

S P R I N G 2 0 1 2



Common Ground



The Individual, the Community, and Nature

A unit rooted in raising self-awareness through **mindfulness activities**, cultivating a positive **learning community**, and connecting with nature through a class **indoor gardening experience**.

Written for the opening weeks of the school year, *Common Ground* as a unit is sensitive to the stresses 6th graders face as they transition to middle school. The main objective of this unit focuses on how individuals can positively contribute to a community. In order to achieve this objective, students are asked to reflect and share their own individuality with the class and to engage their self-awareness through mindfulness activities. As a class, we will cultivate an indoor garden, which will serve as “hook” for less motivated students and an overarching metaphor of our learning environment. The gardening experience will further serve our course objectives as we read Paul Fleischmann’s *Seedfolks* and evaluate to what extent an individual can impact a community. Students will transform themselves into a *Seedfolk* character, writing their own personal gardening vignette.

“Unquiet” Aspects Unit Take-Away Student “Hooks”

-Mindfulness activities that encourage self-awareness and offer holistic self-evaluation of the child’s well being
-Student-centered Indoor Gardening experience
- *I Am Jam* student self-introduction inspired by *Looking Like Me*

Interactive models and hands-on experiences activate students’ senses and heighten engagement.

Mindfulness can take place in any secondary Language Arts classroom.

A Hands-On Gardening Experience that connects children to plants and nature.
Social Interaction as a means of community building through varied gardening and reading groups

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Reading Experience

Unit Primary Text:
Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman

Supplementary Texts:
Looking Like Me by Walter Dean Myers
Egotripping by Nikki Giovanni
Home by Jeannie Baker
Grow: A Novel in Verse by Juanita Havill
Down to Earth: Garden Secrets! Garden Stories! Garden Projects You Can Do! by Michael Rosen

Mindfulness Resources:
Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children by Thich Nhat Hanh
Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens by Gina M. Biegel



