DEMOCRACY IN ACTION
OVERVIEW

Collaboration between eighth grade language arts teachers: Jim DeLuca, Janet Barker, Gerel Santiago, Keith Nyland

REVIEW

FIRST QUARTER: All eighth graders at Parras Middle School in Redondo Beach will study the works of culturally diverse authors, including Maya Angelou, Monica Sone, Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, and Anne Frank to introduce the concept of divergent points of view. Following an intense study of author background and writing style, students will craft their own memoirs that represent their unique cultural perspectives and experiences. Students will share aloud stories that will be bound together in a class and library anthology. First Quarter studies will conclude with an assembly conducted by a speaker from the Simon Wiesenthal Center and possibly the Japanese National Museum who will offer students yet another perspective on the lasting effects of racism. If that presentation Can't be arranged, students will watch the film version of "The Diary of Anne Frank." Teachers will conduct a discussion that assists students in connecting the highlights of the quarter. Students will consider groups, situations and people today who are unfairly discriminated against and write about their First Quarter discoveries in a Reflection that will be kept in their Portfolios.

SECOND QUARTER
FOCUS ON NON-FICTION AND CONSUMER MATERIALS

OVERVIEW: Taking the background study of First Quarter, students will launch an investigation surrounding the essential question, "Who Should Be Remembered Today?" Students will develop an **Inquiry Question** regarding segments of society that are either ignored or misrepresented. They will determine who in our society needs to be remembered. They will spend the entire Second Quarter researching the answer to their individual questions, determining facts and specifics. Following a business action plan model, students will create timetables with firm deadlines: they will be required to interview primary sources and collect various other types of data. The subject of their research is an issue they feel passionate about:

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it could be the Southland's homeless population, the disabled, people with cancer, people who are short or large—their focus will be entirely their choice. Students will be required to read, analyze and study consumer materials that will aid in the deep understanding of their particular issue. Students will then create a campaign on behalf of their cause: they will be required to write letters to individuals, companies, and newspapers as they represent the needs of underserved or misunderstood populations. They will be required to write an editorial, write and deliver a speech, and create a Public Service Announcement.

Students will be asked to create PSA films, posters, theatrical presentations -- these, again, will highlight their individual gifts and strengths -- that will be featured at an end-of-the-quarter evening program celebrating eighth grade language arts studies. Guests will be encouraged to visit various areas—from the visual arts to monologues to an assortment of mass media campaigns. As the evening progresses, participants will experience a student-created multi-media presentation that integrates compassion with a spirit of democracy. Guests will learn what they can do to foster tolerance in their neighborhood. The media and various other dignitaries will be invited to the program. Once again, students will be involved in this process, learning to write public relations materials. At the end of the First Semester Studies, parents and teachers will be asked to write a reflection about "Who Should Be Remembered?"

By the end of the quarter, students will be hooked on the notion that words are powerful and that they can—even as young teens—begin to change the world for the better.

WEEK ONE
Nov. 14—18

1. Monday: Students will be given an overview of Second Quarter requirements and deadlines such as;

    - Find a topic or issue you care about.
    - Develop a list of essential questions
    - Develop a list of people, organizations, primary and secondary sources you need to contact for more information.

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- Develop a Strategic Plan regarding research, presentation, and informing the public about your group or issue's plight.
- Write two letters: one, to an organization seeking information, and the other to a newspaper or publication enlightening the public about the cause you are representing.
- Write a press release welcoming the public to our final presentation.
- Write an analysis of an editorial/opinion piece.
- Write an opinion essay.
- Write and deliver a speech on behalf of your cause.

Students will begin brainstorming about topics and issues they might want to pursue. Students will be given various consumer materials, from news magazines to newspapers. A classroom list will be developed and posted.

2. Tuesday: Students will narrow their topic. They will develop a list of questions they'll need to know before they launch their campaign. They will also develop a list of possible sources. This work must be completed before they can begin their research.
3. Wednesday: While Ms. Barker's students develop a strategic game plan that outlines their approach to research, Mr. DeLuca's and Mrs. Santiago's classes will go to the computer lab and begin researching their issue.
4. Thursday: Roles will switch. Barker's classes in Lab, DeLuca's and Santiago's are back in class refining their research strategy.
5. Friday: All students will re-assess their status, developing new questions and strategies, wherever necessary. Students will determine where and how they need to get further information. Students will begin a rough draft letter to a source that can provide deeper insight, or informational materials. Barker's classes will work on letter over the weekend.

WEEK TWO

Nov. 21—22

1. Monday: Students will write a second draft letter, making sure it's polished;

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carefully worded and edited. Barker's classes will work in computer lab. Work is due Tuesday.

2. Tuesday: DeLuca's and Santiago's classes will go to the computer lab and prepare letters. Letters will be typed, stamped and sent to various parties. A second letter, along with the rough draft, will be kept for a grade.

WEEK THREE

Nov. 28—Dec. 2

1. Monday: Read letters to the editor. Analyze. Work on campaign.
2. Tuesday: Read letters to the editor. Analyze. Work on campaign.
3. Wednesday: Write a letter to the editor.
4. Thursday: Revise/type letter to the editor. Barker's classes in computer lab.
5. Friday: Read and analyze editorial/opinion piece. D.'s/S.'s classes in lab.

WEEK FOUR

Dec. 5—9

1. Monday**:** Review/revise Strategic Plan.
   Read editorials/opinion pieces. Analyze. Work on campaign.
2. Tuesday**:** Read editorials/opinion pieces. Analyze. Work on campaign.
3. Wednesday**:** Read an editorial. Write an in-class analysis.
4. Thursday**:** Write an opinion piece/editorial.
5. Friday**:** Edit opinion/editorial piece.

WEEK FIVE

Dec. 12—16

1. Monday**:** Editorial board: Review opinion piece for flawed views, etc.
2. Tuesday: Watch PSAs, commercials. Study propaganda, brainwashing techniques.
3. Wednesday**:** Analyze media ads. Work on campaign.
4. Thursday**:** Analyze media ads. Work on campaign.
5. Friday**:** Report progress. Show peers what you've done thus far and what you still need to do. Seek suggestions.

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WEEK SIX
Jan. 3—6

1. Tuesday: Students learn about end-of-quarter evening presentation. They will brainstorm about what they want the event to look like and who to invite.
2. Wednesday: Event planning continues. Students will analyze press releases, then create their own.
3. Thursday: Students will edit press releases and mail.
4. Friday: Research and final plans are due. Students must have evidence of a variety of sources including one primary source, four varied secondary sources (the Internet, books, pamphlets). This material must be presented in a binder. Strategic plans with deadlines must be included, along with a summary of the project, a copy of the letter to the editor, editorial/opinion piece, essential questions, press release and expected outcome.

WEEK SEVEN
Jan. 9—13

1. Monday: The Speech Unit begins: Overview, including deadlines.
2. Tuesday: Speech Seminar—Library
   What Are the Qualities of an Effective Speech? What to Look for: Analyze
3. Wednesday: Speech Seminar—Types of Speeches
4. Thursday: Create a speech outline
5. Friday: Write first draft of the speech

WEEK EIGHT
Jan. 16—20

1. Monday: Work on speech/Draft Two
2. Tuesday: Speech Seminar—Editing your speech
3. Wednesday: Speech Seminar—How to Present your Speech
4. Thursday: Revise speech with the help of peers.
5. Friday: Final day to revise speeches.

WEEK NINE
Jan. 23—26

1. Monday: Speech presentations
2. Tuesday: Speech presentations

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3. Wednesday: Speech presentations
4. Thursday: Speech presentations
5. Friday: Preparations for Tuesday Night's Evening XXX

WEEK TEN

Jan 30—Feb. 3

1. Monday: Set up for Tuesday night presentation
2. Tuesday: View presentations. EVENING PROGRAM!
3. Wednesday: Write a reflection. What was effective? What could have been done better? Where do you go from here?
4. Thursday: Quarter ends. Go to the Library and check out "The Outsiders." Author background. Reading strategies. Start reading.
5. Friday: Reading continues.

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