

Galt Elementary School District
Galt, California
2004-2005 Case Study Results

Sample Section from the Local Evaluation Report

Choosing Exemplar Case Studies in Galt

Each case study project in 2004-2005 was chosen for its breadth, depth, and representation of the five elements of service learning: meets a real community need, integrates into and enhances the curriculum, coordinates with a community agency, another school, or the community at large, helps foster civic responsibility, and provides structured time for reflection. Also, each project had to have earned one check on each measure of the Service learning Dipsticks: A Project Assessment Tool (Youth Service California, 2005 <http://www.yscal.org/resources/rslltools.html>).

Galt Case Study One: Salmon in the Classroom

Description the Service Learning Project

A seventh grade class implemented a Salmon in the Classroom unit. Students hatched and raised salmon eggs in their classroom and worked with a related agency to release salmon into local rivers. This is the third year this teacher has raised salmon in the classroom, and she said that each year the unit gets a little richer. Numerous lessons, over several months, revolved around the academic content standards. Lessons related to civic responsibility were also taught during this time. Over thirty students took part in this unit.

In part of the unit, students kept journals and carefully noted each day how the salmon hatchlings grew. Changes were discussed in light of cell differentiation. Many standards were included in this unit. The teacher described how seventh grade science standards were integrated into the salmon unit.

“We have covered the following standards, with them we learned about cell biology, standard 1a-f. But basically we learned specific 1f. Well, the standard 1f is multi-cellular organisms develop their cells differentiate. We looked at them differentiating to the different organs, and the different parts they have. Then we have also covered standard 2a-e which is genetics. Also we covered standard 3a-e, evolution, particularly 3a environmental factors caused diversity of organisms. The curriculum that I got with the steelhead [salmon] helped learn standard 3d, which is a branching diagram to classify living groups of organisms. Specifically also 3e, standard 3e states extinction of a species occurs when the environment changes and there is not good enough characteristics to survive. We learn about that. I will get into how we assess that in a minute. Also, we went into standard 5, structure and function, anatomy and physiology.”

Academic Components and Assessment

The following seventh grade California science standard was part the basis of this unit.

Life Science/Evolution

Biological evolution accounts for the diversity of species developed through gradual processes.

3.e. Extinction of a species occurs when the environment changes and the adaptive characteristics of a species are insufficient for its survival.

The GUESD uses the Edusoft program to monitor students' progress on standards in middle school. The teacher described the process and what percentage of students in her class achieved the identified standard.

“EduSoft is a big databank that we choose our questions from. I will be giving this formal assessment in a couple of weeks. What we did was, I bought some fish from the store. We learned their functions and structures of all their parts and I had informal anatomy quizzes. Really we are going to know how they did

at the end of this Edusoft test because it breaks down every question what percent, every sub-standard 5-g and then it spits out all this information about what percent of the kids know standard 5B etc. The school says to really stress more of this Edusoft test. In the old days, we had more informal quizzes, sort of like a hands-on assessments. We are kind of going away from that now. They want proof that they know that written standard. So of course, the steelhead and the Chinook go a long way to help us learn that standard. On our cell test, the average was 88. On the genetics test, that is called standard 2, they got 80 average. On standard 3 called evolution, they got 77. But we haven't done the structure and function big test yet.”

On the identified standards, 77% of students demonstrated proficiency.

The teacher indicated that pairing service learning with teaching this year has boosted student scores from last year. They also said that service learning adds a motivational aspect that is missing when learning only takes place with the text in the classroom.

Teacher Quote: “My scores are better than last year. I don't have hard evidence right here, but maybe it was because the salmon were here and maybe that is why the scores were better. But I don't have those at my fingertip, how they did last year, but I know that they did better. The cell unit went up, the genetics unit average went up. I think that this [service learning] has a lot to do with it.”

Integrative Component

Students kept journals throughout the process of raising the salmon. Not only did they describe the changes in the salmon, they reflected on the life of the fish and on how they were performing a service by raising and releasing them. The class also had numerous discussions about why it is important to protect salmon and their habitats.

As a culminating event, the class visited Discovery Park to release their salmon into the American River.

Civic Outcomes

For this unit, the following civic responsibility standards were referenced:

California State Content Standards for History/Social Science

3.4.2 Discuss the importance of public virtue and the role of citizens, including how to participate in a classroom, in the community, and in civic life.

The teacher felt that all students achieved the civic responsibility standard for this unit. She said that by analyzing students' reflective writing and monitoring student discussions, she saw a high understanding of this civic responsibility standard through the use of this activity..