

Appendix 2: Key Instructional Concepts

Responsibility - A strong sense of responsibility inspires students to solve identified problems that affect many, whether or not they affect the individual. It further empowers students to recognize their role in their own success, as well as in the success of others. Within a history lesson, students will be challenged to try to determine why specific events occurred. To integrate the concept of responsibility, students are asked to investigate the reasoning of the principal figures in the event, and imagine what could have been done differently that might have altered the outcome. The museum curriculum helps and promotes students develop a deep sense of responsibility for their own learning. With teachers as guides, children are directed to make their own inquiries about a subject. Next, they experiment, observe, and investigate material. Once they have reached their conclusions, they construct a museum exhibit presenting their knowledge in a way that can teach others.

Respect - In order to understand an individual's impact in the world and the desire to manage world problems, students at the Bertha B. Williams Academy learn to respect the thoughts, feelings, and problems of others. Students learn respect through direct experience and real-world challenges. In the science classroom and during museum visits, students collaborate and communicate to achieve common goals. One of these goals is the end-of-unit museum exhibit that the class must construct and present together. Students come to realize that to fully achieve class goals, they must respect the points of views and impact of others. Long-term collaborative projects provide students the exposure and real-life opportunity to learn cooperative skills such as effective communication and task management, as well as teaching and instilling respect for others.

Cooperation - Students always have individual learning goals and plans, but also have group projects that require cooperation with others. The creation of museum exhibits is one way the curriculum focuses on cooperation. Exhibit projects span several weeks and complete each thematic unit. Cooperation is a highlight in the mathematics program which employs "Everyday Mathematics". This program was chosen because of the evidence supporting its use and its ability to reach multiple learning styles, but it was also chosen because of its use of cooperative learning and small-group instruction. Real-world experiences in cooperation provide children with the skills needed to work with others and become life-long assets.

Creativity - The museum curriculum naturally invites and stimulates creativity. Students identify their own problems to solve and questions to answer as a basic premise of the inquiry-based learning framework. Teachers encourage risk-taking and innovation in guiding students' explorations and investigations. Museum learning culminates in the creation of a tool for sharing knowledge with others. This can be anything from a physical object to a dramatization of events. Students have the opportunity to use creativity at every step of the museum process. Writer's Workshop, a writing program, specifically encourages creativity in students' writing. Fostering a sense of creativity and encouraging an active imagination are the means to making learning meaningful and engaging. Transforming school from an obligatory activity to a fulfilling activity is key to the development of life-long love of learning.

Kindness - Being kind is a vital way of making our own lives, and the lives of others, meaningful and positive. At the Bertha B Williams Academy, concern for others is contagious. Charitable words and acts lead to new displays of kindness, perpetuating a different culture. Students engage in acts of kindness toward one another, and these acts are recognized, rewarded and encouraged.

Multicultural acceptance -The museum learning model acknowledges a diverse array of learning styles while nurturing knowledge from a variety of experiences and people. Student visits to museums and other cultural institutions provide extraordinary opportunities to acquire knowledge of diverse histories, philosophies and peoples. Students are regularly challenged to examine information from the perspective of another culture, period in history, or set of circumstances.

Teaching materials are used that present diverse racial, ethnic and cultural perspectives on events, concepts and issues.

Communication - Emphasizing communication between students and teachers in developing inquiries, explorations, and projects is vital to the museum process. Students are also required to communicate to larger audiences during the end-of-unit exhibit nights. Students compose placards for their museum exhibits, which helps them learn to draw a main idea from the knowledge they have compiled and present this idea effectively in writing. They also act as docents for their exhibits, where they convey the knowledge they have to others through oral presentation. Further evidence of the emphasis on communication is manifest in the Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop frameworks of the English Language Arts programming. The "workshop" format encourages students to effectively communicate both by sharing and reflecting on what has been shared.