A Trail To Every Classroom (TTEC)
Curriculum Development Tool

UNIT DESIGN COVER SHEET

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Title: Creating a Poetry Trail

Abstract/Vignette: By engaging in creating a “poetry trail” along the Elbow Trail and other trails, students will connect to poetry in a more personal way and, at the same time, create a lasting gift to the hikers of these trails, including the A.T.

Grade level(s): Please check all that apply.

☐ K-2  ☐ 3-5  ☐ 6-8  ☑ 9-12  ☐ College and Lifelong Learning

Discipline: Please check all that apply.

☐ Art and Music  ☐ Health and PE  ☐ Foreign Language

☑ Literature and Language Arts  ☐ Mathematics  ☐ Science

☐ Social Studies and Geography  ☐ History  ☑ Technology

Year Developed: 2011

Period (month, week, year): unspecified

Teaching environment:

☑ In the Classroom (indoors)  ☑ Outdoors

☐ In the Community  ☑ Online/Virtual
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Berkshire School 2011
Project: Poetry Trail created by sophomore English students

Poetry Trails on school’s trails, including the AT

The Big Idea
By engaging in the project of creating a poetry trail along the Elbow Trail and other trails, students will connect to poetry in a more personal way, and at the same time, create a lasting gift to the hikers of these trails.

Standards/Outcomes:
MA: Reading grades 9/10
10.

MA: Writing grades 9/10
3.A. Demonstrate concept of theme by writing short narratives, poems, essays, speeches or reflections that respond to universal themes.
4. clear, well-developed writing for task, purpose and audience
6. Use internet to publish

Essential Questions:
Is there specific poetry that connects us to nature and the natural world?
In what way does literature in general, and poetry specifically, connect us to the natural world?
Does the natural world include feelings/emotions that are present when one is “in nature”?
In what ways do the trails and the elements of these trails inform and connect people about poetry?

Student Role:
Choose mode of expression within literary genres—poetry, fiction, non-fiction; either original work or published work of others.
Choose appropriate place for writing along the trail
Create trail with classmates

Community Connections
Offer as a downloadable from website that is open to other schools or individuals
Invite community members to join in reflection, poetry readings, etc.
Invite writers to speak and read along trails as well as to classes.

**Skills and Habits of Mind**

Use of internet as an educational tool, as a publishing tool
Commitment to a connection of place and emotion
Incorporate interests into concrete expression in reflection trail
This is a way to connect an idea, the page and “real life”
Kids have the ability to connect self with the trails around campus, especially the Appalachian Trail
Students find pride in a lasting contribution to the trails

**Service Project**

“reflection trail” that includes maintaining trails used on poetry trail

**Partnerships and Benefits**

AMC/ATC Kellogg Center
Great Barring AT Community partnership

**Resources**

*Walden* excerpts  HD Thoreau
Various, Emerson
Various, Mary Oliver
*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard
Poetry Anthologies
*Berkshire Reader* Anthology of writing in Berkshire Hills

**Models and Examples**

Poetry Trail at Steepletop, Millay home
Berkshire School Natural landmarks brochure, student created brochure
Reflection
Journal reflections after study of poems, during and after hiking
Reflection after completion of the trail, after poetry reading

Student Assessment:

Students write poems, essays, reflections
Evaluation/Assessment of students through poetry, prose rubrics
Evaluation/Assessment of student journal entries

Students create web-based trail with photos and text
Evaluation/Assessment of completed web-based content

Final Celebration
Poetry reading along the trail with poets reading original or selected work. Invite local community partners.

Evaluation of the Unit
Personal evaluation through own reflection writing
Evaluation by teacher-peers of completed work
Student evaluation of what worked well, needs improvement, etc.
Response of students, members of school community and broader community
Clean water is a precious resource and it is threatened in many parts of this country and the world.
State Standards

- Relevant Massachusetts state standards
  - 4.5-4.7 Chemical bonding
  - 7.1, 7.3, 7.5 Solutions
  - 8.2, 8.3 Acids and Bases
Essential Questions

- Why do so many things dissolve in water?
- What kinds of substances are dissolved in water on our mountain?
- Are any of the dissolved substances bad for us?
- How can we test for dissolved substances?
- How can we remove dissolved substances?
Student Role

- Students will complete a written reflection prior to starting the unit—what is the AT? Where is it?
- Students will share their pre-flections
- As we get into the unit, students will complete reflections: what?, so what?, now what? format
- They will have a chance to find out how what we have learned at school pertains to water systems in their hometown and across the world
Community connections: year 1

- Learn how water supplies affect hikers on the Appalachian Trail
- Connect with past thru hikers to see what issues or problems they had with water supplies on the trail
- Try a variety of water purification systems to see which ones are most effective
- Share results of tests with the community-newspaper article, article on school’s web site.
Community connections: future

- Offer water testing services to senior citizens in Sheffield through the Senior Center
- Connect with other schools along the Housatonic River and the Housatonic River Initiative project to test water in the Housatonic River
Skills and Habits of Mind

- Asking questions and developing strategies to answer them in a meaningful way
- How do actions of one group of people affect other groups of people?
- Why should we care about water quality at home and across the world?
- Working on ways to convince other people to care: oral presentations, news articles, visual presentations
- What chemicals should we expect to find in water in Berkshire County? In other areas?
Service Project ideas

- Water testing for senior citizens
- Final product would be a map of water testing sites around Sheffield (mapped with GPS) and displayed at the Senior center
- Any patterns of dissolved substances at various sites would be displayed on the map
- A get together with students and seniors at the Senior Center at the end of the school year.
Service project ideas

- Water testing on the Housatonic River and sharing data with other groups—schools along the river and community organizations
- Final product could be a gathering along the river with all those schools involved
- Join river clean up days
Partnership and Benefits

- Senior citizens on fixed incomes could get free water testing.
- Students in class would meet the seniors and get an idea of what their lives are like.
- Community organizations would get additional testing sites and groups to help monitor water quality in the river.
Resources

- Rural Water (magazine)
- Running out of Water (book)
- Water Crisis (article in Discover magazine)
- Keepers of the Spring (book)
- Water Atlas (book)
- The Blue Covenant (book)
- When Rivers Run Dry (book)
- Unquenchable: America’s water crisis (book)
Models and examples

• Students will have a chance to turn in work, have it critiqued and then redo it to make it better.

• Final projects will be displayed in the Great Room with students on hand to explain what they did to the school community.

• Projects could be a power point presentation, a poster project or a short film explaining their water testing techniques.
Reflection

- Students will have a chance to reflect on their work at various points in the curriculum.
- One important part of the reflection will be how the traditional curriculum topics tie in with the water testing project.
- Written reflections will be collected using the what?, so what? now what? format.
- Students will reflect on applications to other areas of the country or world.
Student Assessment

- Students will have traditional tests on the portions of the project that deal with state standards.
- In addition, written reflections will tie in water testing with the more academic work to see that students are making the connections.
- Class discussions and small group discussions will help focus the students for the written reflections.
- Students will also present a final project for grading in which they show what they have learned.
Final celebration

- Students will take a day and hike up to the AT and then have lunch on the top of Mt. Everett
- We will have a “water testing night” in which students can share what they learned with the community
- Students will demonstrate the various water purification procedures they have learned and explain which ones were most effective
Evaluation of the Unit

- I will use the reflections as the primary method of evaluating the unit.
- Changes in student’s values and opinions will be especially noted.
- If the unit is successful, I will expand it to a wider audience next year. If it is not, I will rework this year’s plan to make it more successful before expanding the project to include river testing or senior citizen’s water testing.