

Suggestions

Naturally someone could study the field of art for a lifetime and still never really touch the surface of all there is to learn. This theme should help your child narrow down certain areas that really inspire and excite them, so when they find that, let that guide the focus. If poetry doesn't excite your child, skip that part. If your child meets a local craftsman and is inspired by the trade, lean fully into that. The beauty of this theme is the many unique paths it can take!

Working through this theme:

Reference back to the introduction for the seven steps of working through a theme.

Print out the following pages if your child prefers a workbook feel for organization, or choose a designated notebook/place for them to organize their research and information.

Take your time. This is not a race and it has no designated ending. The journey and joy of learning is the important piece, and there is no timeline for that. This doesn't have to be something that happens every day - there will likely be surges where your child goes all in and does nothing else for days and then lulls for awhile. When you feel rushed or pressured, do that deschooling work to remind yourself that this is not about content or proof... it's about real life learning and the joy of discovery.

Areas of Focus

Art

Craftsmanship

Artisan

Creative
Innovator

Animalier

Sculpture

Mediums

Architecture

Beauty &
Fashion

Poetry

Folk Art
& Artists

Famous
Artists

Artists in Movies
& Pop-Culture

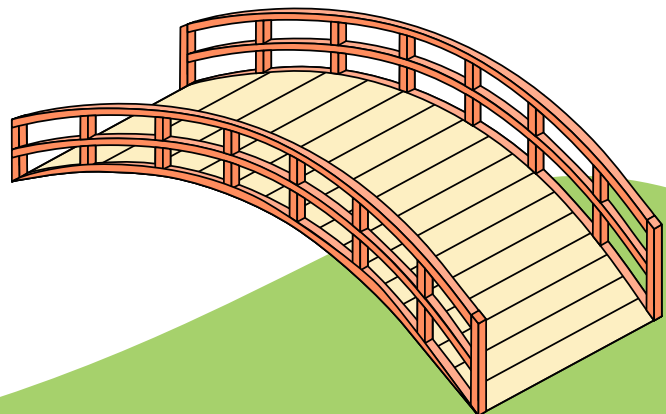
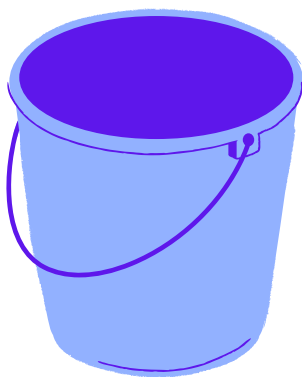
Your Natural Learner

5TH THROUGH 8TH GRADE

This group of curriculum themes for 5th-8th graders is an expansion into self-directed learning as a collaborative experience.

At this level, it's a slow removal of the scaffolding that you put up for them in earlier years. With each new year, you are removing that scaffolding little by little, guided by the abilities of your child.

The old belief is that children are an empty bucket, and your job is to fill that bucket with information.



Our new understanding is that children already contain everything they need to learn.

We construct scaffolding through building support systems in early years and as the children age and mature, we slowly remove these supports until they are capable of standing on their own.

Some elements of the support system are foundational and stay, but as your child matures they become responsible and capable of providing these elements for themselves.

Themes are a starting point.

Use the theme's title as a starting point. Write out your own key words. The point here is to explore variations and develop an understanding of nuance. This will open up new pathways, highlight unique relationships between topics that make this experience relevant for the learner, and consider different perspectives.

The goal at this stage is to practice following a spark of curiosity and intentionally investigating it.

Discernment & Decision-Making

Go through the categories provided and define your questions, big ideas, areas of high interest, what you'll cut out, etc.

You can follow the Scientific Method if that feels right. If your child is a visual learner you can use a white board for mind-mapping. Fit the experience to your child's learning styles and needs.

The goal at this stage is to support a learner in developing their discernment and decision-making. In the age of information overload, it's important to develop confidence in choosing a line of inquiry, following your curiosity, and trusting where it will take you to be worthwhile. Along the way there will be many opportunities for overwhelm or lack of interest, so a self-directed path is imperative.

There is no actual ending to learning.
Reject the old belief that learning looks like:

TOPIC INTRO → KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION → TEST → END

Options & Creating Opportunities for Oneself

Support your child in becoming aware of the abundance of options around them. Your learner is practicing being a member of the community, and accessing resources available to them. Some will be fairly simple to access, but as your learner grows and their investigations become more poignant and passionate be intentional about supporting them in creating opportunities for themselves.

Is there a professional they can email for an interview?

Is there a circulation desk that could support their search for information?

Might they volunteer at a non-profit that can give them first-hand access?

Get creative on where can you go.

It's not just about finding *more* information.

This on-going stage is about building a bridge between the decision-making (self-direction) and action. This is an invaluable opportunity for your child to begin to value their own curiosity, to the point where they are willing to work through feelings of awkwardness, overwhelm, uncertainty, etc.

Some Ideas:

- Books/library
- Online search engines
- Classes (Outschool, free/audit university online classes, local classes, etc.)
- Expert/mentor locally or within the family/friends
- Social media searches - hashtags/accounts
- Shows/movies/documentaries
- Posting surveys to professional forums
- Podcasts
- Museums/exhibits
- Customer service departments of relevant companies
- Volunteering anywhere relevant
- Famous experts on the topic (reach out via social media, follow them, etc.)

Assessment

Time to trust in the natural learning power and journey of the unique learner, and trust that as their parent, you are more than capable of providing that experience for (and with) them. Standardized tests and assessments do not tell us anything about the individual learner - they are designed solely to find norms in a large group.

When assessing, pay attention to their comfort and ability to find knowledge and practice their ability to seek out information, NOT on the content itself.

Examples of what you are looking for:

- Do they know how to word their searches to find what they are looking for?
- Are they comfortable with other adults in a mentor/expert role?
- Do they have a grasp of media literacy to weed out information from unreliable sources?
- Do they know how to ask questions that take the knowledge deeper (i.e. Why/How questions vs Who/What questions)?
- Do they prefer hands-on vs visual vs auditory information, and are they seeking out these resources to support their own way of learning?
- What is their organization and research process like?

These observations are what help you guide your pre-teen/teen in their learning experience to take more and more control over their own learning.

Your assessment focus is shifting from CONTENT to LEARNING SKILLS.

Sharing Knowledge and Contributing Insights

Remember that sharing is a CHOICE! When sharing is forced, it is PERFORMANCE, and that is not how natural learning works. Your child should have the option and tools/resources to share their knowledge in a way that makes sense to them if they desire to do so. Encourage self-expression by modeling it and being available for it when it naturally happens, but never pressure your learner. Checking things off a checklist is not the name of the game here. Remember that you can also model this by sharing what you've learned and specifically what excites you or feels meaningful to you.

Some ideas for how your child could share their knowledge if they wish:

- Compilation of research (This is not really a share for others, but more of a documentation process for themselves. If your child prefers to keep track of their work and save things they've discovered, find an organization system that works for this. Binders, folders, digital spaces, etc.)
- Social media
- Sharing with friends and family
- Homeschool groups/coops
- With other Bridge Academy peers!

Remember learning in
itself is the reward!