Fifth and Sixth Grade Curriculum Guide 2007-2008

5th and 6th Grade Humanities

Content: The focus of this year is non-western world history and cultures. Using the *Early Times* series, *World Explorer* textbook, and supporting literature, the class will study ancient and medieval civilizations in China, the Near East, South Asia, Africa and Latin America. The class will examine the social, political, and economic structures and practices in each of these periods, as well as the cultural legacies and influences on the world we live in today. We will also investigate the regional geography and cultural practices of each area. Guiding questions for the course include: Why did certain civilizations thrive or decline at given periods? How did geography and climate affect the civilizations? How did the people live? How did they govern? How did they interact with other civilizations? What did they believe in, and how were their daily lives affected by their beliefs? And finally, why do we study these civilizations? Why does it matter, and how can this study help us understand the world we live in? Students will investigate through research and study places different from their own experience and will draw connections to help them understand the diversity we see in the world today. Supporting literature providing an expanded perspective into each civilization may include: *The Remarkable Journey of Prince Jen,* selections from *The Ramayana, A Year of No Rain, Jade and Iron*, as well as supplemental short literature and poetry. Additional readings will include modern young adult literature that will help students develop their reading and analytic abilities.

Reading: The humanities class is based on reading, writing, and improving listening and speaking skills. Students formulate perspectives on historical study and literature based on evidence, synthesis, and understanding. Students explore a range of genres and continue to work on summarizing, paraphrasing, and identifying important information as they read. Reading strategies such as synthesizing, connecting, inferring, questioning, and determining importance will be explicitly taught over the course of the year and will provide students specific skills for making meaning from texts. Students read every day in class and for homework, keep an independent reading journal with written correspondence with their teacher, and give three "book talks" throughout the year. Independent reading allows students to develop reading preferences and enjoyment, explore different genres, and increase responsibility in making meaning of a text outside of class discussions.

Writing: Students engage in a variety of writing in writing workshop – personal narrative, profiles, journal, reader response, critical essays and poetry. They also practice revision and editing skills and write in their journals daily. In addition, students develop clear and focused writing skills, including the use of evidence, introductions, transitions, and conclusions. Research and immersion projects help students to gain skills such as questioning, focusing, outlining, finding supporting evidence, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The frequency of both reading and writing – every day in class and at home – increases fluency, confidence and achievement in both areas. Students use the

6+1 Trait writing model and learn to incorporate these skills into all aspects of their writing.

Vocabulary and Grammar: Grammar study is cumulative and includes daily grammar exercises and continued emphasis on editing in writing workshop. Skills are taught, reinforced, and reviewed so that students become accustomed to using them in their own writing. Mini-lessons will be taught for all students as common grammar problems emerge from the class.

Using the *How to Spell* series, students will review basic spelling rules and patterns, including syllable types and syllabication rules, long vowel spellings, common affixes, and patterns for plurals and possessives, and practice spelling words with more advanced patterns. With twice-weekly review of spelling principles and spelling "demons," regular quizzes, individual practice at home and assistance in identifying strategies that best match their learning styles, students learn to use spelling in application. The continued practice, repetition and practical application of spelling skills helps students incorporate spelling rules into their own writing.

Wordly Wise is a vocabulary text that teaches word origins and words in context to help students build vocabulary and understanding of words through recognition and reasoning skills. Students complete weekly lessons and quizzes. In addition, students keep word lists from their reading that are incorporated into cumulative vocabulary study.

5th and 6th Grade Mathematics

With a solid foundation of basic mathematical operations in place, fifth and sixth grade math students expand on their understanding and prepare for the study of more advanced mathematics. After a review of basic mathematics, fifth grade students study several new concepts such as the order of operations (in preparation for algebra), basic geometry, and advanced fraction and percentage operations. Sixth grade students engage in such topics as variables, ratio and proportion, speed/rate/distance operations, advanced geometry, and challenging word problems that demand the application of problem-solving strategies. These topics form the main body of study for the year. By the end of sixth grade, students master the basics of converting fractions, decimals and percents and are prepared to tackle the abstractions of algebra.

Math classes typically begin with whole group problem solving, a teacher-led review of solutions and homework. Instruction in new concepts is given to both grade levels, while grade-specific instruction is given to small groups when appropriate. Hands-on manipulatives, whenever possible, are used to introduce more abstract concepts, and also when students struggle with more challenging operations. Students engage in discussions and activities designed to introduce new concepts or to review and reinforce previously learned material.

The primary text for the course is *Primary Mathematics* by Singapore. Students build new skills by progressing through concrete, pictorial, and abstract approaches. This text

promotes clear thinking, effective communication of mathematical ideas and adept problem solving, and helps develop the foundation pupils will need for more advanced mathematics. Students often work with classmates to share and solidify their understanding of given concepts.

Math is also integrated across the curriculum in order to build an appreciation for the usefulness of mathematical application in real-world situations. Students complete hands-on projects such as building models of structures from the ancient world and also study famous mathematicians and mathematical ideas, including the Pythagorean Theorem, the original measuring of the world and pi. Students use calculators and computer software to reinforce skills learned in the classroom and provide familiarity with technology. Most importantly, students deepen their mathematical thinking and problem solving throughout the course of the year as they grow to see math as a tool to help guide everyday inquiry.

5th and 6th Grade Science

Children are fascinated by the world and enjoy opportunities to explore it. Students can best acquire science concepts and skills by means of a fun, inquiry-based, hands-on approach that focuses on the process and techniques of discovery. Students satisfy their innate curiosity as they observe, question, and test basic scientific concepts. The scientific method is introduced and incorporated into a wide variety of topics, selected to develop the students' understanding of the natural world around us. We ask questions, make predictions, create hypotheses, collect data, conduct research, and present findings. At the heart of our science approach are the open-ended types of questions that children ask as they explore the world around them, such as "What will happen?" and "How and *why* does that happen?"

Each year, students complete an in-depth study of topics in earth science, life science, and physical science. Over a two-year progression, 5th/6th grade students learn about forces, flight and rocketry, weather, planetary science, cells, human anatomy, marine science, and pollution. Throughout each unit, students employ the scientific skills of observing and comparing, classifying, measuring, inferring, formulating hypotheses, designing and testing investigations, collecting and interpreting data, and recognizing variables. Students' curiosity is encouraged and many lessons involve active and outdoor exercises.

Skills:

A fundamental goal of this curriculum is to develop awareness, scientific reasoning skills, and a commitment to learning in addition to increasing specific subject knowledge. Student progression in science results in informed decisions, responsible behavior, and constructive actions concerning wildlife and the environment upon which all life depends. We spend a significant amount of time discussing the ways in which scientists think, design experiments, collect data, record data, analyze and learn from that data. Those concepts are then put into action daily as we conduct hands on activities and create

a science journal. We also use our Experiential learning trips as a reinforcement of the lessons learned within the classroom.

Cross-curricular connections:
All the 5th/6th grade teachers work to incorporate what students are learning in humanities and math into science. There are several larger themes that have ties in all the major disciplines. This year we are doing several substantial projects that allow students to combine what they are learning in all their classes in a fun and exciting way!

5th and 6th Grade Spanish

As this age group transitions towards more abstract thinking, the approach to language acquisition also changes. Students formalize existing skills and learn more advanced concepts, including language structure and individual components of grammar. They also explore cultural influences in greater depth. Students use the Kagan *Spanish: Cooperative Learning and Multiple Intelligence Activities* book and worksheets to develop vocabulary while Total Physical Response, skits, games and other activities connect the spoken language to actions. Students focus on culture through creating personae from Spanish-speaking countries and designing a Hispanic community where they will live and work.

The curriculum provides a foundation in the 5 C's of the National Standards for foreign language instruction:

- Communication in the target language
- Connections with other disciplines
- Comparisons that develop insight into the nature of language and culture
- Cultural experiences
- Communities – students learn how to communicate in a multilingual community

5th and 6th Grade Visual Art

Art is a process that requires the combination of learned technical skills and the ability to think creatively and conceptually. Students have the opportunity to deepen their particular artistic interests by exploring a variety of disciplines. With a variety of artistic media that matches their interests and skills, students can find an avenue that individually suits them.

Visual art is a vital element in the development of the academic and creative mind at the middle school level. Through the actions of daily rituals, artistic "missions" (instead of "assignments") and sketchbook exercises, the program is focused on the process of making art rather than the final product. Students will participate in formal and informal critiques of their work in the interest of understanding 'how' and 'why' individuals work in specific ways, not to compare and see who is the "best". Discussion will facilitate the formulation of personal preference and opinion in relation to appreciation and historical study, as well as allowing for the development of an "art dialect".

The first units focus on drawing skills as the foundation for all visual expression. This includes observational drawing, imaginative drawing and the art of "doodling". The integration of daily rituals at the beginning and end of class prepare the mind and recap the day or provide historical examples. Following drawing, the students delve into color theory, mixing and application techniques and the compositional decision-making of painting and collage. Three-dimensional projects using clay, cardboard or any other accessible 3-D materials play an important part in the building and integration of old and new technical skills. Sketchbook assignments in and out of class provide technical practice, idea generation and preparation for class projects/missions.

5th and 6th Grade Music

The fifth and sixth grade students take advantage of the Rock and Roll Academy studio space where they have full access to guitars, drums, basses, keyboards and vocals. Employing a "learn by doing" approach, the students quickly gain competence on a variety of instruments and, most importantly, play together in a group. This essentially allows the band to become the teacher, as the students intuitively understand when the music sounds right or wrong. Observing, performing and sharing knowledge with one another creates a supportive and vibrant learning environment. Students develop a rudimentary understanding of the cultural and historical perspective of American music and learn to play in various styles. Performance opportunities bring focus and excitement to student work. Developing listening skills, confidence and the ability to enjoy making and performing music are primary goals for this group.

5th and 6th Physical Education

The goal of the fifth and sixth grade physical education program is to provide students with physically enhancing and rewarding experiences outdoors that contribute to a lifetime of healthy and active endeavors. Students focus on building general fitness and coordination to improve athleticism. Sound work ethic and sportsmanship is expected. Fifth and sixth graders play sports such as soccer, ultimate frisbee, dodgeball, and track with a shift in emphasis to the physical training aspects of becoming successful athletes. Students use the skills and concepts of heart rate monitoring, student-led yoga and stretching, breathing, warm-up and cool-down, and endurance to encourage the synthesis of mind and body. Students train for winter sports through agility and strength exercises. Classes take place on the Lawson Hill field throughout the school year and in classrooms when weather dictates. Like all disciplines at the Telluride Mountain School, students are expected to uphold the core values of responsibility, respect, integrity, and love of learning.