



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute

1999 Volume VI: Human-Environment Relations: International Perspectives from History, Science, Politics, and Ethics

Edgewood Speaks: Politically, Historically, Scientifically and Ethically

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.06.05

by Mary E. Stewart

Edgewood Speaks is a 10 week study posed with a single question: *What is an honorable relationship with nature?* It has been written to use in middle school general science courses. My 8th students' task will be to present an answer, in the form of an exhibit, that includes evidence of scientific and historical research as well as a basic knowledge of currents, erosion and land sculpting of the West River located in Edgewood Park in New Haven, CT. My objective is to assist students as they achieve a greater understanding and appreciation for the intrinsic connection between humans and the environment. This unit will also directly address the New Haven 8th grade science content standards (3) numbers 4.0 in regard to local geology, erosion and water systems and weather; 6.0 in regard to the impact of technology and its use to understand characteristics of changing populations, natural resources and the consequences of human behavior.

The students will explore historical, political, scientific and ethical aspects of Edgewood Park through hands on activities, labs, integrated arts and research. These sessions will help students apply scientific concepts to on-going dialogs in our class to promote language development and scientific literacy. Communicating historical, political, scientific and ethical perspectives in such a manner naturally creates literate individuals. Literacy is often associated solely with reading and written communication. Readings and writing are tools to achieve literacy, but true life long literacy depends upon the acquisition and application of historical, political, scientific and ethical concepts and experiences.

When the students have investigated change over time, open space in urban areas, political terminology, effects of change in respect to Edgewood Park, and have reproduced the West River in the science lab, they will conduct independent work and curate their own exhibit. Once the exhibit ends the audience will gather for a debriefing session with the researchers. This will allow *Edgewood Speaks* to end with meaningful dialog just as it began. The students are now the facilitators and I will be another member of the audience.

(Recommended for Science, grades 6-9.)

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