

## LEARNING ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Cost Per Student</u>
7.59	120	\$680,288	\$5,669

**Primary Goal:** To stimulate academically talented students to develop higher thinking skills and advanced research skills.

**Enrollment:** During 2008-2009, 120 students (5.1% of the total population) were placed in the Learning Enrichment Program. The participation by school was as follows:

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
Blue Creek	10
Boght Hills	38
Forts Ferry	15
Latham Ridge	20
Loudonville	17
Maplewood	1
Southgate	19

The grade level breakdown was as follows:

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percent of Class</b>
1	1	.3%
2	7	2%
3	17	4%
4	26	8%
5	24	6%
6	45	10%

The program identifications were: reading: 77 (65% of population), mathematics: 64\* (54% of population) and English/Language Arts (writing: 46 (39% of population) and science: 4 and social studies: 1. There were 3 additional students in the program who are in the very superior range of academic ability but for whom we could not identify subject areas at this time.

These are duplicated counts since many students are labeled in more than one program area. The math students are placed in the Alternate Math Program at grade 5. In that

\*This includes students being "monitored" for math since we no longer label math students as gifted/ talented below grade 5. "Math monitor" students are those from grades 1-4 who have been found to have high math potential resulting from PST discussions regarding placement in the learning enrichment program. It is a way of ensuring that they are not overlooked when placements are made for grades 5.

## **LEARNING ENRICHMENT PROGRAM** (cont.)

program there are additional talented math students who are not reflected in these numbers.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Primary students (grades 2 and 3) engaged in two reflection units. The first, “The Great Chocolate Caper” was an experience in logic and deductive reasoning. The major unit, “Invention and Discoveries” helped students develop an inventor’s frame of mind by viewing ordinary objects in a new way, form associations between unrelated objects, ask relevant questions, and determine how things work. The objectives meet six N.Y.S. Learning Standards. Students kept an Inventors Notebook and discussed the inventions of Kleenex, sneakers, Ferris wheel, lifesavers and others. They analyzed Rube Goldberg inventions. After researching one inventor and product, they created their own from “junk” and submitted a “how it works” card.
- Grade 4 students reflected on Economics which is defined as “the study of how people use their resources to meet their needs and satisfy their wants, and of how they decide to distribute and consume the goods and services they acquire and produce.” They engaged in hands-on activities to help them acquire an understanding of the concepts of inflation, scarcity, opportunity cost, consumption, production and interdependence. The student fair was framed as an international summit during which members of various governments (L.E.P. teachers) described an economic issue in their country and requested advice from the experts (4<sup>th</sup> grade students). The students, in their response, summarized the concept in their own words and demonstrated their true understanding by using illustrations from their real-life experiences.
- Fifth grade students followed up their Revolutionary War mini-unit with in-depth research substantiated by bibliographies. Each school selected a topic on Life and Times of the Era; Heroes, Heroines and Traitors; Engineering Feats; Economics of the Times; Politics and Military Strategies. Students developed their own presentation. There were three histories through biographical dialogues/monologue, one through an original music composition (RAP) and two through use of authentic drama.
- The subject for the grade 6 debate was “Resolved: The U.S. Government should promote the use of alternate forms of energy” – used for the first time. As usual, the students did an outstanding job of research and debating. The Latham Ridge/Maplewood team won a first place trophy.

We were able to arrange to have the one Maplewood student bused to Latham Ridge each week.

## **LEARNING ENRICHMENT PROGRAM** (cont.)

- Three enrichment seminar days were scheduled in the fall as the conclusion to the first trimester program. Fourth graders engaged in a multi-disciplinary project based upon their reading of Verne, "Around the World in Eighty Days." They compute the value of the 20,000 £ wages in our currency and other countries' currency today and five years ago, engage in a time zone activity, compute rates for speed for a steamer and a train, measure the distance between cities on the itinerary using a technique of choice, compute number of miles traveled and number of days used, and design a passport stamp for one country based on information they must locate in a reference book.

Fifth graders followed their study of Revolutionary War slogans and their impact by dividing into teams at the seminar to study specific battles. Each team prepared to give a brief oral report on guided questions and to mark the large map either as a victory for the colonials or the British. The question for discussion was "If the British had all the right equipment, supplies, military strategies, number of soldiers and experienced leaders, how did the American colonists win the war?" Responses must be substantiated.

A music, art, literature seminar called "Classic Moods" was the 6<sup>th</sup> grade seminar topic. After a brief review of adjectives that describe emotions evoked, students heard brief musical selections and viewed slides of paintings and recorded their first reaction with an adjective. Following that they were divided into three groups to rotate among three learning stations to read E.A. Poe's Masque of the Red Death, view and discuss a video clip of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and a video clip and readings from T.S. Eliot's Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats.

- A Young Writer's Day held at the end of first semester for talented writers in grades 4-6 engaged over 100 students in learning how to write a mystery. The participants were those students identified as gifted/talented in written communication and others as nominated by their teachers. They were a very motivated group. Their only problem seemed to be that we would not allow any violence in their mystery story! Their task was to write a story within the guidelines and submit it to a Board of Editors for critique. Each piece was then returned to the student for revision and re-submission. Those students who met all obligations were invited to a professional "author's day" at Rensselaerville where they attended conference sessions. The written pieces were sent to a different Board of Editors (gifted 8<sup>th</sup> grade writers and an English teacher) for evaluation. The final selections will be published in the Circle of Excellence journal.
- Another annual publication, Kids' Stuff, is an illustrated journal of writing from students, grade 1-6. We sponsor this as a motivation to encourage our elementary students to write and I understand it is popular reading among all students.

## **LEARNING ENRICHMENT PROGRAM** (cont.)

- Simulations for each intermediate grade level are the final projects. They are multi-disciplinary and call upon students to use all of the reasoning skills learned previously. They also introduce a whole new set of skills related to functioning as a contributing member of a group to resolve a problem or situation.

At grade 4 the students become consultants to an organization trying to establish a natural zoo. They will need to research the type, number of animals, dietary and habitat requirements and organize the data. Design will include three climate zones. Persuasive letter writing will be a required skill to find donations.

Students in grade 5 became members of an organization formed to aid companies, law enforcement agencies and others in solving complex problems. They call themselves the Creative, Logical, Efficient Problem Solvers. They gather, organize and analyze data.

Expectations are that students will use the scientific method, employ the steps to creative problem-solving, develop and implement a Plan of Action, use the concepts of interdependence and develop effective communication skills. This project meets nine of the Learning Standards.

Sixth graders participate in a survival simulation (decision-making and leadership) developed with help from the Stratton Air Base 109<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing in Scotia. They then engage in an ancient Greek Simulation. Their objective is to “determine if there is sufficient data for a pharmaceutical company to pursue research at an ancient Greek home in order to find and develop a new line of drugs that could ‘cure’ many diseases facing society today. More than one pharmaceutical company has developed an interest in the ancient Greek city of Olynthus, specifically in the home now named ‘The Villa of Good Fortune’. Rumors indicate that inhabitants of this villa were able to produce a medicine that had tremendous healing benefits for a variety of ailments.”

Students are advised to become knowledgeable about ancient Greek locations, Greek language, Greek gods/goddesses, Hippocrates, ancient Greek medical practices, ancient Greek measurements and herbal medicinal plants. The source for this simulation, A House of Ancient Greece, “Destination Olynthus” was the Boston Children’s Museum.

- The district Spelling Bee which we sponsor in early February for gr. 4-8 students who were winners in their school competitions is open to all students. The students seem to thrive on the competition. We try to make it a comfortable, professional experience. Students who misspell a word remain seated on stage. Each student brings his/her class to be in the audience. The name, grade and school of each contestant is flashed on a screen as the student comes forward to the microphone. In addition to the pronouncer, we have three judges (elementary/ junior high principals) who have the authorized dictionary on their

## **LEARNING ENRICHMENT PROGRAM** (cont.)

table. We also have the camcorder with zoom lens as backup in case the judges are not sure how a student spelled a word.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Look to update the list of options for debate in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade program.

Evaluation: Were subjects of more immediate concern and not previously debated considered.

Six new debate topics were selected as options for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. They deal with global climate change, food enhancements, healthcare, impact of internet, alternative energy sources, and restrictions of personal freedom. This year's class has selected "Resolved: the United States Should Promote the Use of Alternative Energy Sources."

- Review all of the intermediate simulations to determine whether refinements are in order or whether we need to consider a change.

Evaluation: Were the simulations reviewed by staff? What was the result?

All the simulations were reviewed. We have six primary simulations; this year the Inventors and Invention simulation for teams was selected. Major revisions were made to the grade 5 simulation which deals with gathering, keeping records and analyzing data. Based on evaluations after the first use last year we streamlined the objectives, developed a faster-paced calendar and eliminated some activities that were repetitious recordkeeping. The final analytic investigation was strengthened. Despite this attention neither the students nor teachers are satisfied with the level of challenge. A new simulation will be developed for use next year.

- Examine the Young Writers program offered as the third year rotation. Ascertain the need to develop a different model?

Evaluation: What was the result of the review? What if any changes were suggested?

As the result of a review of the third rotation theme, we determined that a total change was warranted. The theme selected is Writing Mysteries. Skills of observation, analysis, and evaluation were emphasized as the students learned the elements that characterize well-written mysteries.