

Cesar Chavez Garden and Greenhouse Project

Part I - Lesson Plan Format

Introduction and Description of the Lesson

This service-learning project is a continuation of a service-learning project started last year that is expanding in its scope of meeting educational goals and community needs. Last year, our class was the recipient of a Cesar Chavez grant provided through the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism. The goals of the grant are to emphasize the core values and legacy of Cesar Chavez through a service-learning project. We created a garden, integrated curriculum of many courses, and met a community need of providing fresh produce to people served by local food banks. In the process, students learned about the life and legacy of Cesar Chavez and incorporated his core values into their actions of working in the garden, studying various subjects and giving to the community.

This year, we have received the grant again and will build a 20' x 48' greenhouse. With the greenhouse, we will be able to grow food year round and develop a nursery to provide plant starts for other schools and community gardens that will donate food to people in need. The construction of the greenhouse and the maintenance of all the systems necessary to maximize its potential for production will create opportunities for the students to learn valuable and applicable skills in the workplace and in relationships with each other and the community.

Academically, the project will serve as a source of inquiry into the study of a number of different courses. I will provide integrated and thematic lessons as well as allow the students to make choices regarding how they would use the project as a way to meet state standards in their courses.

Contact Information

Mark Johnson
Pathways New Horizons Court School
2004 Harrison Ave.
Eureka, CA 95501
Ph:(707) 268-3380
Fax:(707) 445-7093
Email: mrj@humboldt.k12.ca.us

Instructional

Preparation

In order to do this project, funding to build the greenhouse and purchase all the necessary supplies will be required. I utilized a state grant and donations in the form of rebates from local retailers who I made purchases from for supplies. Space to locate the greenhouse and/or garden should be exposed to direct sunlight throughout the year.

I made contact with local food banks to arrange drop off times for fresh produce. Other contacts can be made depending on your community's range of services for people in need of food.

Curriculum development is ongoing and creative. I utilize text and Internet sources for information needed to answer questions raised by students as the project proceeds. Local experts are contacted to come to the class to provide additional perspective and information.

Action

Maintenance of the greenhouse is a daily venture. In order to maximize its potential, students must work daily to maintain the plants and watering system. As various tasks need to be planned and followed through with, the students learn the skills necessary to maintain a working business. Students will use these experiences of day-to-day work to guide their study in their coursework. Much of their coursework can be directly applied in their work in the greenhouse and the project serves as a theme to guide writing, fine arts and use of technology. Students are presented with state standards and invited to create lessons and projects based on their knowledge of course requirements. A web page will be developed to document the entire project and share the lesson plans that result from our efforts.

Reflection

Reflection is the key to the students ownership of the project. The students are given time to discuss, write and reflect on their experiences so that they can communicate what they are learning and share what they value from the project. The development of a web page will serve as a documentation of learning and a demonstration of skills learned and enhanced by the project. We will also be tracking the quantity of food produced and comparing that to the techniques for growing to provide feedback on how to become more efficient in the use of the greenhouse space in meeting a community need. Regular discussion and writing about how the core values of Cesar Chavez are expressed through the project will be emphasized.

Student Assessment

Students will be assessed by their contribution to the project. Learning styles and academic strengths will be recognized by the choices that students make in how they integrate the project into their coursework. Where students are observed to have exceptional or competent skills and knowledge, they will be given the role of teaching to other students. A number of lessons will be provided that will be assessed through traditional testing methods and portfolio evaluation of work.

Project Evaluation and Expansion

The project will be evaluated by the coursework requirements met by the students and the need of the community being met. Mistakes made and problems encountered will be responded to as learning opportunities as opposed to failures. This project is an expansion of last years garden project and provides opportunities to expand in its ability to meet student and community needs with time. The ongoing documentation of the project through the web page and portfolios created can serve as a means to continually raise the efficiency of the project in providing service learning and a model for other communities to follow. The availability of plant starts for other community and school based gardens will also be tracked to demonstrate the expansion of the service provided by our "incubator" project.

Celebration and Public Recognition

The web page will serve as the main source of public recognition. We will also be contacting local media to report on the project as a way to encourage community awareness of the hope for the future as evident by the actions of our youth today.

Materials and Staff Development Needs

Greenhouse and supplies

Basic gardening and nursery skills

Funding, Resource Support, and Sustainability

The project was funded through the Cesar Chavez Day of Service and Learning Grant. Beyond this year, the project will be mostly self sustaining due to our efforts to utilize composting and local mini-grants and in kind contributions from community members and businesses.