



Learning Through Thematic Units

The teaching staff at RA has been trained in Understanding By Design, a curriculum planning method in which student learning experiences are created after teachers have determined what students need to master by the end of each unit. All thematic units and supporting materials are recorded in Atlas Rubicon, a curriculum mapping software. The thematic units include instructional practices that promote student engagement, inquiry and critical thinking skills. In these units, assessment of student learning is frequent and varied. Students are engaged in multiple assessment types to achieve the instructional goal. Teachers regularly use assessment data to determine instructional priorities.

The thematic units created by the instructional staff at Renaissance Academy begin with a unit kick off to spark and engage students' interest in learning. Each thematic unit also ends in a performance task that pulls all of the instructional goals together, thereby increasing student understanding and achievement. By our third year of school operations, the majority of the unit planning has been completed and staff takes a closer look to ensure they are rigorous and of high quality. During the course of this year the staff of RA has been working with Dr. Michele Hancock to incorporate culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. As an outgrowth of these sessions, RA has looked closely at the units to determine which titles are culturally responsive and how we can add more culturally responsive literature and nonfiction text to enrich our children's experiences. In response to the significant work and professional learning, instructional staff have become more facile with identifying what rigorous instruction and curricula looks like. Staff engage in reviewing common assessments to calibrate our instructional lenses to ensure we can all identify high-quality unit outcomes.

Teaching children the dispositions for learning remains a priority for RA. RA adopted P2, the Positivity Project, as the vehicle through which children engage with those dispositions. Staff lead students in daily lessons that focus on 24 character strengths or dispositions. The mantra of the program is "Other People Matter." Staff also began incorporating the character traits from the Positivity Project into the thematic units.

Grade Level	Thematic Units
Kindergarten	My Community and Me Falling for Trees Digging Up the Holidays

	Home Sweet Home Invention Convention Happily Ever After Zooniversity
Grade One	Where I Belong Air, Air, Everywhere! Holiday Traditions in our Community Change Begins with Me Catch the Wave Live, Grow, Change
Grade Two	Finding Unity in Community Rock and Roll-asaurus Newsflash: Celebrating Rochester's Traditions Healthy Eating Matters Timestamp of Rochester, NY The Moral of the Story is.... Strivin' and Survivin'
Grade Three	Water = Life One World, Many Communities Sports in Motion Everyday Heroes Orchestra of Life
Grade Four	Weathering the Storm Timeline of NY State Part 1 Timeline of NY State Part 2 Timeline of NY State Part 3 21st Century Homes and Energy Hidden Figures
Grade Five	Who Are the People in my Hemisphere?