improving the community; thru service and charity.

Mr. Smith, the Art teacher, will oversee the layout process. Ms. Leciszka, Phys. Ed, has agreed to give access and inside information to the sports reporter as well as a contributor to the health and wellness corner.

So, What's In It for Us?

Our Newspaper will contain many features of a school paper, plus a little more.

We will cover school events, sports and extra curricular activities. Our reporters will also span out into the community. There will be features on community leaders and members that highlight what they do to help the larger community thrive.

Student reporters will also spotlight the contributions made by fellow students in making for better community for all. This community will extend beyond the walls of Spring Valley Middle School. It includes our town, our state and our World.

There will be a page of contributions from any student. These may be short stories, poems, personal stories, art or humor and comics.

There will be a spot where anyone can contribute an "op. ed." piece that is of interest to our community and will help us all to thrive.

"Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community."

-Anthony Burgess

An Egret

January 1, 2007
Volume 1, Issue 1

One Paper in Every Hand, or E-mail...

The printing process of our newspaper will be two fold. The actual layout will be done in the art class. Students will use special software to layout the edited copy so it fits within the constraints of the paper.

Photography will be edited using Photoshop.

Printing will be accomplished through a special relationship we hope to build within the community. We will be soliciting services from a local office supply retailer. This service will be in exchange for an exclusive relationship for providing school supply lists. This retailer will also be granted a designation as preferred supplier for school supplies and listed on the sponsor page and beginning of year letters from the team to students and parents.

As technology permits we will offer e-mail distribution in a Portable Document Format (pdf) file. Over time we hope to archive all issues on an indexed website that is linked to the school's own webpage. This webpage will have a search feature so readers can find specific articles or articles on specific topics.

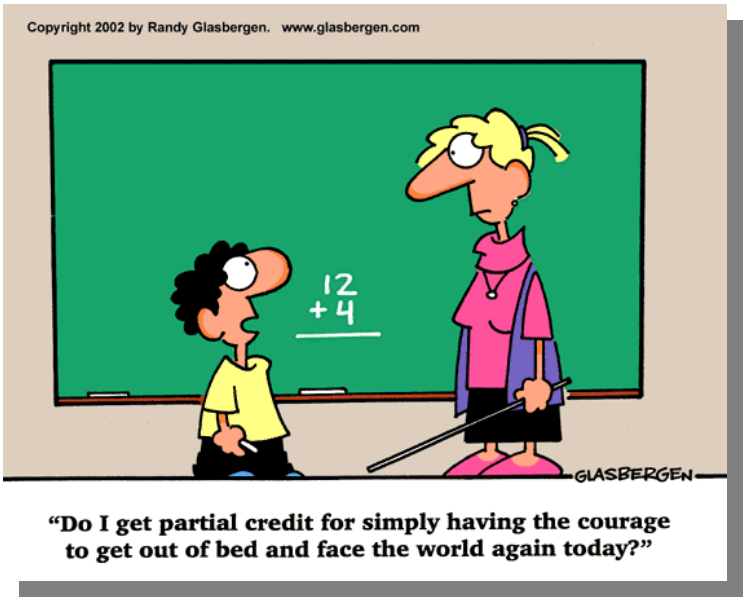
The Final Say

Welcome to the Show!

We will cap off the unit on community by sharing the fruit of our labors-with the community.

In our Launch Party students will present to the community their individual contributions to the process.

The students are free to present this as a group, or individual. These presentations, as will be discussed further, will include Posters, Movies, photo essays or whatever mode the student chooses.



EEDUC 6137 Integrated Thematic Unit Team Egret
Community – Thrive or Just Survive?

Egret News Sign Up

You are going to be part of something very exciting. As part of our unit we will be publishing the first, of many, Spring Valley Middle School News!

This paper will highlight everything that makes our school, our town and our World an exciting, dynamic, thriving community. We will have news stories that are important to you. We will feature the creativity of our entire team. With your hard work and commitment to this newspaper will be what makes it a success.

This is not a small undertaking. We will need everyone's assistance. This exciting venture will require everyone's participation. We are asking you to take a few minutes to select a job you'd like to perform in the production of our newspaper.

Please select, at least, one area that interests you. If you are unsure of where you'd like to participate, you can talk to your friends, parents and teachers. Maybe we can help you choose, as everyone has personal skills that can make our paper a success.

Name:_____ Homeroom:_____

Check, at least, one...

- ☐ Reporter...find out the Who, What, When and Where of the stories that interest your fellow students.
- ☐ Editor…Verify the quality of writing and accuracy. Provide constructive feedback to the writers to produce the best possible product.
- ☐ Layout…assemble the articles, columns and contributions in a computerized format to create an eye catching and engaging paper.
- ☐ Sales…responsible to go into the community to solicit services and funding to the production of the paper.
- ☐ Reviews…provide thoughtful and creative reviews of the music, movies, books and magazines that kids are enjoying.

Not all students will get the job, for this first issue, they ask. We will have future issues where the jobs will be rotated. You may even be asked to take on a task you didn't check off, this would be done to fill a need of the team.

Culminating Activity

Egret News Launch Party 2007

Culminating Activity

Launch Party of School Newspaper

Culminating Activity: Rollout, distribution and celebration of the publishing of the school newspaper *(Egret News)*

What:

As the culminating activity to our interdisciplinary unit, *Community: Thrive or Just Survive*?, a Launch Party will take place in November in the school cafeteria. All students from the Egret Team will showcase at this party, a visual representation of their role in the creation of the newspaper, built around the theme of community. This presentation will include their favorite activity and/or deliverable from the interdisciplinary unit, what it means to them and why. They will make this presentation at the Party Launch, in a *Gallery Tour* format.

Presentations will vary by content and format, but all will be based on their own personal contribution to the newspaper. Examples of presentations can include students who have compiled data from polling which has taken place in Math class on students' views on the war on Iraq. These results will be graphically represented and shared in a presentation at the Gallery Tour. Other students may want to graphically depict their newspaper publishing experience via photographs and creatively display them for viewing by creating a collage. Others may want to create a computer montage of pictures, depicting their personal journey on helping create the newspaper. Still other students may wish to present a video presentation of their work while others may want to present their written work by displaying articles they have written.

Irregardless of the format, each student will be celebrating his or her personal contribution to the newspaper and will be able to celebrate their efforts with others, in helping create the school community newspaper.

Who:

- Students on the Egret team who produced and contributed to the newspaper
- All students from the middle school will have an opportunity to tour each student's or groups of students' booths/presentation at different periods of the school day

- Members of the community will be invited in the evening, including parents, guardians, newspaper representative from the field trip, staff, faculty and administration, as well as community leaders and the school committee.

Where:

- To take place on the school premises in the cafeteria

When:

- In November before Thanksgiving
- Students from Middle School will Gallery Tour during the school day during designated periods so as to limit crowding
- Community members will be invited in the evening/(or day)

Goals and Objectives of Culminating Activity

- Students will be able to celebrate and share the completion of the school newspaper.
- Students will build interpersonal relationships among their peers, faculty, staff and community members and all who this event.
- Students will gain a sense of accomplishment and community through this culminating activity
- Students will hone presentation and public speaking skills and in presenting their work at is relates to the newspaper.
- Teachers will gain insight into the students thought processes as the students present in the Gallery Tour.
- Students will gain real life experience seeing how hard work, determination and goal setting can produce realistic and successful results by working as a team.
- Students will gain a better understanding of what community is and their role within the community at this activity.

Quality Control and Assessment

Final Newspaper Project

Student Handout: Creating a News Page for the Egret News:

Final Assignment Instructions

Name:_____ Class_____

1. The Assignment

Design and produce a newspaper section for the *Egret News:*

There must be at least three stories on the page. Remember to vary the length of the stories according to their importance. All stories on your page must feature the school community or the community at large, our town Spring Valley. Include some photographs or illustrations (cartoons, charts, graphs).

Before laying out your page, **each group must complete an Assignment Sheet**. Keep the Assignment Sheet in your folder and hand it in with your final project.

2. Editing

Once a story is finished, have all the members of the group peer edit the article. Peer editors are looking for spelling errors, grammar mistakes, incomplete thoughts and run-on sentences.

Read all work out loud. Show all articles to the teacher before putting them on the page.

3. Headlines

Each student must write a headline. This can be a collaborative effort in groups, but all students must participate. Some stories will require a subhead to break up the print copy.

4. Illustrations & Photographs

All photographs and illustrations (clip art, graphs) used on your page require a cut line.

5. Layout & Design

Final copy for stories must be on computer in MS Word/Publisher. Stories will be placed on a page you create in a computer program in eth computer lab during production week..

All stories will be written in Times New Roman 12 pt.
Cutlines are written in Times New Roman 10 pt.
Photo credits are written in Times New Roman 9 pt.

6. Grading

A rubric is attached to this assignment. Read it over carefully. Make sure you understand what's required for this project.

7. Timelines and Deadlines

The plan for your page is due (A lead reporter (person responsible for story) must be assigned to each story.):

_____

Interviews and research should be completed by:

_____

All copy (stories) must be written by:

_____

The final page layout is due:

_____

Student Handout: Newspaper Assignment Sheet

Group Members: _____

_____

_____

_____

Project: _____

Assignments: 1._____

2._____

3._____

Progress Sheet and sign off

Article	Teacher OK	Interview/Research	1st Edition Peer Initials	2nd Edition Peer Initials	Final Edit

Teacher Assessment Tool: Marking Scheme for Newspaper Production

Part A: News Stories

Total of ___marks

1. Each article is worth ___ marks.
2. Articles will be marked for: content quality; spelling, and grammar.

Part B: Headlines

Total of __ marks

1. Each headline is worth __ marks.
2. A mark will be given for the fit of the headline in the space, a second mark will be given for the clever use of words.

Part C: Photographs, Clip Art and Illustrations

Total of __marks

1. All stories must have either a picture, clip art or an illustration. Not all of the art must be used on the page. Show the teacher what was left off, and explain why this editorial decision was made.

2. Each cut line, clip art or illustration is worth marks. A mark will be given for the work done, a second mark will be awarded based on accuracy and/or creativity.

Part D: Layout & Design

Total of __marks

1. Placement of the stories based on importance.
2. Use of hairlines around photos, illustrations, clipart. A mark for each image correctly boxed by a hairline.
3. Overall style of the page. Do the font styles of headlines match the tone of the articles? Has all of the space been filled by either copy (text) or art?

Part E: Teamwork

Total of ___marks

Each team member will be given marks based on their contribution to the group, willingness to work together and ability to complete the job assigned.

Rubric for Newspaper Production:

Student Name: _____

Review: _____

Part A: Content of Page

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Page theme/topic	Stories are not related to the theme of the page	Some stories are related to the theme of the page	Most stories are related to the theme of the page	All stories are related to the theme of the page
5 W's Who, what, where, when and why	Missing key information, stories do not include most of the 5 W's	Some key information included, missing some of the 5 W's.	Key information included. most of the 5 W's included	Key information included, all 5 W's answered
Sentence structure	Incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, little variation in word choice	Some incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, some variation in word choice	Most sentences complete, few run-on sentences, good variation in word choice	Complete sentences, good variation in word choice.
Spelling	Frequent errors, common words misspelled	Most common words are spelled correctly	Few spelling errors	No spelling errors

Page Design and Layout Rubric

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Appearance	Layout guidelines have not been followed.	Some layout guidelines have been followed.	Most layout guidelines have been followed.	All layout guidelines were followed.
Headlines	Do not reflect the content of the article, font style is unsuitable for content.	Reflect the content of the article, font style is somewhat suitable.	Reflect the content of the article, fill the column space and font style is suitable.	Reflect the content and are cleverly written, font style is suitable, fill the column space.
Illustrations	Contains no illustrations	Some illustrations included, some cut lines missing	Most stories have an illustration, contains a mix of clip art and photography, includes cut lines and photo credits	Each story has an illustration with cut lines and photo credits included
Design details	Disorganized, difficult to read, missing boxes on pictures or illustrations, no hairlines used, date and place not included on page	Stories are placed on the page to reflect importance. Pictures and illustrations are boxed, some hairlines used, date and place included on page	Stories are placed on the page to reflect importance. Design reflects planning and attention to detail, boxes and hairlines are used, date and place included on page.	Design reflects good planning and attention to detail. Hairlines and boxes are used effectively, date and place included on page

Producing a newspaper is a time-intensive project. After doing some research, many school and other learning institutions have successfully produced a school newspaper, using ideas that have worked and others that need fine tuning. With this in mind the following assignment information and rubrics were used from the Newspapers in Education website as cited below; areas were adjusted for our particular project. It is a website which caters to teachers in education both elementary and secondary, which we found this particular section useful, in terms of quality control and assessment rubrics. .

Source:
Newspapers In Educationhttp://www.newspapersineducation.ca/eng/level_7to9/culminating/culminating_eng.html#creating

Scaffolding Skills and Beyond…

Scaffolding Skills Obtained for the Final Project and Beyond

The final project of publishing a newspaper is a vast undertaking. Embracing and utilizing the theme of community across disciplines allows for an integration of effort from all students across the board. Many building blocks were laid within the foundation for the final project including developmental skills in forming the habits of mind, building interpersonal relationships through group work, and important academic study skills such as critical thinking, discussion, and writing and communication.

Students in each of core disciplines were able to foster the habits of mind and developmental skills needed in inquiry based learning such as forming hunches, asking actively pursuing understanding, noticing patterns, thinking fluently, and acting on information.

Collaborative group work was an essential element in keeping the day to day workings of the newspaper content going, while at the same time, group work fostered interpersonal relationship building efforts. Students worked extensively in groups, collected survey and polling data in Math classes; groups worked together in Science examining the requirements for life, graphing changes in temperature and determining how species survive via adaptations; group work was important in Social Studies as students ventured on a "web quest" to learn about their larger community. Students will also work together and present to each other how the news of the day is just the news placed in the context of the day. What is newsworthy today may be inconsequential or unforgettable tomorrow. Finally, in English Language Arts, students researched the background for the Salem witch trials, examined sources of social conflict, revised work together, and engaged in discussions and play acting for the benefit of their own and their peers' understanding. All of these activities require that groups work effectively and

allow students to see and experience what group work is all about. Students learned how to form a group, obtain group feedback, resolve conflict, and perform required tasks. In their small school community, they were exposed to real life interpersonal relationship situations which hopefully will help them in future years.

Academic skills were fostered not only by virtue of the inquiry- based learning which was going on in the main subject areas and unified arts, but also across discipline activities. For instance while students read The Giver, by Lois Lowry, in English Language Arts, and learned about a very different community than their own, they were able to write and reflect about qualities of community and share their insights through expository writing: ultimately for submission to the school newspaper . Writing and revising compositions for various purposes were skills we worked on to help scaffold the newspaper publishing effort.

Communication and presentation skills were demonstrated as students presented their contribution to the newspaper at the final Launch Party.

All of the project components outlined above, require use of important skills which students can build upon in subsequent assignments, as well as improving their interactions in their communities beyond the classroom. After all, beyond the classroom is what really matters.