

# VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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## PRESS RELEASE

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## Vernon Center Middle School Student Creates Word that is Recognized by New York Times in Vocabulary Challenge

### *Sixth Grader Blake Lewis Earns Honorable Mention for Word 'Seath'*

Sixth and seventh graders in Regina Lee's Talented and Gifted classes at Vernon Center Middle School spent several class sessions discussing how words are created and then went to work inventing new words.

Sixth grader Blake Lewis' word was judged to be so original that it won "honorable mention" from The New York Times in a Vocabulary Challenge for middle and high school students. Read the story [here](#).



**Blake Lewis**

"When I first gave the kids this assignment some of them were really intimidated," Lee said. The concept of creating words is difficult. And there's a tendency for older people to dismiss new words created and spoken by younger generations, she said. "Older people say, 'that's not a real word.'"

In fact, new words are created all the time to fill new needs.

"Every word is a real word," Lee said. "Whether words get into the dictionary depends on how well we decide they meet the needs of our language. And that means how commonly new words are used."

Lee had her students view a TED talk by lexicographer Erin McKean, who urges students to create new words. Just as people create art and music, they can and should create words, she said.

"You can make a new word right now," she said. "English has no age limit. Everybody who speaks English decides together what's a word and what's not a word. Every language is just a group of people who agree to understand each other."

*The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.*

New words can be created in a variety of ways – by taking them from other languages, compounding words by putting two words together, or blending by combining two words into one, McKean said.

To create his word, Blake, 11, thought about articles he has read about the health of the world’s oceans.

“There is information about how the seas’ health is getting worse and worse,” Blake said. “So, I thought of a word for it – ‘seath.’ I used “sea” and the last part of ‘health.’”

He said he was “amazed” when he learned the judges at The New York Times listed his word among the top entries they received.

“I’m hoping that someday Blake’s word is used by scientists,” Lee said. She suggested the “seath scale for ocean health” would be a good way for the word to be used. In the submission to The New York Times, Blake suggested this sentence: “Horrible pollution is decreasing our world seath.”



**Blake Lewis and fellow Vernon Center Middle School students.**

Although Blake’s word was the only one to be recognized by The New York Times, Vernon Center Middle Schools created many interesting and fun words, Lee said.

Some of those words include:

- **CollyDrop:** a person who drops out of college. – Parker Burns, grade 6
- **Sheltooz:** a house with a lot of pets and a crazy dynamic. – Storm Berard, grade 7
- **Arreltion:** when you find something (a book, movie, TV show or song) that puts the emotions you have been feeling into words and makes you feel seen and understood. – Rowan Hodgkins, grade 7
- **Knucklepluckle:** someone who picks at their fingers, cuticles or nails. – Lucy Powers, grade 7
- **Jad:** when you feel happy for someone because they got a good opportunity, but also sad because they will be leaving to seize the new opportunity. – Soumil Jain, grade 7
- **Snickely:** the act of sneezing uncontrollably. – Jacob Brown, grade 6
- **Crish or crished:** what happens when you drop a glass item and it breaks into many pieces. – Mason Pitkin, grade 6
- **Exquizamble or exquizambled:** to make someone think they look better than they actually do, or to act as if you look better than you actually do. – Livia Castle, grade 7

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