BEANE PROCESS

Maranacook Community Middle School uses the Beane Process for thematic development of the curriculum. Each trimester, teams worked on the Beane Process, which is the way the middle school chooses curriculum topics, that are based on student interest.

- *Students start by asking questions about themselves, their community, and the world.*
- *These are grouped to determine possible themes.*
- *The team votes to determine the most popular theme. After the vote, students have time to ask more questions.*
- *Team teachers then match standards with the questions and create the core classes.*

Below is a description of each phase of the Beane Process:

PHASE ONE
First, group the kids (and any adults that will be working with them) into groups of between 4 and 8. Ask them (individually) to think about questions/concerns that they have about the world and to jot them down. Then ask them to share these questions/concerns with their group. Ask each group to choose someone to record (in question form) any questions/concerns that are shared by two or more members of the group. Once all of the questions/concerns are recorded (on large chart paper), ask them to post them nearby for future reference.

PHASE TWO
Ask the participants to individually think about attribute describing themselves. After they jot their ideas down, ask that they label each one with either a "K" for keep or a "C" for change. This information is not intended to be shared with the group. It is a way of having people shift their focus from the world to themselves. They do not post this information.

PHASE THREE
Ask them to individually think about questions/concerns that they have about themselves. Some of these may be reflected in the Keep/Change activity they just did, but they man not. Ask that there be a recorder who documents any questions/concerns that are shared by at least two people in the group. They should be phrased as questions.

PHASE FOUR
At this time, ask the groups to read their lists to see if there is any overlap in the questions about the world and questions about themselves. They should then generate general themes about those that overlap. For example, a question about divorce and one on war in Bosnia might fit into a them on Conflict.

PHASE FIVE
Ask each group to share their lists of themes with the whole group. Someone should record all of these on a chart in front of the whole group. Once all have been shared, then read through the list so everyone can hear all of the themes. Next, have them vote to narrow down choices of themes until one is chosen. A show of hands for voting is sufficient. Continue to vote until a theme is chosen. Let them know that the other themes will still be options for later in the year. You are simply starting with the theme that is selected at that time.

PHASE SIX
Ask the kids for input on what kinds of activities they would like to do around the theme. You can do this by having the small groups brainstorm and then share their ideas with the whole group. Often some of the best ideas for activities are thought of as a result of this sharing.

PHASE SEVEN
The adults (and sometimes small groups of students) then meet to plan the courses based on the themes, the activities and teacher strengths and interests. It usually takes several weeks of planning and collecting resources before teaching the unit. However, at this point, older students could become involved in the planning similar to the Foxfire approach.

*You may want to spread the entire process out over two or three mornings so that the kids don't get too overwhelmed.

**This process is based on the model developed by James Beane.