

Examples of sub-group activities or mini-courses made possible by the increased instructional time made available by integrating, for general education purposes, the study of math, science, language arts and social studies.

- Advanced math, writing, programming, media skills, etc. classes
- Garden
- Survey parent expertise and ways of utilizing this expertise
- Stage music, drama, dance performances
- Address a difficult school problem
- Publish a literary booklet
- Free reading
- Internet search competitions
- Life skills instruction
- Self-chosen projects for those with intense interest
- Art shows
- Community service
- Comic strip/graphic novel production
- Photographic documentation
- Contact foreign peers (many possible projects)
- Serious, structured physical activity
- Rehearsal/practice time
- Food preparation
- Occupational studies

Examples of Science-Related Groups (similar possibilities in other subjects):

- Local geology: Rocks, soil, typography
- Solar system: Model earth's axial tilt/seasons, moon phases
- Weather systems investigations
- Botany in the target area: Inventory/classify plants and weeds
- Biology: Protozoa in grass infusion, insects as systems
- Aerodynamics: Paper airplanes or kites as systems, build wind tunnel, etc.
- Electrical systems investigation—start with flashlight analysis, conductors, insulators, etc.

- Mechanical engineering: e.g. create a system to store and release energy.
- Home systems: Electrical, plumbing, sewage, trash, food supply, etc
- Chemistry in food preparation
- Physics of musical instruments

More from “How to fix the mess we call middle school” by Valerie Strauss, at:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/how-to-fix-the-mess-we-call-middle-school/2011/09/25/gIQAjCx1yK_blog.html

To which “dottie b” responded: “*I love the life skills idea! Here are some suggestions (might be a little dated. I'm not a spring chicken.)*”

- First aid and CPR
- Nutrition
- Basic cooking skills
- Basic sewing skills - sew a button, darn a sock (do people do that anymore?), hem
- How cars work
- Basic auto skills - change a tire, change oil, basic road emergencies - they don't need drivers' licenses for this
- Basic childcare skills - change a diaper, etc. Prep for babysitting and parenthood.
- Lawnmower care
- Basic plumbing skills
- Basic electrical skills
- Caulk a tub
- Paint a wall
- Keyboarding skills
- Mastering internet research
- Tree, bird, and plant identification
- Getting around town - where to get info on location and routes; learn where things are; reading a map; using GPS; planning a route
- Basic music skills in some instrument
- And lots and lots and lots of reading!

<p><i>Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.</i></p> <p>Chinese proverb</p>

John Holt: "We teachers like to think that we can transplant our own mental models into the minds of children by means of explanations. It can't be done." *How Children Learn*, Pitman, 1967.