

# Question-Understand-Experiment-Share-Think



Week of September 12, 2011

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Students began the Q.U.E.S.T program today. We had a successful first day in which the students learned about the curriculum, got to know their classmates, and worked together in small groups to analyze and discuss literature. Students also created a “Personal Mandala”. A Mandala is a traditional symbol from Asian cultures that uses pictures and symbols to represent people, places, or things. The students built personal Mandalas using symbols that represented their personalities. After, they shared their project with the class. They explained the symbols that they used and the decision making and creative process by which they designed and created their work.

In addition to doing several projects, I went over some topics with the students, and would like to share the information with you as well. Please find an overview of pertinent topics below:

## **Daily Schedule**

Students will check in with their homeroom teacher in the morning for attendance and announcements. Students will then come to the Q.U.E.S.T. program to spend the full day in the Q.U.E.S.T. classroom. Time will be spent in the computer lab and library as needed. Students will have lunch and recess with their Q.U.E.S.T. classmates. They will return to their home school at the end of the day for dismissal.

## **Expectations**

Students are expected to come to class on time, follow directions, be respectful, and give their best effort. The Q.U.E.S.T. curriculum is challenging, and students must be active participants in order to succeed. Today, the students signed a contract that outlines behavior and academic expectations for the year.

## **General Overview of Curriculum**

Q.U.E.S.T. students will work on thematic units of instruction designed to supplement and elaborate on the general curriculum. The curriculum has been developed by the Center for Gifted Education at The College of William and Mary. Students will be challenged to think critically and work hard throughout the year. The three units of study include Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science.

Language Arts will span the entire year, and will focus on developing writing skills, analytical and interpretative skills in literature, linguistic competency, and reasoning skills. Students will read and discuss novels, work together in groups to analyze literature, and work through the writing process to create both creative and constructed response pieces.

Social Studies will be taught for the first half of the year and will focus on the 1930s in America. The unit explores Depression-era America from the perspective of many groups of people. Students will learn about the causes and effects of the various events that occurred during that time period. They will also develop skills in historical analysis and primary source interpretation. Students will write critical and creative assignments, participate in group research projects, and read historical literature.

Science will be taught the second half of the year and will focus on electricity. Students will work together in order to understand and apply the principles of experimental design and develop an understanding of the concept of systems. Students will work on a long-term project in which they build a model city and wire it for electricity.

### **Grading**

I will assess students throughout the year both formally and informally. Informal assessments will include observations during group work, participation in class discussions, and preparation for class. Formal assessments include individual projects, writing assignments, and journal responses. Students will receive a QUEST report each quarter that will be sent home as a supplement to their regular report card.

### **Open House**

There will be an Open House in early October. Detailed information about the event will be sent home next week.

### **Newsletters**

Each week, you will be able to keep up on what your child learns in QUEST through a newsletter that will be posted online. The QUEST website provides an overview of the class and also has a tab for weekly newsletters. The website is listed on each elementary homepage under "More Quick Links". I will not send home printed copies of the newsletter; instead I will post them online. However, if you are unable to access the newsletter online, please let me know and I will send home a hard copy.

If you have any questions or concerns prior to the Open House, please feel free to contact me at [madderin@shenet.org](mailto:madderin@shenet.org). I look forward to working with you and your child throughout the school year!

Sincerely,

Erin Madden  
Q.U.E.S.T. Teacher  
Shenendehowa Central Schools