



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume VII: The Population Explosion

Life in 2010

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.07.03
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Students should become aware of a personal responsibility for helping to solve the population crisis. They have control over their own future - including their reproductive future. They should know how to plan and provide for a family. They need to understand the costs associated with expanding a family - personal/emotional, economic and environmental. They can predict their future - occupation, earnings, space requirements and consumption and forecast their quality of life.

"Life in 2010" is a thematic unit which extends New Haven's Values and Choices social curriculum. It encourages students to consider personal and social consequences of adding to our local population. Students will, upon completion of the unit, predict their future in the year 2010, when most are getting out of college, or starting careers and families. They will predict how much of Earth's finite resources they will need, and will plan how to afford "comfortable space" in an increasingly competitive world. Students should understand the power of their own personal choices when it comes to reproduction. They need to recognize that individual personal choices, when aggregated, contribute to agreeable, or stressed, environments.

After observation, analysis and prediction of their own space (environment), students will learn how actions and impacts interact. They will explore connections between population trends and environments, economic and social systems. They will explore competing interests within and among these groups. Students will identify and analyze the relationship of population growth and the environment. Students will discover damage to the environment is sure to increase given the Worldwatch Institute prediction of an increase of 90 million people each year for the foreseeable future. Only through population stabilization programs, conservation and implementation of less destructive technologies will we preserve the natural world and our own security.

Students will conclude the unit by recognizing every effort they make is part of a larger, global context. Every contribution in a community has a rippling effect which can spread through their neighborhood, their city, the state, the nation and their world. As the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development reported, "Efforts to slow population growth, to reduce poverty, to achieve economic progress, to improve environmental protection, and to reduce unsustainable consumption and production patterns are mutually reinforcing." We can stabilize world population at sustainable levels, protect and enhance the environment, and balance inequalities between nations and individuals. What we need is committed individuals willing to make the effort. Our students are these individuals, the leaders in the year 2010 and beyond.

This unit is divided into six sections:

- (1) Introduction
- (2) Illustrating overpopulation
- (3) Overpopulation and the environment
- (4) Overpopulation and social stresses
- (5) The economics of overpopulation
- (6) Conclusion/Final Project

“Life in 2010” is a thematic unit which spans the curriculum and will be included in my Earth Science class. Although prepared for Grade 8 Science, its interdisciplinary approach lends itself to other subjects as well. There are many data and mathematical activities, for example. The activities presuppose student competencies in: addition/subtraction, multiplication/division, measuring length and area, calculating, percentages, basic graphing and use of a calculator. The unit also includes diverse reading as well as expository and persuasive writing, which may be presented to students with diverse language arts competencies. The unit will prepare students for problem solving skills assessed on the state's CAPT test. Therefore, many components of this unit are directly and easily incorporated into most grade 6 through 9 studies.

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