



## ***Algernon's Exercise Regimen***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
Language Arts Classes, grades 6-8

**Keywords:** *Flowers for Algernon*, kinesthetic classroom, exercise, layered curriculum, fiction, The Walking Classroom, podcasts,

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** *Flowers for Algernon* is a well-loved, classic middle school story that contains many topics that are still current for today's adolescents. One of the pervasive topics covered in this story is enhancing human intelligence. In this unit students will improve their knowledge of fictional elements, while increasing the amount of time they move in the classroom. The students will learn new material, complete assessments and create projects by moving around the room, or in a contained outside area, where the content will be taught. The lesson and activities in this unit contain pre-assessments, interactive quizzes, and review material for the fiction curriculum. Included in this unit are active teaching strategies and lessons for the kinesthetic classroom, along with movement-driven lessons for the short story version of *Flowers for Algernon* that can be adapted to any novel study. Finally, the culminating task at the end of this unit includes research project ideas that allow students to analyze real word issues that connect to the themes in the novel. Therefore, teachers can leverage this unit to teach fiction in a kinesthetic classroom or simply utilize the project sheets in the appendices for the short story version of *Flowers for Algernon* or any other story.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year in to 64 students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade honors language arts classes.*

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## **Algernon's Exercise Regimen**

*Molly McCarthy*

### **Overview**

In the last decade obesity rates as a nation has risen in the United States. In 2012, more than one third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese (1). Because heart disease is the number one killer in the United States there needs to be a significant shift in the way we eat and exercise. As educators we do have the ability to make a drastic change in the amount our students are moving in the day during transitions, Healthy Kids (outside recess), and classroom instruction. Through "Exercise and the Brain" CTI seminar meetings I have learned that exercise is not exclusively advantageous for lowering/combating childhood obesity rates, but exercise also aides our students' developing brains.

The objectives of this unit are twofold. First, students will exercise during language arts instruction, during reading and comprehension activities. Second, students will research topics regarding brain disorders for a final project.

### **School Background**

Piedmont IB Middle School is a 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school that resides just outside the city of Charlotte, NC on Central Ave. The urban atmosphere allows us to take field trips in and around the uptown area. It is necessary for me to describe both my classroom setting and also the surrounding areas in order for other teachers to understand the space I will be using for these lessons. First, behind our school is an open field that contains a track, a basketball hoop (with no court), and a smaller grass area where classroom trailers were formally located. We also have a small, outdoor courtyard in the middle of the school (that tends to carry an echo into nearby classrooms). I will be using the outdoor areas for the activities and creating a kinesthetic classroom indoors for the activities in this curriculum unit.

I am currently working towards establishing a kinesthetic classroom by preparing a

DonorsChoose project that consists of adding adjustable standing tables, several elliptical desk machines, and ergonomic balance chairs. Currently, I use a class set of Bouncy Bands, small bands made from recycled tire and PVC pipes that attach to the students' desk allowing them to move their legs without getting out of their seats. After I received these through a DonorsChoose project last year I noticed that a majority of my students used the bands to help them focus on lessons, take notes and complete tests. Therefore, my next goal is to create stations of standing desks, Bouncy Band desks and ergonomic chairs for the students to choose from.

Demographically, Piedmont IB serves a very diverse group of students consisting of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Caucasians. Specifically, I teach a diverse group of 115 students that enter sixth grade with varied reading levels and content knowledge. My schedule includes four language arts classes (two standard and two honors), a planning block, lunch and Healthy Kid time, as well as an academic enrichment block that consists of rotating developmental classes. My core classes have approximately 29 students per class and for the most part students who have scored a 3, 4, or 5 on the EOG in math and reading (A small percentage of students scored a 1 or a 2 on their 2015 EOG's). Because Piedmont IB is a type of magnet school, our students are in danger of being exited from the program if they fail one of their core classes, do not complete their community and service requirements or exhibit behavior problems. Fundamentally, Piedmont students need to test to get into the school then maintain academic and behavioral performance to continue.

## **Rationale**

Exercise has long been a very important aspect of my personal life. Furthermore, physical education classe was and still is integral to schools in New York State, while I was growing up. When I moved to Charlotte, I was shocked to find that students only participated in physical education for a couple of months every other day. However, because it is the south and warmer than up north CMS go outside every day for twenty-five minutes during Healthy Kids (which we did not get to do in Buffalo, NY). In my experience, I continue to feel that the health of our students is not a top priority in education as it absolutely should be. Therefore, I will create a kinesthetic classroom that will allow my students to move around to learn new content, take breaks, transition, and also to educate them on the importance of exercise. I am creating this unit in order to get my students up and moving around while still learning content that is essential to their language arts training.

During my first year of teaching I attended a P.E.A.K. professional development class

(2) that specialized in classroom management strategies. After the first half hour, I was hooked in to the idea of allowing children to move while learning. The memorization activities, along with getting the kids out of their seats to share their responses and play games astounded me. One of the workshops I attended demonstrated the act of taking notes as well as working in groups all while standing and moving around the room. Also, many of the teachers that attended P.E.A.K. expressed their guarantee of reduced behavior problems in the classroom because the students were able to move in a structured manner without getting in trouble. After the third session, I had developed and deployed several strategies in my classroom, realizing that the music portion of transitions was my specialty. Basically, I turn on Pandora (Vitamin String Quartet, Instrumental Hip-Hop, or the Temptations radio stations) as the students move from their seats to get a worksheet, share their journal, or work in a group. When it is time for the next set of instructions, I turn the music off signaling to the students that it is time to pay attention to the teacher. Fortunately, I had a supportive administration that allowed me to try all these new ideas even if it meant “a nontraditional” type of classroom with noise and activity.

I am continually developing additional creative ways to get the kids out of their seats to learn. Most of the movement in my classroom came in the form of “around the room notes,” standing on the chairs to clap out and signal new words, and transitioning from one activity to the next (getting up to get papers, turn things in, share journal entries, etc.). Not surprisingly, I frequently worried during observations that my administrators would view my classroom as “chaotic” and not understand why my kids were moving around so much. Thus far, I have received exclusively good feedback from my observers indicating that it was refreshing to see the kids getting excited to take notes, share their ideas, and learn new words. Nevertheless, I found that students were restless during the times they had to be in their seats.

There are many ways to create a kinesthetic classroom for my 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Thus far I have been reading literature to help me transform my classroom into a kinesthetic classroom, and reaching out to people who may help me acquire standing desks for my classroom. I am also open to placing a few treadmills, exercise equipment, foot rest pedals, etc., in my classroom to get my kids moving while they learn, read, and take assessments. I will create “brain breaks,” in which the kids take an actual break from the content and complete some sort of simple exercise movement for approximately two to three minutes at a break point in the 55-minute class. I plan on using [www.gonoodle.com](http://www.gonoodle.com) or [www.brain-breaks.com](http://www.brain-breaks.com) (4). An additional way to create a kinesthetic classroom is to prepare the brain for learning, where students participate in exercise before they enter the classroom. Unfortunately having students exercise before they begin the lessons in my classroom would prove to be logically impossible, because they have other classes before

mine.

Finally, the most effective way to incorporate movement is through content. Currently I use specific activity when we learn new vocabulary words (stem/root words) where the students stand up on their chairs, clap and create a sign for each stem. After we run through this sequence a few times the students then face the back to determine if they know the definition. Ultimately, I plan to incorporate more of these types of active learning strategies that go beyond vocabulary words in language arts as described below in this curriculum unit.

## **Objectives**

While sitting at one of our CTI seminar meetings back in May, our professor, Barbara Lom, was explaining scientific experiments conducted with mice. At that point I was reminded of a novel I read in middle school, *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes, that told the story of a man, a mouse and improving brain function via a new surgery. Because I am a language arts teacher, I was eager to connect this memorable story with modern science. The unit described here incorporates literacy and research skills, in ways that allow middle school students to participate in their own study of the effect of exercise on the brain.

Specifically the unit addresses the following:

- Close reading strategies, specifically SQ3R and Signposts (5)
- Fiction vocabulary (inference, plot, theme, conflict, characterization, point of view).
- Content vocabulary (words used within the short story version of “Flowers for Algernon” and research articles).
- Research skills: primary and secondary sources, creating a works cited page, using keywords to search a database for articles.
- Writing a short, research essay.
- Participating in exercise routines within the classroom for brain breaks and to learn and review content.

All of these skills correlate directly with Common Core standards for language arts and some touch physical education standards as well. During the lessons in this unit, students will be working in pairs, groups and/or individually to accomplish each task. Largely, students will choose to work alone, with a partner, or in a group. I will provide choices for many of the activities because some students tend to work better when they are by themselves, while others need the assistance and guidance of a partner or group of students. The concept of “choice” will give students ownership of their learning and

motivation to complete the tasks in their unique ways. Similarly, I will allow students to select from a variety of topics in the research portion of this unit. Many of my students will generate independently creative ideas for their research product. It is important to note that this particular unit allows students who are usually labeled as “behavioral problems” the opportunity to succeed because they are able to move around the classroom and learn. Although I will encourage choice and freedom, the written portion of the research assignment will include criteria that students will be required to fulfill. The objectives emphasized in the unit:

1. Define the fiction terms: plot, characterization, conflict, and theme
2. Apply the plot stages (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution/denouement) to a short story
3. Edit grammar and spelling errors within the text of “Flowers for Algernon”
4. Demonstrate the types of conflict using nonverbal signals
5. Utilize close reading strategies to make inferences about the characters in the short story “Flowers for Algernon”
6. Define complex words within a short story
7. Compare and contrast the dynamic and static characters in literature
8. Research a current issue that emphasizes medical complications of the brain
9. Evaluate the researched issue and connect it to “Flowers for Algernon”

## **Teaching Strategies**

### **Kinesthetic Content (6)**

#### *Spin to Win*

This strategy will be used to in the pre-assessment of the whole fiction unit. Students will pick a partner or work by themselves to determine the answer to several multiple choice questions. This activity requires several small balls (a few less than the amount of groups you have in the class), a large area in the center of your room, and four index cards per group, labeled A, B, C, and D to match up with the questions and answers. See lesson #1 for specific directions to this activity.

#### *Definition Clap-Out*

I have been using this strategy with vocabulary words since 2014. My students always look forward to our clap-outs because they get to stand on chairs and act silly with me. This activity requires chairs, a projector and a list of the words. See lesson #2 for this activity.

#### *Plotting to Diagram*

After introducing students to the literary terms for the unit, students will use this strategy to move to positions that determine the line of plot they have on their card. This activity requires index cards, plot stages from fairytales or common stories, and a large area to move around. See lesson #3 for this activity.

### *Skits*

Students present their skits to the class to show their knowledge of plot, characterization, narrator, and conflict. This activity requires several grab bag items, and an oral presentation rubric. See lesson #4 for this activity.

### *Interactive Quiz*

This is no ordinary pop quiz, instead it allows students to work as a group to help each other answer every question correctly. This type of quiz also incorporates movement and exercise while completing a formal assessment. Lesson #5 is a detailed description of how to create a successful interactive quiz.

### *Review Braveheart (outside)*

After going to Camp Thunderbird for an overnight field trip with my 6<sup>th</sup> graders I watched as they played a really cool game of “Braveheart.” The start of this game has two groups on either side of an open field. When the instructor yells “Go!” The students run at each other and find an “enemy” to play rock-paper-scissors with. The loser of the game has to pretend to die a gruesome death, while the winner runs back to their side. We will play a review game using this setup. See lesson #6 for specific directions

### *Scavenger Hunt (outside)*

Students will be outside in the back of the school finding answers to scattered questions around the field. Students will only have one class period (55 minutes) to complete this assessment. Questions to use in conjunction with the activity will can be found in the Appendix section. See lesson #7 for more information on implementation.

### *Walking Classroom*

“The Walking Classroom” (7) is an initiative that aides in the fight against childhood obesity by allowing students to learn while walking and listening to podcasts. Because it is a program that costs money for specific listening devices and headphones, I decided to create my own walking classroom. This activity requires an outdoor area for the students to walk around, a device to listen to and questions associated with each reading passage. See lesson #8 for this activity to apply to numerous pieces of literature.

### *“Flowers for Algernon” Reading and Activity Ideas*

One of my favorite units in language arts in 6<sup>th</sup> grade is fiction. One way we teach fiction terms, vocabulary and concepts is through our novel study. In this unit students pick a book they would enjoy reading as a class and we spend about a month and a half reading the novel and learning the fiction terms. We also spend a lot of time in this unit working on reading strategies and comprehension. Therefore, I have included in this unit lessons to get the kids up and moving, while learning content.

Because I want to continue using a novel study in my curriculum, since it is my students' favorite part of 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts, I will extend the fiction unit into our research unit. The novel, *Flowers for Algernon* has been widely used in language arts classrooms since I attended middle school. Unfortunately, this novel is more appropriate for an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reader because of its length and references to sexuality. Fortunately, a shorter and cleaner version of the original book can be found in the author's short story that will challenge some of my 6<sup>th</sup> graders reading abilities. I will be piloting this unit in conjunction with the fiction unit in my honors level sixth grade class.

The short story "Flowers for Algernon"(8) describes a mentally handicapped man, Charlie Gordon who is given the chance to participate in a surgery that will essentially raise his intelligence and triple his IQ based on promising results with mice. Enter Algernon, a small mouse that Charlie despises because he wins every time at a maze test that they must both perform for the doctors. After the surgery is successfully completed, Charlie begins to befriend the small mouse when he realizes that the mouse is a direct parallel to him (Algernon had the same surgery as Charlie and ended up getting smarter). Through diary entries, Charlie's grammar and vocabulary slowly improve, which becomes very obvious to the reader. Soon enough, Charlie triples his IQ and realizes that many of the men he worked with at the plant viciously made fun of him when he was "slower."

Charlie also starts to fall in love with his teacher Mrs. Kinnian from his weekly interactions in her class. Unfortunately this "feel good" effect ends pretty quickly for readers when they realize that Algernon's intelligence starts to decline rapidly. When Charlie finds out about Algernon, he works quickly to create a research report for what went wrong with his surgery miracle. The story's falling action includes the death of Algernon and the decline of both Charlie's intellectual and emotional well-being. The story ends with Charlie leaving a note to Mrs. Killian asking her to keep with the tradition of putting flowers on Algernon's grave in the backyard.

This short story is a heavy hitter on the emotions of the reader with the lamenting of



both Algernon's passing and Charlie's declining state, attributes that have made it a well-used and well-loved story by middle school teachers and readers. Additionally, at moments in the story the reader empathizes with Charlie as he is bullied by coworkers, due to his limited intelligence and clumsiness. Consequently, this story is well-suited for middle school students who need to understand the importance of empathy and sticking up for those people who do not have the ability to stick up for themselves.

My goal is to incorporate movement into our lessons and also involving my students in a "walking classroom." This term refers to students walking at the same time as learning a lesson or listening to an audiobook or podcast (5). My plan is to gather enough iPods, iPhones, and devices to allow all of my students the ability to listen to the short story while walking around our school's track. I will assess my students as they walk and read by having checkpoints around the field that students will move to when they finish reading a specific entry from Charlie's journal. Obviously the checkpoints will be located at different parts of the field and track, to encourage students to move quickly to each checkpoint to answer the reading comprehension questions. Not only will the students have to get through the checkpoints quickly, but they must also get the answer correct in order to move to the next checkpoint. These checkpoints will include a variety of formatted questions. For example, after students read journal entry #2 they must find checkpoint #2 and answer a short answer question and write it down on a piece of paper. Then, after students read journal entry #3 they must find checkpoint #3 on the field and answer a true/false, multiple choice or matching question.

A particularly attractive feature of the short story "Flowers for Algernon" is that journal entries at the beginning and end contain many spelling and grammatical errors that are ripe for an activity, where students are responsible for correcting an entire journal entry using their knowledge of spelling and grammar.

After students read their novels in our fiction unit they usually complete a Layered Curriculum project where they ultimately evaluate an important theme/topic that was evident in the novel. For "Flowers for Algernon," my students will research a disorder in the brain, or ways to improve brain function without the need for surgery. For example, students who have a relative with Alzheimer's disease, complete their research paper on how Alzheimer's affects brain function, or a student could research psychologists use of ink blot tests, like those Charlie participates in before his surgery. There are a multitude of topics in the story that can readily link to a research paper on the brain, such as using mice in neuroscience research, mental retardation, and brain mapping.

The research process is new to most 6<sup>th</sup> graders; they have little experience

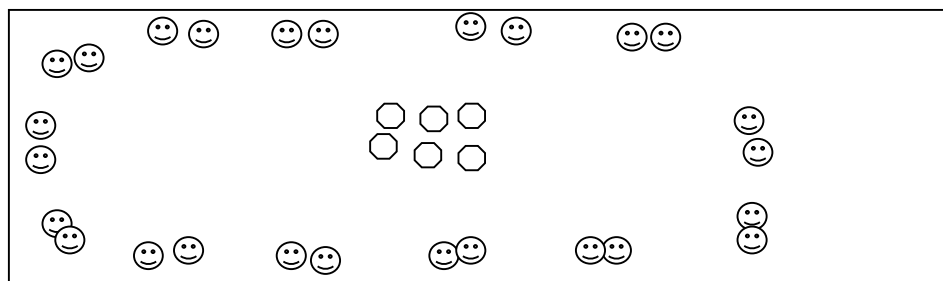
researching topics and giving credit to existing research. I will teach students how to use primary sources, create in-text citations, and create a works cited page and reinforce these skills in their assignment. I will provide students with a list of possible topics and appropriate starting articles and resources to help them initiate their research. I will always give those students who want to research something “not on the list,” the opportunity to do so with my permission. A challenge for this portion of the project will be the ability to find articles and research papers suitable for students in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The tool Newsela, provides articles that can be adjusted to a student’s Lexile level.

### Classroom Activities for Fiction Terms

#### Activity One: Spin to Win Pre-Assessment

Pre-assessments are imperative to assess student knowledge of fiction before teaching the content, so that we are not wasting class time on terms and information that they already know. Students will move around while pre-assessing their knowledge of fiction terms.

1. Prepare approximately 15 packs of four index cards labeled: A, B, C, D, or ask students to create their own cards.
2. Arrange the classroom to create an open area in the middle and a place for your students to stand. The diagram below illustrates the room setup, denoting placement of small balls (octagons) and pairs of students (smiley faces). It is important to use fewer balls than pairs of students.



3. Each pair of students needs a set of the four answer index cards (A, B, C, D).
4. Project the first fiction question. Example: “Which plot stage introduces the characters and setting?” A) Rising Action B) Climax C) Exposition D) Resolution. Give students approximately 20 seconds to read and discuss the question and answer.
5. When students know the correct answer they will link arms with their partner and turn around five times in a circle with the correct answer card in hand. One of the students then goes to the middle to grab a ball and bring it back to the partner.

6. If a pair has the right answer in hand and a ball they receive two points. If they have the right answer, but no ball they get one point and if they have the wrong answer (regardless of whether they have the ball or not) they receive no points.

Note: For each question, tally how many pairs got the question right, so that data can inform the content that needs to be reviewed in future activities.

### Activity Two: Vocabulary Clap-Out

Vocabulary Clap-Out activity can be applied to any vocabulary words that students need to remember.

1. Have students stand on their chair safely or stand next to their desk. The teacher may stand on a chair in the front of the room, so all kids can see her motions.
2. The teacher creatively makes hand gestures to accompany the word. The teacher models the clap, word, signal and definition. It also helps to change the tone and fluctuation of your voice for each word.  
EXAMPLE: Exposition-sets up the story (characters and setting). When you model this you clap your hands while you say exposition and find a silly and fun way to say “sets up the story...CHARACTERS AND SETTING!” While you say “characters and setting” make hand gestures to relate to the word. For instance, I may use my hands to frame my face for character and then with my fingers outline the shape of a house.
3. After the teacher drills through the words, ask the students to face the back of the room. This time around, the teacher will clap the word and the students will say the definition and create the hand signals, allowing the teacher to determine which words need more clap-out time.

### Activity Three: Plotting to Diagram

After going through definitions and examples of plot stages, students will move about the room to read sections of sample stories to determine which plot stage best fits. It is best to use stories that the students are familiar with, but obviously there will be some educated guesses within the group if they do not know the story.

1. Select familiar stories from common fairy tales, popular children’s books, nursery rhymes and/or Disney movies. For each story, type up each plot stage, cut them out and paste them around the room (scatter the plot stages, so that students do not see a pattern).

EXAMPLE: *Cinderella*

Exposition- A girl lives with both her stepmother and stepsisters, who treat her as a servant by giving her all chores to do in the house

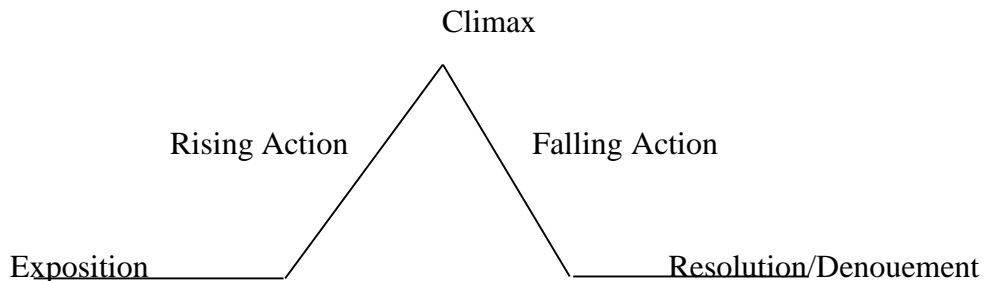
Rising Action- Cinderella is not allowed to go to the ball and is locked in a room, while the other two sisters get to attend (there are other parts of the rising action from this fairy tale you can add).

Climax- Cinderella leaves a glass slipper on the stairs that the prince finds.

Falling Action- Prince Charming goes from house to house looking for the owner of the glass slipper and finds that Cinderella is the match.

Resolution- Prince Charming and Cinderella get married

2. Students match each plot stage with the plot diagram on their paper (see below for an example). You could also challenge the students by selecting only a few plot stages from the stories to put around the room.
3. I suggest selecting more than three stories (total: 12 fairy tale plot stages) to put around the room to keep the students moving and busy.



#### Activity Four: Plot Skits

Students use objects to create a plot skit for their classmates.

1. Collect simple and common objects such as a paint brush, deck of cards, baseball, sunglasses, etc. and place them in a bag or box
2. Give students the opportunity to form groups of 3-5 or assign groups. Find random objects around your house or at school.
3. Each group blindly selects two objects from the bag.
4. Using the objects from the bag the group has to come up with a story that includes all five plot stages, a conflict, characters, and a narrator.
5. Students write out a summary of their story that includes the description of all five plot stages, characters, the main conflict and the theme. Have students write out a script for the play that students will turn in before performing in front of the class.

6. Groups then rehearse and perform their plot skit for the class. The presentation rubric below is scored by the teachers as the groups present.

| <b>Assessment</b>                 | <b>Totally RAD</b> | <b>Yah it was COOL</b> | <b>BOGUS dude</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Script                            | 3                  | 2                      | 1                 |
| Use of props                      | 3                  | 2                      | 1                 |
| Plot stages evident               | 3                  | 2                      | 1                 |
| Voice projection                  | 3                  | 2                      | 1                 |
| Overall contribution to the group | 3                  | 2                      | 1                 |

#### Activity Five: Interactive Quiz

The interactive quiz allows students to prep for a formal test that involves vocabulary words, definitions and concepts for any unit of study. I usually start by making the students think they are taking a pop quiz that will be counted for a grade involving the terms that we have already studied for the fiction unit.

1. Put up all of the fiction terms that the students have learned so far, include a plot diagram for the stages of plot and no definition for the terms. Explain to students that they will only have four minutes to fill in all vocabulary terms and the plot diagram.
2. After four minutes explain to the students that they now have five minutes to leave their paper on their desk, get up and look at anyone else's paper in the room. If they find a word that they think has the correct definition they can go back to their paper and write it down. Students are not allowed to touch other students' papers and can only fill in their own paper.
3. After a few minutes (or when students sit down because they think they have all of the terms completed and accurate) stop the timer.
4. Students then return to their seats and circle all of the terms that they did not know. Go through the answers and students are now aware of which terms they will need to study for the formal assessment.
5. Reveal that this quiz does not count toward a grade.

#### Activity Six: Review Braveheart

This optional activity could take the place of an interactive quiz or could be used in addition to the interactive quiz, before test day. Students need an open outdoor area to complete this game.

1. The teacher prepares an even number of questions on plot stages, conflict, setting, characterization, point of view, etc. See Appendix 2 for question ideas.
2. Students can be grouped into two teams. One team stands on one side of a field and the other team stands on the opposite end of the field.
3. Each team chooses a team name and a battle cry (simply to make the game much more interactive and fun).
4. Choose one team to give the question. Let them read the question, discuss the answer, then share the correct answer with the teacher quietly and secretly (if they are totally stuck, then obviously the teacher can help them reach the correct answer). Then when the teacher shouts “BRAVEHEART,” the two groups run at each other and each chooses an opponent (student from the opposite team). Student A asks Student B the question, Student B must whisper the answer into Student A’s ear. If Student B gets the answer wrong they must fake a terrible, horrible death and lay on the field. If the student gets the answer correct they need to run back to their side where they perform a victory dance.
5. The instructor tallies how many students were victorious in each question battle.
6. The team with the most victorious soldiers at the end of the game is declared the winner.

#### Activity Seven: Scavenger Hunt

Teachers can use this activity in place of Review Braveheart, since it is setup similarly.

1. Cut and paste the questions in Appendix 2 onto index cards. You may want to enlarge the size of the text for students to read more clearly. On the question cards write a letter that corresponds to each letter of the secret word on the answer sheet in Figure 4. You can create your own secret word or use the one in Appendix 3, “Fantastic Fiction.” If you are using “Fantastic Fiction” then you should have letters on 16 of the 23 cards.
2. Punch a hole in the upper right or left corner of the index card and tie string around the hole.
3. Find an open area in or around the school where you can hang the cards for the students to safely navigate.
4. Give each student an answer sheet (Appendix 3). Instruct the students to work their way around the area to find question cards and write down their answers on the sheet provided, along with the letter (if there is one) from the cards.

5. The rest of the directions for this activity can be found on the answer sheet provided.

## Activity Eight: Walking Classroom

This activity is setup similarly to the scavenger hunt. As stated in activity seven, you will need to prepare questions for each journal entry or several journal entries from “Flowers for Algernon,” depending on how you would like to chunk the readings. Students will need a device and headphones to listen to the podcast version of “Flowers for Algernon.” Note: If students forget to bring headphones they can always put the device on speaker to hear it.

1. Create questions that you would like your students to think about while reading the journal entries in “Flowers for Algernon.” The questions need to be posted around the track area for students to find and answer. An alternative to positioning the questions around the track is simply giving the students a worksheet with all of the questions attached, or posted on any online platform like Google Classroom.
2. While students listen to the podcast version of “Flowers for Algernon” they will be walking around the track or any open area. It is important to give the students a worksheet that indicates the time on the audio that they need to press pause to answer each question.
3. If the weather is inclement then students can always walk around the classroom in a circle or designated pattern. As long as they are up, moving around then the exercise portion of this activity is fulfilled.
4. Creativity with your questions allows students to research using their devices. For example, ink blot tests are introduced in the beginning of the text. Give the students a question where they research the purpose of ink blot tests, how they are used, and any other interesting information that they find about these tests.
5. Hold a classroom or group discussion the next day regarding the questions you asked the students to explore. Encourage students to get up and discuss their findings with the classmate that is the furthest from his/her desk then have them report out to the rest of the class when time has elapsed.

## Activity Nine: “Flowers for Algernon” Layered Curriculum Project

Layered Curriculum differentiates final assessment for novel study or short story projects. The project sheet that is used in conjunction with this lesson is located in Appendix 4. The project sheet can be adjusted to fit any novel or short story that you are teaching in your classroom.

1. Before reading the short story “Flowers for Algernon” inform students that they will need to collect 10-15 vocabulary words they encounter in the story. The vocabulary list



should only include words that the students do not know the definition to, or words that they do not use in every day conversation.

2. After reading and/or listening to the entire story “Flowers for Algernon,” students will be working their way through the Layered Curriculum Project Sheet (Appendix 4).

3. Part A is verbally assessed by the teacher. Therefore, as the teacher you can choose which words/elements you want to assess for each student. For the vocabulary and elements/comprehension section, choose five out of the fifteen words/elements the student has a study aid for, and ask them the definition or answer. If they correctly identify all five words/elements they earn all of the points possible.

4. The beauty behind layered curriculum is that you can allow your students to continue to be assessed if they do not get all of the points possible on the first round. It is up to the teacher how many attempts the students will receive.

5. Part B is the project portion where students choose the project(s) they want to complete. The teacher can adjust the point values of each activity as they see fit.

6. The research part of this project (Part C) utilizes the students’ prior knowledge of researching skills, completing a works cited page, and including in-text citations in a paper. Without these skills, students will not be able to fulfill the requirements in this section. The students will again be able to choose the topic that interests them the most and draft a short research essay that addresses one of the topics/prompts/questions located on the sheet. Students will need the computer and the internet in order to complete their research.

7. Teachers can determine if they want students to share their Part B and/or Part C portions of the projects with the class when they are finished. I know most students are very proud of the work they complete this rigorous project, so I encourage you to let them present.

## **Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards**

Literacy R.L 6.3- Describe the plot of a story and how the conflict is resolved.

Literacy R.L 6.7- Comparing and contrasting listening to the audio version of “Flowers for Algernon” while exercising with reading the visual text while sitting stationary.

Literacy R.L 6.10- Reading complex texts that will require slight scaffolding for deficient readers.

Literacy R.I 6.4- Determining the meaning of several new vocabulary words in the short story “Flowers for Algernon”

Literacy R.I 6.8- Evaluate the arguments and claims in nonfiction articles.

Literacy W 6.1- Create a research paper that contains a strong argument with specific reasons and evidence to support the claim. Students will also cite credible sources and utilize the information within their essay.

Literacy W 6.5- Students will peer edit each other’s research paper and will have their instructor review their rough drafts with them.

Literacy W 6.8- Students will quote or paraphrase information from credible sources and use in-text citations and a Works Cited page to accurately give credit to the authors of the articles.

Literacy S.L 6.4- Students will present their plot skits using adequate volume and clear pronunciation.

Literacy L 6.2- Identify misspellings and incorrect punctuation in the journal entries in the short story “Flowers for Algernon.”

## Appendix 2

### Fiction Review Questions

Jake struggled with the controls on the machine. He had to make the repair. On Earth, a mechanical failure like this would not be an issue. Here, however, the failure could be devastating. If he couldn't fix the valve, poisonous gases would leak into the ship. Everyone would be knocked out within hours.

1. When does the action take place?
2. Where does the action take place?
3. In the \_\_\_\_\_ plot stage the writer sets up the conflict
4. Which type of conflict does the story exemplify: MAN VS. \_\_\_\_\_  
Megan wants to get a real job, like working at a shoe store; her parents want her to babysit her brother.
5. Which type of conflict does the story exemplify? MAN VS. \_\_\_\_\_  
Jamal was parched and knew he had to find water. He had been lost in the Las Vegas desert for two days, and his lips were so cracked that they could crumble.
6. Which type of conflict does the story exemplify? MAN VS. \_\_\_\_\_  
Hester was sentenced to walk the stage and have old food thrown at her because of her slip-up. One day, she would show the town that she was innocent of the charge brought against her.
7. T or F is the statement is an example of foreshadowing?  
A) "Holy Moly, don't open that door! Who knows what could be behind it?"  
B) "Oddly enough, Miki and Dominique were the only children walking into the house of horrors."  
C) "There's nothing like feeling free and running in the fields," Ashley thought to herself.
8. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the main struggle of the story.
9. When you make a logical guess about a character based on details in the text and your own knowledge and experience the term is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
10. This stage shows the story's outcome: \_\_\_\_\_
11. The \_\_\_\_\_ stage introduces the setting and characters
12. At this stage the tension of the conflict is relieved: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Which type of conflict is each example, EXTERNAL or INTERNAL?
- A) A cloud of smoke forced the woman to find another way out of the building: \_\_\_\_\_
  - B) Andy wondered if he should finish his essay that was due the next day or go to football practice: \_\_\_\_\_
  - C) Sanyah shot back at Anaiya yelling, "You can't hurt me with your words you bully!" \_\_\_\_\_
14. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the turning point in the story
15. \_\_\_\_\_ gets the reader to begin predicting what will come next in the sequence of events.
16. The \_\_\_\_\_ introduces obstacles that make the conflict more complicated.
17. This is the stage where the plot thickens. \_\_\_\_\_
18. The \_\_\_\_\_ reveals the outcome of the story's climax.
19. WHAT PLOT STAGE DOES THIS REPRESENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rufus the dog was sniffing along the trail as usual. This was a daily routine that he thoroughly enjoyed
20. WHAT PLOT STAGE DOES THIS REPRESENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
"It's going to be fine," Colin said. "You made a mistake and you didn't take anything we will bring the money back...uh oh!" He gasped. The money he left on the table was gone.
21. Hints about things that will happen later on is called \_\_\_\_\_
22. WHAT PLOT STAGE DOES THIS REPRESENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
After the last of The Titanic's life boats had slipped beneath the water, Rose stood in astonishment of the events that occurred. Soon it would be daylight, and she would be rescued.
23. WHAT PLOT STAGE DOES THIS REPRESENT: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zoe had to keep running, even though she could barely breathe. This was her chance to show her friends that she really is the fastest girl in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

### Appendix 3

#### L.A Scavenger Hunt

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Block: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Race around the field to find the answers to all 25 questions with your group. **ALL answers must be written on this sheet.** If you see a letter on the bottom of an index card write the letter on the dash marks under the secret word box below. Once you have answered all questions and unscrambled the secret word, kick the ball into the goal, hand your answer sheet to your teacher. The first three students to get all answers correct a prize! GOOD LUCK ☺

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7.A) \_\_\_\_\_  
B) \_\_\_\_\_  
C) \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
- 13.A) \_\_\_\_\_  
B) \_\_\_\_\_  
C) \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_
16. \_\_\_\_\_
17. \_\_\_\_\_
18. \_\_\_\_\_
19. \_\_\_\_\_
20. \_\_\_\_\_
21. \_\_\_\_\_
22. \_\_\_\_\_
23. \_\_\_\_\_

**SECRET WORD**

|             |
|-------------|
| SECRET WORD |
| -----       |

## Appendix 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date \_\_\_\_\_ "Flowers for Algernon" layers sheet

**A Layer (50 points possible).** *You will be verbally assessed for each activity in this layer that you choose to complete. Complete at least one activity from each of the A level areas below.* You must complete this layer before moving on to the next.

| <b>Earned</b> | <b><u>Vocabulary</u></b>  | <b>Points Possible</b> | <b>Points</b> |
|---------------|---|------------------------|---------------|
|               | 1. Choose 15 words from the story that you do not know, look up their definitions and create flash cards. Learn them.                       | 15                     | _____         |
|               | 2. Create a crossword using 15 words from the story. Be sure to include a word bank.  | 15                     | _____         |
|               | 3. Create a song that correctly incorporates a total of 10 vocabulary words from the story. Their definitions should be clear from context. | 15                     | _____         |
|               | 4. Create a 10 question vocabulary test with an answer key 😊  | 15                     | _____         |
|               | 5. YOUR WAY! Choose an idea not listed and use it to study your words.  | 15                     | _____         |

### **Comprehension & Elements:**

**\*For each item you need to include:** All five plot stages, the main conflict, main characters and at least TWO minor characters, setting and point of view from the story.

|  |  |    |       |
|--|--|----|-------|
|  | 1. Create a half page summary of "Flowers for" Algernon." Be sure to use transitional words and phrases. | 35 | _____ |
|  | 2. Create a small poster incorporating all of the above elements.  | 35 | _____ |
|  | 3. Make a mobile that includes all of the above  | 35 | _____ |
|  | 4. YOUR CHOICE. Choose an idea not listed.   | 35 | _____ |

☺ = CHALLENGE

**B Layer (50 points possible). Choose 50 points worth of activities; be sure to check the point values of each one.** *Credit is earned for learning, which comes about through listening, writing, discussion, reading and doing. You will be assessed using the IB rubric.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (45 points) Create a **board game** that focuses on the plot, elements, and vocabulary of “Flowers for Algernon.” Include clear directions for how to play, as well as everything needed to do so. ☺
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (35 points) Produce a soundtrack for the story. By selecting and listing songs and artists for each section, briefly explain each choice (two-three sentences. Include at least 15 songs.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (5 points) Create a CD or album cover for the soundtrack
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (10 points) Write a song/rap or poem about the story including literary elements (characterization, setting, conflict), plot and theme. **You must include 5 of your vocabulary words from layer A.**
6. \_\_\_\_\_ (5 points) Perform the above activity for the class, your teacher OR another one of your teacher’s classes.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ (35 points) Make a collage of one of the characters from the book that includes at least three direct quotes, four physical or personality traits and one hand made image.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (10 points) Imagine you are Charlie and you have to give a Eulogy at Algernon’s funeral. Write at least a half a page of what Charlie would say about his furry friend after his death. Be sure to use first person point of view.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (35 points) Draw a cover for the story. Add a synopsis of the story on the back along with at least TWO reviews from popular critics.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (? points) Other activities you may want to complete (children’s book, brochure, newspaper, sculpture, play or movie. If you think of something that is not on here you need to write a two-three sentence proposal to hand into your teacher, so that she can determine the point value.

**C Layer (100 points possible).** Draft your findings for one of the questions or prompts below. Next, use your answer to guide your research. Your job is to find at least two articles that contain information to answer your question(s). Read each article then create a bibliography for **each one using [www.easybib.com](http://www.easybib.com)**. Your final paper should be in paragraph form, **include in-text citations**, and a works cited page and be a minimum of two paragraphs. Proofread, edit and type your final draft.

| Choose <b>one</b> to answer:<br><b>Earned</b>  | <b>Points Possible</b> | <b>Points</b> |
|--|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Charlie Gordon has an intellectual disability, formerly known as mental retardation. Imagine that you are Charlie’s caretaker. What information would you need to know in order to take care of Charlie or someone who had an intellectual disability? Consider: causes, signs, symptoms, and treatments. | 100                    | _____         |
| 2. Ink Blot tests, better known as Rorschach tests are used in the story to determine Charlie’s emotional functioning. Look up the history of these tests and why they are or have been controversial.   | 100                    | _____         |
| 3. Algernon was a integral part of the intellectual tests to determine the effectiveness of Charlie’s surgery. What kinds of medical studies use mice? Why does the medical field use these rodents? Elaborate on one particular study that uses mice.   | 100                    | _____         |
| 4. Patients with Alzheimer’s disease experience a decline in the functioning of the neurons in their brain. What are some ways that patients can delay the symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease? How can people combat the effects of dementia early on in life?  | 100                    | _____         |
| 5. Research any other disease of the brain and give a detailed explanation that includes causes, signs, symptoms and treatments.   | 100                    | _____         |



### **List of Materials for Classroom Use**

1. Outdoor area for games
2. Space in your classroom for movement. Preferably in the middle of the room
3. Index cards
4. About 10 small, soft balls
5. Copy of "Flowers for Algernon" <http://www.sdfo.org/gj/stories/flowersforalgernon.pdf>
6. iPods, iPhones or any other smart phone or tablet
7. Bouncy Bands: <http://bouncybands.com/>
8. Brain-breaks <https://brain-breaks.com/> OR <https://www.gonoodle.com/>

### **Reading List for Students**

1. Podcast App- Escape Pod: Episode 490: Flowers for Algernon
2. Flowers for Algernon PDF print version  
<http://www.sdfo.org/gj/stories/flowersforalgernon.pdf>

### **Notes:**

1. "Childhood Obesity Facts." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. August 27, 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm>.
  2. Rogers, Spence. *Teaching for Excellence: Essential Concepts, Strategies, Techniques, and Processes for Ensuring Performance Excellence for All Kids*. Conifer, CO: Peak Learning Systems, 1994.
  3. Ertl, Scott. "Bouncy Bands Help Active Learners Move While They Learn--not Just for Kids with ADHD, Autism or Learning Disabilities." Bouncy Bands Help Active Learners Move While They Learn--not Just for Kids with ADHD, Autism or Learning Disabilities. 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://bouncybands.com/>.
  4. "Brain Breaks®: Research Based Classroom Activity Brain Breaks Powered by HOPSports." Brain Breaks®: Research Based Classroom Activity Brain Breaks Powered by HOPSports. 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <https://brain-breaks.com/>.
- "GoNoodle." GoNoodle. 2012. Accessed October 25, 2015. <https://www.gonoodle.com/>.
5. Beers, G. Kyline. *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*.

6. Lengel, Traci, and Mike Kuczala. *The Kinesthetic Classroom: Teaching and Learning through Movement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010.
7. Fenn, Laura. "The Walking Classroom." *Walking Classroom*. 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://www.thewalkingclassroom.org/>.
8. Keyes, Daniel. *Flowers for Algernon*. PDF. Green Bay: Martin H. Greenberg.

### **Annotated Bibliography for Teachers**

Beers, G. Kyrene. *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. Heinerman, 2012. The signposts that are found in this book for effective close reading are used during our novel study for independent study. Signposts can be applied to the story "Flowers for Algernon" as well.

"Brain Breaks®: Research Based Classroom Activity Brain Breaks Powered by HOPSports." *Brain Breaks®: Research Based Classroom Activity Brain Breaks Powered by HOPSports*. 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <https://brain-breaks.com/>. This website can be used for quick two minute activities to give the students a break from sitting in their chairs such as running on a roller coaster track, fighting flying objects using common martial art moves, or jumping through shadow boxes.

"Childhood Obesity Facts." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. August 27, 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm>. This website contains facts and statistics describing childhood obesity issues.

"DonorsChoose.org: Support a Classroom. Build a Future." DonorsChoose.org. 2000. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://www.donorschoose.org/>. In order to get a full classroom set of Bouncy Bands in my classroom I went through this website. I will also be creating a new project requesting elliptical desks, and standing, crank desks.

Ertl, Scott. "Bouncy Bands Help Active Learners Move While They Learn--not Just for Kids with ADHD, Autism or Learning Disabilities." *Bouncy Bands Help Active Learners Move While They Learn--not Just for Kids with ADHD, Autism or Learning Disabilities*. 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://bouncybands.com/>. Bouncy Bands are simple desk attachments that allow students to move their legs while learning without distracting others.

Fenn, Laura. "The Walking Classroom." Walking Classroom. 2015. Accessed October 25, 2015. <http://www.thewalkingclassroom.org/>.

Although I will not be using the program "The Walking Classroom," I have designed my curriculum unit to adapt the same concept. Students will be walking around while learning and listening to a podcast of the story we read in class.

"GoNoodle." GoNoodle. 2012. Accessed October 25, 2015. <https://www.gonoodle.com/>. This website provides teachers with activities to get students out of their seats to move and exercise. Each activity is approximately two minutes.

Keyes, Daniel. "Escape Pod: Episode 490 "Flowers for Algernon""

This podcast version of "Flowers for Algernon" is read by Dave Thompson. Note that when the students first start listening to the podcast, they may ask you why his voice is so monotone, a purposeful device to characterize the voice and state of Charlie.

Keyes, Daniel. *Flowers for Algernon*. PDF. Green Bay: Martin H. Greenberg.

This is a PDF version of the short story "Flowers for Algernon." I will post a link to this story on Google Classroom to share with my students.

Lengel, Traci, and Mike Kuczala. *The Kinesthetic Classroom: Teaching and Learning through Movement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2010.

This book is a great way to get started building a kinesthetic classroom and utilizing movement without purchasing new furniture. It is divided up by ways to take brain breaks, incorporate movement into content and specifically what type of movement is best for the type of material taught. There are several images and figures that clarify the movements and exercises that the authors describe.

Rogers, Spence. *Teaching for Excellence: Essential Concepts, Strategies, Techniques, and Processes for Ensuring Performance Excellence for All Kids*. Conifer, CO: Peak Learning Systems, 1994.

I used this book to enhance my classroom management when I first started teaching. I utilize the music transitions to get the kids up and moving during "down" time. I also created the "round-about notes" activity from some of the other lessons that are found in this book.