



WMRSD Leaders and Learners – Your Community Connection White Mountains Regional School District

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At the Lancaster School

Choice Blocks: Learning Through Curiosity, Creativity, and Exploration

This year, Lancaster Elementary School is expanding opportunities for students in grades 3–6 to take an active role in their learning through Choice Blocks. The program is designed to provide students with meaningful choices, hands-on experiences, and opportunities to explore topics that spark their curiosity.

Choice Blocks will operate in six-week rotations, giving students the opportunity to select an area of interest, spend six weeks immersed in that topic, and then make a new choice for the next rotation. Students and their families will review the available course options and select the activity that best matches the student's interests. Through this structure, students will experience a variety of learning opportunities throughout the school year.

The courses are built primarily around Science and Social Studies concepts, but the learning will extend well beyond traditional content areas. Each Choice Block will incorporate literacy strategies, allowing students to read, write, research, communicate, and build vocabulary while applying those skills in authentic and engaging settings.

The range of available courses reflects the broad interests of Lancaster students. Students can explore the natural world through courses such as Animal Adaptations, The Night Sky, Weather Watchers, Photography in Nature, Trout in the Classroom, Life Below the Ice, Spring Animals, Inside the Earth, and Living Cycles. These experiences provide opportunities to observe, investigate, ask questions, collect information, and develop explanations based on evidence.

Other courses focus on creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. A Tinkerer Lab, A Genius Lab, Inventors Club, Underwater Robotics, Tech 101, Build for Survival, and Mud to Masterpiece encourage students to design, build, experiment, revise, and create. These courses emphasize the idea that learning is often a process of trying something, learning from mistakes, and trying again.

Students interested in history and the world around them can choose from courses such as How Exploration Has Changed the World, United States, Geography and Landmarks, The Evolution of Warfare, and Turning Points in USA History. These courses give students opportunities to examine events, people, places, and ideas that have shaped the United States and the world.

Choice Blocks also connect learning to real-world experiences and careers. Dogs with a Job allows students to investigate the many ways dogs support people and communities. Sports Broadcasting introduces students to communication and media while connecting literacy skills to an authentic audience. Woods to Table explores connections between the environment, resources, food, and community. Route Rangers provides another opportunity for students to explore the world around them through a unique lens.

Some Choice Blocks are built around seasonal experiences. Fall to Frost and Spring Animals allow students to investigate changes in the natural world and connect classroom learning to observations they can make throughout the year.

The program also provides opportunities for students to develop as readers and writers. Writing and Publishing as an Author gives students the chance to explore the writing process and work toward creating and publishing their own work. A Science Fair provides another authentic opportunity for students to develop questions, conduct investigations, analyze findings, and communicate what they have learned.

Across all of these courses, literacy remains an important component. Students will encounter informational texts, research materials, written directions, vocabulary, and other sources connected to their topics. They will write to explain their thinking, document their learning, communicate ideas, and reflect on their experiences. By embedding literacy into Science and Social Studies experiences, students will see that reading and writing are tools for learning in every subject.

The hands-on nature of Choice Blocks will also provide opportunities to develop skills such as collaboration, creativity, communication, critical thinking, perseverance, and problem-solving. Whether students are studying trout, building a survival structure, exploring robotics, examining the human body, investigating weather, or creating a piece of art, they will be expected to actively participate in the learning process.

Most importantly, Choice Blocks give students voice and ownership. Rather than every student experiencing exactly the same learning experience, students will have opportunities to make decisions based on their interests. Families will be an important part of this process, helping students review course descriptions and select the experiences that they believe will be most engaging and meaningful.

The variety of offerings reflects Lancaster Elementary School's belief that students are naturally curious and that meaningful learning can happen in many different ways. A student who loves animals may find a passion for science. A student who enjoys building may discover an interest in engineering. A student fascinated by history may become an enthusiastic researcher. A student who loves telling stories may discover the confidence to become an author or broadcaster.

Through six-week rotations, Lancaster Elementary School's Choice Blocks are designed to make learning active, relevant, and student-centered. The program gives students opportunities to explore their interests while strengthening the academic and literacy skills they need to be successful.

From Animal Adaptations to Underwater Robotics, from Writing and Publishing as an Author to Turning Points in USA History, and from The Night Sky to Mud to Masterpiece, the possibilities are intentionally broad. Each course offers students another chance to ask questions, try something new, and discover where their curiosity can take them.

Choice Blocks are ultimately about more than choosing a class. They are about giving students opportunities to explore, create, investigate, communicate, and become more invested in their own learning.