

## Renaissance Program: Follow up Questions and Answers

**Q:** *What is “Buddy Bears” and is it an elective option for students?*

**A:** Buddy Bears: Buddy Bears is an activity which pairs middle school students with the lower grades for games, support, school spirit activities, etc. that has been run during the gen. ed. DSS time.

HLS Renaissance program has many activities that are similar, including former Renaissance who have gone on to interesting and engaging careers, and return as guest speakers. Additionally, we will begin our first-ever Renaissance Student Council- which will be working between grade levels to organize events, spirit days, celebrations, and related activities throughout the grade levels. This team will be an extra-curricular opportunity, but will benefit all Renaissance students at every grade level!

**Q:** *What is Future City? Is there a schedule? Does it take the place of the Capstone project?*

**A:** Future Cities is an international competition for students in grades 7-8. There is a specific timeline, many requirements, and a significant academic and time commitment. Students who commit to Future Cities programming will be given an assigned Capstone research topic that will correlate with the requirements for Future Cities’ research paper and related requirements. Students will follow the same capstone research paper requirements (From William and Mary CFGE Research Model) and related due dates. The final project for future cities may be used as the STEAM Fair entry for the teams.

**Q:** *When will the clubs and activities start?*

**A:** Most of the clubs will begin in September. The club advisors will send home information via Canvas, Newsletters, Email, or will put information on their websites. Additionally flyers may be sent home.

**Q:** *Why are some of the clubs for Middle School Only?*

**A:** Some of the clubs available to middle school students *only* will include the lower grades- for example, the literary publication will include student work from all grade levels. However, because of scheduling issues, our students are not able to participate in the leadership activities such as Video Announcements. We have worked to create these clubs so that the Renaissance students will have those opportunities.

**Q:** I realize that some activities are done as a grade level but for many classes there is still a huge separation between the ren kids and the general Ed kids. On the fifth grade trip last year, initially the parents were told that bunks would be intermixing everyone together. However, that did not happen. Will there be opportunities for helping to integrate the kids with the other kids at other times or will it not be until middle school?

**A:** We recognize the importance of students being able to be involved with their same-age peers socially and academically. Our Renaissance Academy is a “Program within a Program” and many of the shared academic opportunities do not begin until middle school- outside of specials. Field trips are a particular challenge- organization of activities, sleeping arrangements, groups, etc. often revolves around chaperones and the requirements of the accommodations and/or organizations. After school activities that are open to all students is an avenue to explore.

**Q:** Will the STEAM Fair projects have to be done at home, or will students have time in school?

**A:** Space is our biggest issue with regard to large scale projects. Some teachers will provide some time in class for students to work on research and the design process. Students may have to work at home and store projects at home. Each teacher will send out details about the STEAM Fair, and will communicate with parents if time will be allotted for more large-scale work.

**Q:**How successful are these kiddo’s in High School if they choose NOT to follow the IB Program Route?

**A:** Our students have many options for success in High School. The IB Program is one option, but there are Honors level classes, AP Classes (open to our students freshman year), Dual Enrollment, WESTMEC, and other considerations. Each school has niche programs which might interest your students, and extras like Marching Band, sports, drama, etc. should be looked at as well. Historically, our students are very successful regardless of the chosen track.

**Q:** Are there any long term goals/plans to further improve social/emotional support for Ren students?

**A:**Yes. We are building SEL lessons and activities to share with our students weekly, in all grade levels. Additionally, we will have Mindful Mondays for students in grades K-8 to explore a wide variety of techniques to help address the challenges many of our gifted kids face- heightened sensitivity, perfectionism, anxiety, BIG Emotions, etc. We will also be working with the counselors for elementary and middle school to offer classroom support and individual student support.

**Q:** We feel there were not enough field trips and not a single overnight trip for 6th grade last year. Trips give kids experience and education in a more interactive way. Is there any guidelines on the number of trips and where they should be going for Ren kids ?

**A:** At the middle school, many of the students participate in the music department trip to Disney in May, which costs about \$800. All field trips must have a curriculum-related component to them. There are also guidelines on the number of field trips, availability due to buses, costs, etc. Typically 6th grade (Renaissance and Gen Ed) no longer does an overnight field trip. The Renaissance 6th grade did a couple of years ago when the music department did not do their Disney trip. 7th and 8th grade was able to include 6th grade in our trip to Universal Studios. We do look for field trips that will meet the standards in a content area, where we can get buses, and that do not put a strain on parents financially.

**Q:** Do the kids get to compete in battle of the books?

**A:** Highland Lakes has not participated in battle of the books in a few years. At this time, there is no plan to resume this competition.

**Q:** Are there any plans for having Makerspace with 3 printers etc.? We have seen this in most gifted schools, this enhances science and STEAM education.

**A:** 7th and 8th graders do have access to a 3D printer on a limited basis. Currently, there are no spaces big enough to accommodate a MakerSpace on our campus. In addition, funding for the approved materials is up to the schools.

**Q:** Are there plans to cap class size/create 2 classes per grade level with larger enrollment?

**A:** Class sizes are limited. We have a wait list, and it is possible that an additional class could be added if enrollment increases significantly, though it can depend on the capacity at other locations.

**Q:** For Isearch have you considered picking a different research topic other than careers and trade. It often becomes challenging to find published literature to find information on careers, especially the nuanced areas our kids often pick. If it was a little bit broader it might make it easier to find information.

**A:** The topic for I-Search has been selected specifically for depth and rigor, so we will continue to ask for a career or trade (with an emphasis on career). In the past, requirements at different grade levels included multiple sources- two books, for example, and two journal articles. It is true that the niche areas our kiddos often choose do present challenges in finding *books* as sources, so we will adjust our requirements to a certain *number* of reliable sources; books, or journal articles etc. Teachers always help fill in the gaps of resources when there is a need. Students have more autonomy in topic selection after I-Search, in the 5th-8th grades.

**Q:** Are 2E kids accommodated in ren?

**A:** We implement any accommodations required through a student's IEP or 504 plans. 2E students are given the same opportunities for admission to and participation in the program based on staffing class sizes.

**Q:**Have you considered competing in the American Statistical Association's K-12 Data Visualization contest?

**A:** We will look into it! Thank you for the suggestion!

**Q:**How do teachers typically support students throughout the I-Search process, and what resources or strategies are most effective in helping students conduct their research?

**A:** The research projects will be completed almost entirely in the classroom. The process is important because it is built upon each year, with increasing rigor and additional requirements. The students will be walked through each step in the process. Students may need help choosing a career or trade for their topic, and we recommend that students start the process of narrowing down a topic by first looking at something they are interested in or passionate about. For example, a

**student who “loves” dolphins could be encouraged to find careers related to dolphins- anything from research, training, conservationist, etc. Help students remember that learning new tasks, including how to conduct effective research, is hard, but the outcome is amazing!**