

Service Learning Lesson Plan

Beautifying Summit Elementary School and the Upper Ojai Community with Native Trees and Plants and a Fruit and Vegetable Garden

A. Contact Information

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B. Introduction and Overview of the Lesson

Summit Elementary is a small, kindergarten through sixth grade, three classroom, elementary school. There were sixty-seven students enrolled during the 2003-2004 school year. Summit Elementary is a key feature of Upper Ojai. Upper Ojai is a small agriculture farm community and a part of the beautiful Ojai, California. Summit Elementary is not just an elementary school but a community center and recreation facility for numerous Upper Ojai community organizations and individual members, such as 4H, Girl Scouts, Brownies, music lessons, sports instruction and much more.

This service learning activity involved a second, third, and fourth grade combination class of twenty students at Summit Elementary School. Nine out of the twenty students were third graders. This particular lesson focuses on the third grade California Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, and Fine Arts Content Standards and Curriculum. This lesson can be modified for any grade level.

This service learning activity began with a class discussion on Cesar Chavez and community service. The students then shared their ideas of what they thought they could do for their community. Their ideas were listed on the board then a class vote was taken on which community need they wanted to work on. Being predominately an agriculture farm community

surrounded by hillsides, mountains and national forest the majority of the students were knowledgeable on the importance of trees and plant life in their community. They decided to plant trees and plants around their school with a concentration on planning, construction, and maintaining a community school garden for the Upper Ojai community to share.

C. Instructional Process

1. Preparation

- The identified community need to beautify Summit Elementary with trees and plants and a community school garden evolved following several learning experiences. These learning experiences included consecutive class discussions and social study lessons on communities, Cesar Chavez, and California's physical landscape features, observations from local field trips and through knowledgeable parent guest speakers,
- Two parents were the key community partners to collaborate with the students to identify the Upper Ojai community need. The need to replenish and build a community school garden was addressed to the students by a community member and parent. She clearly and explicitly explained and demonstrated through hands on experiences the necessity and benefits of a school community garden. Another vital community member and parent who works for the forest service, guided us through weekly hikes and provided important information on the necessity of trees and plants in the Upper Ojai community.
- Prior knowledge correlated to this service learning project was identified through journal writing, class discussions, and multiple choice test questions. Prior knowledge was built upon through explicit lessons on communities, including green mapping, identifying geographic features, descriptive paragraph writing and through real life, hands on experiences.
- **Civic Responsibility**
The students demonstrated an improved sense of civic responsibility in various ways. Through attitude and assessment they demonstrated their understanding of the importance of a garden in their community, showing respect for land and for their community's and school's well-being. Many students developed a better sense of leadership and collaboration with peers and adult partnerships, teamwork and good citizenship. Students took responsibility for meeting the needs of their community and school by designing,

developing and maintaining a working community garden. Their understanding of the importance of participation in service learning was demonstrated through their commitment in partaking in daily gardening duties, planting, watering, weeding, pruning and selecting ready to pick produce. Their understanding that their services will impact their community and school in a positive way was reflected in their journals, writing assignments, and personal attitude and enthusiasm.

- **California state academic content standards codes**

- Third Grade**

- Language Arts Writing 2.2

- Social Studies 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.4.2, 3.5.1

- Science 2 and 3

- Fine Arts 2.5

- In addition to the content standards all students successfully participated and made our project a success. Students developed organizational, communication and research skills. They learned to problem solve and think critically. They have become aware that they can make a positive difference in someone else's life. They have had the opportunity to experience and develop leadership by lending guidance and advice to their peers and adult partnerships. Students were given a chance to explore their hidden talents and interests and possible future careers.
- Planning and pacing out the year long service learning project is a necessity for preparation. Getting district and parent approval and permission to take frequent field trips to nearby farms and nearby mountainous areas was required. Safety rules for hiking around nearby mountainous areas and along roadsides that led to farms and orchards were a must.

2. Action:

- How did you ensure that the service successfully met the community need?
- Specific activities/actions that linked the content standards to the service-learning project:
 - Students worked individually, small groups and whole class discussions. The curriculum concentration in Social Studies for third grade is Continuity and Change. With this in mind the third grade students at Summit Elementary learned about communities with emphasis on California's physical landscape features. Students learned about native plants, the dangers of pesticides and other chemical products, the necessity for the protection of land and the benefits of organic gardening and composting. For the service learning project students identified geographical features found in their community, Upper Ojai. Students

collected and analyzed data from their environment found in the Upper Ojai natural environment, i.e. Sisar Canyon, and nearby agricultural farms and commercial orchards. They researched and identified native fruit and vegetable producing trees and plants that are native to the Upper Ojai community environment. For Language Arts students wrote daily in their reflection journals, wrote descriptive paragraphs about their learning experiences, used the Internet and books to research necessary information. Science academic content standards were addressed by identifying the concept that living things depend on one another and the environment for survival. Students planned, designed, constructed, and maintained the service learning project garden. They were and will continue to be the leaders in the project. This project was student driven from the start to the finish.

- Supervision was necessary throughout the entire project. During excursions students were supervised by the teacher, parents, and volunteer community partnerships. Supervision was required during building and maintaining the garden especially because of the tools that were being used.

3. Reflection:

- Throughout the entire project students used critical thinking, writing, and speaking, to reflect upon what they learned and experienced. Students kept service learning portfolios that included their reflection journals, detailed writings, surveys, collected data, illustrations and sketches of their research and experiences. Prior to each service learning activity students engaged in a class discussion that allowed an opportunity for students to voice their prior knowledge and experiences associated to the service learning activity.
- Students were asked to reflect on their service learning experiences, information and knowledge they gained during the service learning activity. Students' writing focused on how their actions during the activity served their community.

4. Student Assessment

- Students were assessed on the CA Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Fine Arts Content Standards correlated to the service learning activity. Student academic achievement and knowledge and understanding of civic responsibility were evaluated by a variety of assessments. Reflective Journals and notebooks were reviewed regularly to check for understanding. Multiple Choice and Fill in the Blank tests were given when

finishing a social study unit that correlated with the service learning activity. Teacher observations occurred throughout the service learning activities, particularly during individual, small group and class discussions, to check understanding and knowledge growth. Paragraph Writing was assessed based upon a classroom rubric. Attitude and civic responsibility was observed in the students' determination, responsibilities, attendance and overall commitment to the project.

5. Project Evaluation and Expansion

- The overall project was evaluated by the students' academic achievements and by the overall outcome of the community school garden. Service Learning is an awesome student motivating teaching strategy that allowed a large percent of my students to achieve the academic content standards correlated to our project. Our service learning project would not have been successfully completed without our community partnerships.
- Six fruit bearing trees and over one hundred plants have been planted on the grounds of Summit Elementary.
- This project could be revised and expanded by developing more partnerships with parents, community members, and businesses. Creating a pacing chart for the service learning activity that includes the CA academic standards covered in the activities is essential.

6. Celebration and Public Recognition:

- Our service learning project was celebrated throughout the school year. The largest celebration was at the end of the school year when the Ojai Unified School District celebrated Cesar Chavez Day and allowed each school in the district to share their projects. Students created a display board with illustrations, photographs and written descriptions of the project. Students stood before approximately 300 students and orally described their garden project and how they were going to share it with the community and homeless people in nearby shelters. These display boards were displayed in school bulletin boards and photographs and descriptive writing were placed in the school yearbook. Students also celebrated the completion of their garden by preparing a salad large enough to feed the entire school, only using produce from the new school/community garden. This was a hands on experience and example of what they want to give to the homeless shelters for years to come.
- The public was informed about this service learning project through school newsletters,

school and community newspapers and through visual change in the school environment that opened the eyes of many Upper Ojai community members.

7. Materials and Staff Development Needs

Materials:

- Garden Supplies: potting soil, tools, seed, plants, trees, irrigation system
- Paper, pencils, pens, journals,
- reading material on gardening, community needs, and civic responsibility
- Computer writing program, Microsoft word

Staff Development:

- *Ojai Unified School District Service Learning Unit Plan outline worksheet
- *Knowledge of the California Content Standards

8. Funding, Resource Support, and Sustainability:

- Funding for this project came from the Ojai Unified CalServe Grant, Cesar Chavez Grant, Hanson Trust Grant and donated supplies by students and parents from Summit Elementary. Funding was necessary for building supplies, soil, irrigation system, seeds, plants, and trees. Learning resources; books, computers, paper, and pencils were provided by the school.
- This service learning activity could be sustained by establishing more partnerships in the business community and with parent and community members. I would develop these partnerships by developing an advisory council that is committed to sustaining our service learning garden project. I hope that our service learning project can be sustained year after year with school and community partnerships, ensuring that our project can grow and build upon itself with each new school year.