

Teaching News Is Elementary

May 20, 2016

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

Materials you will need for this lesson: The Seattle Times e-Edition, pencil and paper, dictionary

Article: “Fired up: Seattle Bellevue student rocket scientists get national nods”

Page: Main, A1

Date: Thursday, May 19, 2016

Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

A **stereotype** is a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing – what are some stereotypes that people have about people who like science?

Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it’s used in the sentence:

“All the worry over **lagging** education in science, math and technology might lead anyone to think students run from those fields. But consider rocket-building.”

Lagging: to move or make progress so slowly that you are behind other people or things

“In Bellevue, the rocketry club at Odle Middle School is in such high demand that teacher Brendan Williams holds a lottery to choose students. Some years, he **fields** requests from up to 100 kids **vying** for 32 spots.”

Fields: play as a fielder (someone who catches balls in baseball)

Vying: to strive in competition or rivalry with another; contend for superiority

“I love space because it’s the future. Down is **finite**; up is **infinite**,” Bradford said. What follows are edited comments from local students who may be our next **astrophysicists**. All are members of rocketry teams in Seattle, Bellevue and Issaquah schools.”

Finite: has an end or finishing point

Infinite: having no boundaries or limits; impossible to measure or calculate

Astrophysicists: the study of stars and other objects in space, and the way they move and change over time.

“When did you first become interested in rockets, and what **spurred** this interest?”

Spurred: cause or promote the development of; stimulate.

“People tend to see science-y kids as robot-people that **intake** pizza and **output** coding with no appreciation for the world’s beauty, which is what inspires us to learn as much as we can about the weird and wonderful **phenomena** of the universe.”

Intake: an amount of food, air, or another substance taken into the body.

Output: the act of producing something, the amount of something that is produced or the process in which something is delivered.

Phenomena: things (such as interesting facts or events) that can be observed and studied and that typically are unusual or difficult to understand or explain fully.

“I have been designing and building **prosthetic** arms as a part of the national MESA (Math, Engineering, Science, and Achievement) challenge. The challenge is meant to seek innovative solutions for a low-cost, yet **functional** prosthetic arm for the millions of **impoverished** amputees around the world.”

Prosthetic: denoting an artificial body part, such as a limb, or a heart.

Functional: designed for or adapted to a particular function or use.

Impoverished: really poor, either from having no money or being in bad health.

Journal Writing Prompts:

“I love space because it’s so empty and cold. I love that space doesn’t care what anyone thinks of it. There are zillions of natural processes going along, jamming to their own rhythms, and they create fantastic complexity because they have no reason to be the same as each other.”

The students in this article are passionate about science. What is your passion? Why?

Discussion Questions:

“These are not the science nerds of movie fame. Many rocketry students confess that they are not academic superstars in every class. (History is an oft-cited problem.) Some are also artists, swimmers, musicians and — perhaps unknowingly — poets.”

How do the students in the article differ from stereotypical “science nerds”? Why do you think stereotypes exist? Is stereotyping ever productive? Have you ever been stereotyped? How did it make you feel? Why do you think that humans stereotype? What other professions/things do people incorrectly stereotype? How do you think we can break up/shake up stereotypes? What can we learn by being aware of our own tendencies to stereotype?

Small Group Discussion and Activity:

Divide into small groups. Hand out a card with a type of person that might be stereotyped to each group of students (for example, grandmothers, presidents, models, scientists). Each group should take their card and brainstorm a list of three things that might be stereotyped about this type of person. Once each group has a list of stereotypes the rest of the class should try to guess, from the list of stereotypes, what kind of person the group had on their card. After a reasonable amount of guesses the group should reveal what was on their card. Discuss as a class: Are these stereotypes valid? Can you think of a case that demonstrates one of these stereotypes to be false? What is the problem with stereotyping this group?