

A thematic unit about:

Perseverance



“Life is all about timing. . .the unreachable becomes reachable, the unavailable becomes available, the unattainable. . .attainable. Have the patience, wait it out. It’s all about timing.” (Stacey Charter)

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About the Theme

Theme:

According to Webster's Online Dictionary, perseverance can be defined as the ability to "persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement." As young adolescents face surmounting challenges and obstacles physically, socially, academically, ethically, and morally, they will need to persevere to overcome. It is essential for them to feel empowered and capable of working through such challenges and obstacles before they even encounter them.

Essential Questions:

Our theoretical model, based around James Beane's Guidelines for a Middle School Curriculum, is framed by essential questions that resort back to perseverance. "What is perseverance?", "How does perseverance affect me?" and "How does perseverance affect the world around me?" are all tied into activities on animals, athletes, and activists that have shown perseverance throughout history.

Targeted Grade Level:

Because of the ability level associated with our literature selections; our thematic unit targets fifth grade students. Typically, fifth graders are between the ages of nine and eleven. These students are approaching the young adolescent stage of development; however we realize there are students who are closer to this stage than others. Knowing how to persevere is essential for anyone gaining independence and self reliance, therefore we feel it is essential to present our theme early in the year.

Young Adolescent Characteristics as related to Perseverance:

Physically, young adolescents' bodies are rapidly changing, often making them feel out of control and self-conscious. They are more formally introduced to school athletics that require endurance and stamina. They must persevere in order to accept and embrace such changes and develop a confident self-image. Also, understanding that it takes practice and repetition to build endurance and to improve yourself in physical competitions is essential when choosing to participate in athletic endeavors. Socially, students are beginning to experience changes in peer and adult relationships, as well as changing perspectives of social norms. Being able to maintain a positive self-image and be confident in a society of others that are just as rapidly changing as you are, is often awkward and confusing. Students must persevere in the midst of changes amongst their peers. Academically, the rigor is increasing and requiring more focus and responsibility in accomplishing assigned tasks. Young adolescent minds are constantly formulating and evaluating what's being taught. They demand to be respected, but challenged. Heard, but helped. Morally, adolescents are more confused than ever and will need systematic approaches to evaluate beliefs and judgments. Through all of these changes, they must persevere.

Ultimately...

Our focus is to create a proactive unit modeling ways to persevere throughout life's trials through a series of team-building activities, hands-on experiments, literacy studies, and global connections. Through these activities students will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to persevere. Ultimately, our goal as educators is to observe our students carrying out the theme of perseverance in their physical, social, mental, emotional, and academic endeavors.

Unit Schedule

Our schedule is built around a 4 week time frame, not including pre-launch activities. Students will be divided into three heterogeneous groups and rotate through three cycles, which each integrate the theme of perseverance. Each “integrated cycle” is taught by an individual teacher using exploratory teachers as needed. Each group will study a “cycle” for a week and then move to the next rotation. After the third rotation, students will return to their homeroom teacher to select a person or animal who they believe demonstrated perseverance. Throughout the fourth week, students will be working on their culminating project.

<i>Rotational Schedule</i>	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Animals	Group 1	Group 3	Group 2	Students will rotate in and out of each classroom as needed to work on research, visual, and oral presentation of their culminating project. Each teacher will be facilitating a particular area.
Activists	Group 2	Group 1	Group 3	
Athletes	Group 3	Group 2	Group 1	

Daily Schedule

Each teacher will use a flexible block of time to present material as needed. The schedule is structured around the young adolescents needs for large blocks of integrated instruction, need for increased physical movement, and the need for increased social interaction.

The “Flexibly Scheduled Time” correlates with the thematic unit and integration of core subjects. Health and PE includes topics such as Puberty Education, D.A.R.E programs, First Aid, etc. This time also includes a structured and/or non-structured recess time. Exploratory classes are included to allow students time to explore music choices, art classes, vocational classes, and/or foreign languages. A/A time is included to extend inter and intrapersonal skills and also focus on teacher/student relationships, as well as peer relationships. This block of time will also integrate the “perseverance” theme. The last block of the day is “Independent Study Time”. During this block, students will have the option to write in journals, read self selected texts, research topics of interest, and receive any help they feel needed. The schedule may be altered or adjusted to meet the needs of students.

<i>Daily Schedule</i>	
7:55-8:20	Morning Announcements, Duties, and Routines
8:20-10:20	Flexibly Scheduled Time-Follow Rotational Schedule
10:20-11:00	Health and PE (including recess)
11:00-11:30	Lunch
11:30-12:30	Flexibly Schedule Time-Follow Rotational Schedule
12:30-1:15	Exploratory Classes
1:15-2:15	A/A – Intramurals (focus on perseverance activities throughout thematic unit)
2:15-3:00	Independent Study Time (including journaling, self selected reading, research, remediation help as determined by student)

Pre-Launch

Prior to launching the unit, students will select a novel that illustrates the theme of perseverance. Through the use of literature circles, paideia seminars, and book talks, students will explore how young adolescent characters persevered in the novels *Esperanza Rising*, *Hatchet*, and *Freedom Train*. By the use of discovery learning, students will begin to understand perseverance, however it will not be directly taught until launching the unit.

In *Esperanza Rising*, a young girl must leave her lifestyle of luxury in Mexico and flee illegally to a life of poverty and migrant farm work in America. She endures much loss and is forced to take responsibility of her destiny. Through perseverance, she learns to provide for herself and bring her family back together. The novel *Hatchet* details Brian's fight for survival. He must overcome physical, mental, and moral obstacles to survive. *Freedom Train* is a historical fiction novel detailing the life of a young Harriet Tubman, as she begins her journey to freedom for her and others. Throughout each of these novels, students will analyze the circumstances facing each character as they struggle through hardship and adversity. They must persist in spite of opposition, ultimately persevering to freedom.

Launch

After reading and discussing novels, students will progress into the thematic unit. On the first day, teachers will divide students into three heterogeneous groups, or “teams”. Each team will be asked to complete a series of tasks in the least amount of time possible. Some tasks may require students in each group to work independently, with partners, or as an entire team. Regardless of the way each person completes a task, students must work together as a team and must finish as a team. Throughout the series of tasks, teachers will be noting how team members are persevering.

The teams will begin with the “human knot” activity, in which each team member must become tangled by locking hands with two different people. Through a series of twists and turns, students must become untangled to move to the next task. Once at the next task, students must partner up. One partner will call, while the other partner works their way through the course blindfolded. The caller guides their partner through the twisting ropes to get them to free. Once every partner group in a particular team has made it through, then the team may progress. Following the blind relay, students will progress to the puzzle station, where students must organize themselves into small groups to complete four 50 piece puzzles. The team who finishes first wins.

Following the tasks, everyone will return to homeroom classes to discuss “What is perseverance?” in relation to the games just completed. Teachers will point out any positives and/or negatives documented during the game and link them to the discussion. The teacher will also help students draw a connection between how they participated in the games and how the characters persevered in the books. Teachers will then explain to the students the “logistics” of the next few weeks and how they will rotate through each cycle.

Perseverance Unit Matrix
(Activities, Objectives, Assessments, Resources)

	Activities	Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	Technology	Health/PE	Assessment	Resources
<i>Animals</i>	A Cry for Help	1.03 1.04 3.01 4.06 4.07		1.01 1.03 1.04 1.05 1.06		3.02		Formative Assessment (I am Poem)	Student laptops, charade cards, rubric and model for I am Poem
	Letter to “The Wild Ones”	2.02 2.09 2.10 4.09 4.10		1.01 1.03 1.04 1.05 1.06		3.01		Formative Assessment	Student laptops, Internet access
	Endangered Species Web quest Design		4.01 4.02 4.03	1.01 1.03 1.04 1.05 1.06		2.03		Formative Assessment (Peer Evaluation)	Student laptops, Internet access
	A Day at the Zoo			1.01 1.03 1.04 1.05 1.06				Formative Assessment (Journaling)	Bus, Tour Guide Zoologists, Permission slip, movie “Earth”
<i>Athletes</i>	An Athlete’s Journey	3.01 3.02 3.07 4.05			4.01	3.02		Summative Assessment	Non-fiction texts about athletes
	Race to the Finish						10.01 6.03	Formative Assessment	Stopwatch
	Racing Against Time		5.01					Formative Assessment	Pencil/Paper, recorded time

Reference NCSCOS in Resources section of notebook.

	Cont.						(Bar Graph)	from previous activity
	Tar heel Testimony	5.08			4.03		Journaling	Paper and notebook
<i>Activists</i>	Bill of Rights Breakdown	1.01 1.02 1.03 1.04 2.01 2.02 2.05 2.07 2.09- 2.10, etc.			2.01 2.03 4.04		Formative Assessment (Group presentation assessed by checklist.)	Copies of Bill of Rights, computers, large pieces of poster board, Blank bingo cards and scenario cards
	American History Timeline	2.01- 2.10 3.01- 3.07 4.01- 4.03 4.05	5.03		3.01- 3.06 4.06		Formative Assessment (Notes collected to ensure clarity and understanding, conference with student as needed.)	Yarn, photos of people/events in American History, textbooks, computers, and/or other research materials.
	Rights Revealed	4.03- 4.10			4.01 4.03 4.06	1.04 1.11 2.02 3.07	Summative Assessment (Students will submit final draft of encyclopedia articles for assessment by rubric.)	Research materials. Publishing resources.
	Civil Rights Museum				Goal 2-4		Formative/Summative Assessment	Busses for trip, note cards

Essential Questions

Our theoretical model, based around James Beane’s Guidelines for a Middle School Curriculum, is framed by essential questions that resort back to perseverance. “What is perseverance?”, “How does perseverance affect me?” and “How does perseverance affect the world around me?” are all tied into activities on animals, athletes, and activists that have shown perseverance throughout history.

	<i>Essential Questions per Cycle</i>
<i>Animals</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How would your life be impacted without the existence of endangered species?▪ How can you impact the lives of endangered species?▪ How has the perseverance of “The Wild Ones” impacted the existence of endangered species?
<i>Athletes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How do athletes show perseverance?▪ How can showing perseverance have an impact on others around you?▪ How can having perseverance affect the outcome of life’s challenges?▪ How have others persevered?
<i>Activists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What are the Bill of Rights?▪ How has it persevered over time?▪ How does perseverance shape history?▪ How have people’s perseverance impacted our rights?▪ How can I help portray the perseverance of others through history?▪ In what ways are perseverance portrayed in the museum?

Advisee/Advisor (Intramurals)

A/A is a structured time to allow young adolescents a period during the day to work on team building and social interactions. As we planned our unit, we wanted to incorporate this time into our theme to provide as much integration as possible and to also allow students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of how to persevere across settings. The following activities will be used during this time:

- Perseverance Quotes
- Penny in an Ice Cube
- Riddles (Problem Solving in Small Groups)
- Zoom
(A group tries to create a unified story from a set of sequential pictures. The pictures are randomly ordered and handed out. Each person has a picture but cannot show it to others. Requires patience, communication, and perspective taking in order to recreate the story's sequence.)
- Card games
- Board Games
- Who/What Am I?



A Cry for Help!

Subject: Science, Language Arts, Technology

Essential Question:

- How have endangered species shown perseverance?

Activity Description:

- Students will discuss the term "endangered species" and share what they know about it.
- Students will do an online scavenger hunt using websites given by the teacher to locate and give descriptions of at least three of the following animals: alligator, whale, sheep, elephant, hummingbird, shark, eagle, wolf, panda, tiger, rattlesnake, grasshopper, fly, polar bear, rhino, gorilla, turtle, snail, panther, butterfly, dolphin, rabbit, frog, and iguana.
- Students will play an endangered species charades game. Students will impersonate and give clues of his or her chosen species for the other students to guess.
- Students will write an "I am poem" from the perspective of one of the endangered species they find interesting.

Assessment:

- Teachers will observe students as they play the game of charades. Satisfactory participation includes active watching, listening, and logical and appropriate pantomiming as play progresses.
- Teacher will take up the "I am poem" to be graded. It will be graded using a rubric.



Letter to “The Wild Ones”

Subject: Science, Language Arts, Technology

Essential Question:

- How has the perseverance of “The Wild Ones” impacted the existence of endangered species?

Activity Description:

- Students will take a virtual field trip by visiting:
<http://www.tramline.com/tours/sci/endanger/tourlaunch1.htm>
- While visiting the website students will fill in a graphic organizer. They will list animals that are becoming endangered, list why they are becoming endangered and ways we can help save them.
- Students will visit www.thewildeones.org to read biographies of people who have committed their lives to help endangered species.
- Students will use their notes and write a letter to the National Wildlife Federation or an individual from The Wild Ones Scientists Network, thanking them for their service and discussing the importance of helping endangered species.

Assessment:

- Teacher will take up letters to grade by rubric.



Endangered Species Web quest Design

Subject: Technology, Science, Math

Essential Question:

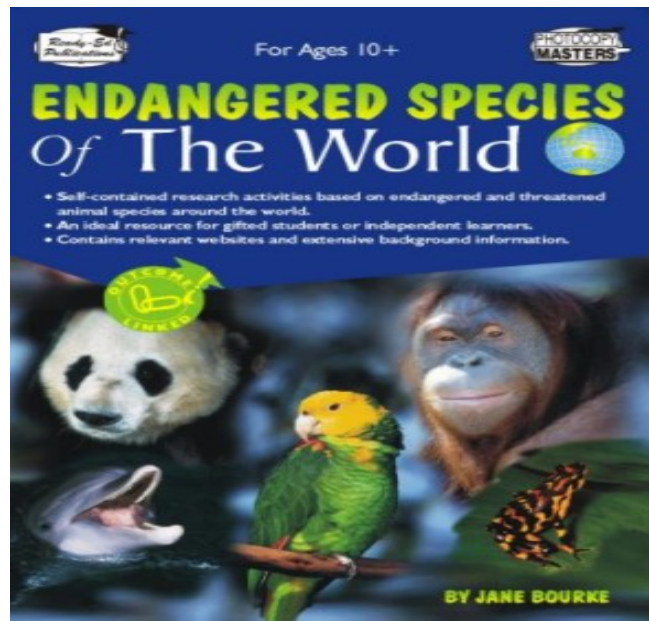
- How can **you** impact the lives of endangered species?

Activities:

- Students will select an endangered species.
- Students will research statistics, characteristics, and information about the species.
- Students will create an outline on paper the design for a Web site that will explain the species' plight and create tables to show researched statistics.
- Students will consider ways to draw attention to and support the effort to save a species.

Assessment:

- Students will be assessed through peer evaluation.



A Day at the Zoo

Subject: Science

Essential Question:

- How would your life be impacted without the existence of endangered species?

Activity Description:

- Students will go on a field trip to the Asheboro Zoo to observe the work of zoologists and the lives of endangered species.
- Zoologists will speak to students about their careers and discuss how perseverance has made a difference in their lives and in the lives of the animals at the Asheboro Zoo.
- Students will watch the movie “Earth”, which “follows the epic migratory journeys of four animal families as well as the earth's journey around the sun and the massive influence it has on all life on the planet, from the Arctic spring to the Antarctic winter.”

Assessment:

- Students will journal about their experiences at the zoo.

An Athlete's Journey

Subject: Language Arts, Technology, Social Studies

Essential Question:

- How do athletes show perseverance?

Activity Description:

- Students will discuss how athletes show perseverance.
- Students will watch a video clip on You Tube about athletes who don't let their disabilities get in the way of them playing sports.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=js_TEJnporg
- Students will be put into groups. Each group will be given a nonfiction text about an athlete. The students will read this text and then discuss how this athlete showed perseverance.
- Students will give a book talk to the class about their athlete.

Assessment:

- Teacher will grade the student's presentation using a rubric.

Race to the Finish

Subject: PE/Health

Essential Question:

- How can showing perseverance have an impact on others around you?

Activity Description:

- Students will be put into teams and run an obstacle course.
- Students again will run the same obstacle course but this time they will have either their arms tied behind their back or their legs tied together. As a team they will have to work together to help each other complete each station.



Assessment:

- Teacher will use a check sheet to grade student's teamwork.

Racing Against Time

Subject: Math (Elapsed Time)

Essential Question:

- How can having perseverance affect the outcome of life's challenges?

Activity Description:

- Students will take the times of both of their races and figure out how much time has passed from start to finish.
- Students will order the races in order from shortest time to the longest time. Next, students will demonstrate the results using a bar graph.

Assessment:

- Teacher will take up the student's bar graphs to be graded.



Tar Heel Testimony

Subject: Language Arts

Essential Question:

- How have others persevered?

Activity Description:

- Ty Lawson from Carolina Tar Heels will come in and speak to the class about how perseverance has impacted his basketball and college career.
- Students will journal about the impact the guest speaker had on their life.

Assessment:

- Teacher will view student journals and give positive feedback.



Bill of Rights Breakdown

Subject: Social Studies, Language Arts

Essential Question:

- What are the Bill of Rights?
- How has it persevered over time?

Activity Description:

- As a whole class, read and discuss Bill of Rights
- Practice memorizing Bill of Rights using song, to the tune of “The First Day of Christmas” as whole class, then students continue to practice with partners for the rest of the week. Will present in small groups on Friday.
- Divide students into small groups and assign them a particular section.
- Students study their section and re-write it in modern day terms to make it easier to understand.
- Each group creates a 3-5 minute presentation of their section.
- Groups present.
- Once every group has present, teacher facilitates class in developing their own version of Bill of Rights using key phrases from presentation.
- Bill of Rights Bingo. Students label card with Amendment numbers. Teacher reads scenarios. Students cover the Amendment related to scenario.

Assessment:

- Teacher will observe students in the creation of the project and help as needed.
- Group presentation will be scored by checklist.
- Students understanding of Amendments will be monitored using Bingo game.

American History Timeline

Subject: Social Studies, Language Arts, Math

Essential Question:

- How does perseverance shape history?

Activity Description:

- Before starting class, teacher strings red (or any other color of choice) around room.
- Teacher begins by plotting several distinctive dates, such as date Bill of Rights were signed, beginnings of particular movements, and current year on timeline around room.
- Then, teacher distributes pictures of people or events that have impacted history and brought about significant change. On the back of the picture are key words or phrases for students to use to guide their research.
- Students are given time to research their person or event.
- When all students are finished, each student briefly describes their picture and places it on the timeline with a clothespin.
- Students are taking notes in the form of a timeline on their own paper.

Assessment

- Teacher collects student notes to evaluate for clarity and understanding. Graded based on thoroughness of completion. (Date, event, and key phrases for each presentation listed =100)



Rights Revealed

Subject: Social Studies, Language Arts

Essential Question:

- How have people's perseverance impacted our rights?

Activity Description:

- Teacher facilitates discussion of civil rights movements, beginning with United Streaming video.
- Students will then work together to create an encyclopedia for first graders following the Discovery Learning Lesson Plan (<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/programs/freetatlast/>)
- Once students have chosen a person to write their encyclopedia article about, they will go to a revising, editing, proofreading station to make improvements on their first draft. There, teacher will monitor for appropriate use of sources, writing skills, and understanding of content.
- Once finished, teacher will help students organize their information into an encyclopedia for first graders.
- Classes will take their published encyclopedia to the local elementary to share.

Assessment

- Teacher will assess student's final article using rubric.



Civil Rights Museum Greensboro, NC

Subject: Social Studies

Essential Question:

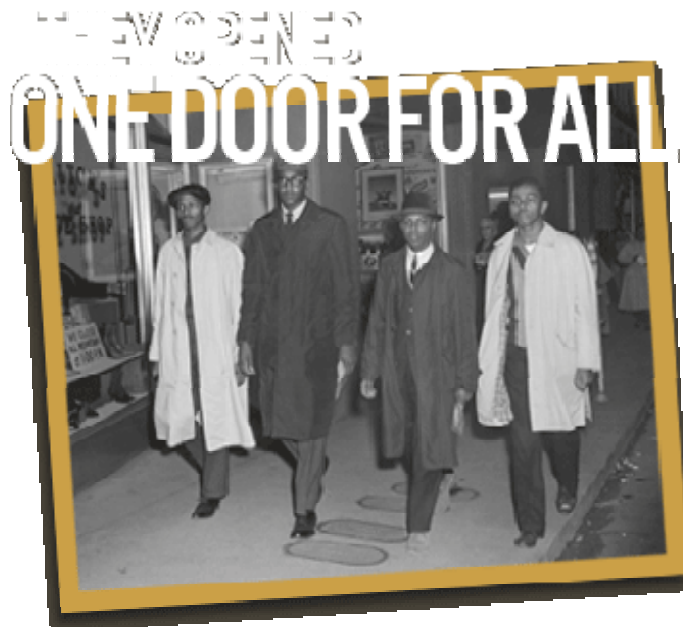
- How can I help portray the perseverance of others through history?
- In what ways are perseverance portrayed in the museum?

Activity Description:

- Prior to leaving for museum, students will explore the museum website, noting their timeline of civil rights movements.
- Teacher will discuss appropriate museum behavior and discuss how to be respectful in places of reverence.
- Once there, students will tour the museum. Their assignment is to observe and come back with five note cards containing information that was new to them.
- After field trip, teacher will help facilitate a Paideia seminar. Initially, students will share their most memorable moment. Then, the seminar will focus around key words perseverance and history.

Assessment:

- Note cards will be collected and graded.
- Students will receive points for participation in seminar to be added to their note card grade.



Culminating Activity *“A Night at the Wax Museum”*

As a demonstration of their knowledge, students will work independently on a written, oral and visual presentation. Students will begin by choosing a person from American history or an endangered species that they feel displays perseverance. They may choose from a list provided or get approval on a person/animal of their own choosing. Once approved, students will begin by researching their “character”, creating a timeline of events and then choosing two other multi-genre projects to be created and displayed on the night of their final presentation. These projects may include a power point presentation, a letter from the character’s perspective, an essay, a brochure, I Am poem, a job application, etc. Once they have completed their artifacts for the multi-genre projects, they will begin working on their oral presentation. On presentation night, students will have a monologue to present when approached by community members. Once the monologue is ready, students will begin working on the visual presentation of their character, which is them dressed up and staged as that character. Teachers will help facilitate by helping students write monologues, find resources and materials, and pacing students through the project. Once students are finished, they may choose to help with invitations and decorations for the opening “Night at the Wax Museum”.

The final night will invite the community, for a small admission fee, to view students presenting themselves as their chosen character. They will stand, much like statues, until tapped by a viewer. At that time, students will recite their monologue. They are not to engage in conversation or say anything more than their monologue throughout the presentation. Viewers may also look at each student’s artifacts. Once community members have walked through the wax museum, teachers will host a light reception. Money raised will be contributed to their service learning project.

Wax Museum/Multi-genre Project

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1	Student Score
Content	Covers topic in-depth with details and examples. Subject knowledge is excellent.	Includes essential knowledge about the topic. Subject knowledge appears to be good.	Includes essential information about the topic but there are 1-2 factual errors.	Content is minimal OR there are several factual errors.	
Attractiveness	Makes excellent use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance the presentation.	Makes good use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance to presentation.	Makes use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. but occasionally these detract from the presentation content.	Use of font, color, graphics, effects etc. but these often distract from the presentation content.	
Originality	Product shows a large amount of original thought. Ideas are creative and inventive.	Product shows some original thought. Work shows new ideas and insights.	Uses other people's ideas (giving them credit), but there is little evidence of original thinking.	Uses other people's ideas, but does not give them credit.	
Requirements	All requirements are met and exceeded.	All requirements are met. The project includes a monologue, timeline, and two other multi-genre artifacts.	One requirement was not completely met.	More than one requirement was not completely met.	
Sources	Source information collected for all graphics, facts and quotes. All documented in desired format.	Source information collected for all graphics, facts and quotes. Most documented in desired format.	Source information collected for graphics, facts and quotes, but not documented in desired format.	Very little or no source information was collected.	
Presentation	Monologues are presented with factual information and show character expression.	Monologues are missing either factual information or character expression.	Monologues are not completely followed and does not have both factual and character information.	Monologues requirements are not met.	
Total Score					

Service Learning Project

With money raised from “A Night at the Wax Museum”, students will complete a service learning project directed towards Habitat for Humanity. Students will donate money raised to Habitat and will also have the opportunity to work as a volunteer on a Habitat for Humanity home. Through their actions, students will be able to come in contact with a family in their own community that may be persevering through their own challenges and will also have the opportunity to network with other community agencies and resources.



Bibliography

References:

Beane, J. (1993). Middle School Curriculum from Rhetoric to Reality. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

<http://www.habitat.org/>

<http://movies.yahoo.com/movie/1809427488/info>

<http://www.sitinmovement.org/home.html>

Resources:

<http://www.habitat.org/>

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/programs/freetatlast/>

<http://www.sitinmovement.org/home.html>