Place Based Learning

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Teacher Plans to Incorporate 'Place Based' Learning Into Her Curriculum

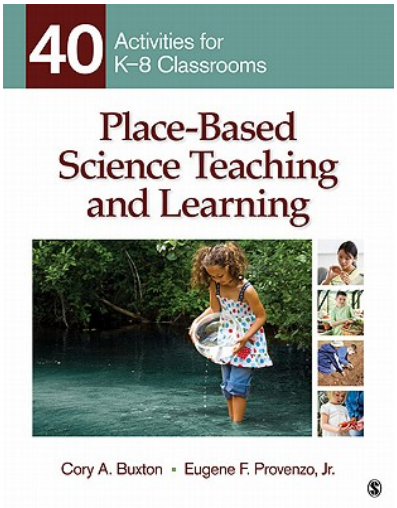
By: Orlando Callegari

http://hasbrouckheights.patch.com/articles/teacher-plans-to-incorporate-place-based-learning-into-her-curriculum

This article is about a fifth grade teacher, Eileen LaTorre, who decided to integrate place-based learning into her teaching because of a workshop that she attended. She went to Ramapo College's workshop about the Hudson River and because of that workshop she realized that incorporating place-based teaching about the Hudson River is important for her fifth grade class. She wanted to teach her students about the history, environment, literature, culture, and art of the Hudson River because it is a part of their community. Teachers at her school are pushed to find places of educational interest nearby to teach their students about and "instead of teaching them (her students) in a classroom, with pictures, go to the place and actually teach about the place." LaTorre decided to make maps of the Hudson River and have the maps be converted into puzzles so that the students will put together the maps and use them to learn about measurements, map scale, and more.

Having students go to the actual "place" that they will be learning about in class is much more effective than just teaching students about that specific place. Students will get a better understanding of the place if they have the opportunity to see it in person and learn about it. It is important to incorporate place-based learning in classes because it encourages learning that is derived in what is local, like the environment, history, culture, and art of a specific "place" that the students should be familiar with. Place-based learning is really effective for hands-on learners and teaches to a variety of students in different ways. Place based-learning can be used in all grade levels and should be incorporated into all classrooms.

Place-Based Science Teaching and Learning: 40 Activities for K-8 Classrooms



Place-Based Science Teaching and Learning: 40 Activities for K-8 Classrooms is an incredible book that teachers should have to help teach place-based science for K-8 students. This book includes 40 different science activities that can be used for all these age groups. Within this book, the authors also provide the reader with many different assessment strategies to help grade students' work. I would highly recommend this book to many incoming and experienced teachers who need to understand the importance of place-based learning and how to implement it into their curriculum.

There were many quotes that I read that were very intriguing but a quote that stood out the most was one of how teachers who implement this model of teaching really open up the minds of their students:

> **"Teachers who take up this model of place-based teaching and learning should be prepared for a change in their classroom and their students. Once we begin to treat our students as the capable thinkers and problem solvers who will be asked to confront tomorrow's global challenges, it is difficult to go back to traditional fact-driven education. In a sense, if you adopt the approach we are advocating, you are opening up Pandora's Box and your students are unlikely to let you put the lid back on. (p. 9)"**

I thought this was very thought provoking and really emphasized the importance of place-based teaching and learning. This quote really introduces you to the idea of how students will be positively affected by place-based teaching and encourages teachers to put this model into practice.

Along with the many activities that this book offers for you to implement into your science curriculum this book also promotes the practice of place-based teaching because this approach is: 1) engaging and motivating for students and teachers, 2) meaningful, relevant and authentic to the skills and ways of problem solving that today's students will need as tomorrow's citizens, 3) it provides a needed counterbalance to the testing-driven model of instruction that has become dominant in public schools today, 3) one that promotes curiosity, and 5) more reasonable and comparable to education of private schooling.

This book talks about how currently United States students are performing much lower than other countries in the field of science. Much of the argument for this is that classrooms are not pushing for inquiry-based practices but rather are focused on state-level tests and how this has become the primary focus for many schools instead of on student learning:

> **"We are concerned that more and more, students are being trained to become expert test takers rather than engaged learners and creative problem solvers. The world that today's students will live in will require creative problem solving and persuasive communication... (p. 4)"**

This is a very scary and discouraging direction that our education system is heading towards and these authors believe that place-based teaching and learning can help our system re-direct itself.

Buxton, Cory A, and Eugene F. Provenzo. *Place-based Science Teaching and Learning: 40 Activities for K-8 Classrooms*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2012. Print.

"100 Days of Learning in Place: How a Small School Utilized "Place-Based" Learning to Master State Academic Standards"

By James Lewicki

One of the many concerns with place-based learning is that a non-traditional classroom does not add up to a traditional one. What exactly is place-based learning? Place-based learning is the act of moving the learning environment from the classroom to another place. With regards to the idea that place-based learning is a lesser approach, the article written by James Lewicki shows otherwise, with resounding evidence. Lewicki implemented place-based learning into a charter school out of Wisconsin, with 25 students. The curriculum was exactly 100 days long and consisted of field studies in local places within the community. Of the local places were "…historical archives, a restored wetland, a river valley, and a senior citizen community." (Lewicki, 2000). Among these places, the students worked alongside 60 community members, integrating their learning into other studies. All 25 students worked together in a one-room schoolhouse when not in the field.

Students were assessed by the Iowa Test of Educational Development both in September, and later in June. There was significant improvement in each of the three sections of the test and the composite score actually raised almost three whole grade levels. Lewicki contributes this success to four major factors, working together, variety of settings, first-hand experience and relevancy. All four of these factors worked together to create the finest educational experience for these students. Working together led to creating a community where the students could have a positive learning experience. The variety of settings helped students to access memory, therefore retaining learning. First-hand experience resonates much more with a student than watching or listening alone. And lastly, Finding something that is relevant to the student makes the project that much more worthwhile.

Teachers can use place-based learning to help their students thrive in any environment. Not to mention, this article shows evidence of higher test scores. With the importance being placed on standardized testing recently, teachers can use this article to back up their reasoning for using place-based learning, while also helping raise their students' test scores. Students that do better in non-traditional settings, those that learn differently, will also benefit from this. To conclude, with place-based learning, all will reap the benefits, with very little to sew.

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http://search.proquest.com/docview/62249079?accountid=14902

Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Community

— By: David Slobel

The premises behind place-based learning is to complete tasks, carry out projects, and accomplish goals that incorporate standards of the classroom within the local community. It takes students from the classroom and places them in their local community in order to get them engaged and aware of their surroundings. It is an approach that provides the opportunity for students to get involved, take action, and see results. It can instill values and create a sense of pride for their local community. By using this approach to learning, the community and its needs become the starting point for student learning. It is a method which enhances curriculum, increases appreciation of nature, strengthens bonds within the community, and allows students to take part in civic engagement.

Place-based learning can be integrated into the everyday curriculum at any grade level as long as the instructor connects it with content standards, grade level expectations, and national state standards that will coincide with student learning. Since these projects typically take students out into the environment and address real world issues, it is important to identify what skills are utilized during the completion of such projects. Including aspects such as student inquiry, reading for a purpose, and writing for an audience becomes a simple task when utilizing place-based learning because there is usually a need for the expression of such skills. Through this form of learning, it is possible to reach beyond the classroom objectives and incorporate

values that are important to the prosperity of the community.

One way students in Berkeley, California got involved with the natural world is by participating in the Food Systems Project. Students at Martin Luther King Middle School were involved in maintaining the school's vegetable garden. This spread to the idea of planting a garden on the property of every school residing in Berkeley. Then, to extend beyond Berkeley, the idea branched to include having a garden in every schoolyard in California. This led to the idea of creating connections between local farmers and school districts which in turn led to creating the Food Systems Project. The goal of the Food Systems Project is to have all the food in the Berkeley school lunch program be organic and locally grown within the next ten years. Not only does this spread awareness of local farmers, but it has the added benefit of enhancing the nutritional value of student lunches. Also, since there is a strong focus maintaining the food in the gardens, agricultural education anf food preparation have been integrated into the school's curriculum.

This is one example of how a school took interest in their community and had an opportunity to make a big difference. The same opportunity is within reach of other schools nationwide as long as instructors decide to look at their local surroundings and the needs that could be met within the community. It is easy to focus on textbooks, but stepping out into the community provides so much more for enhancing student learning.

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http://www.placebasedlearning.co.uk/index.asp

The website I found is a great resource for place-based learning instruction. Their views include "an educational approach that uses the most effective developments in teaching and learning to tackle critical issues of sustainability and community development in the actual context that young people are growing-up". This is a way of thinking that teaches students about the world around them and how to prosper in it. As a future teacher this sounds like a great philosophy but probably very difficult to put into action in a curriculum.

This website has a great explanation about what exactly place-based learning is and also shows examples of student projects. These are strengths of this website because they can be used as resources for teachers and students. Some of the examples include a summary, background information, literature review and references. This allows for teachers to either use the lesson examples directly or build their own based on these. Also this website is open for contacting them in regards to the subject. As a future teacher just learning about this subject this would allow me to gain more knowledge on this subject from the experts.

Some negatives include the fact that the projects seem very complex and difficult to adapt for different ages. Also they appear to cost a lot of money. For a teacher with limited supplies this would make completing the projects very difficult. Overall, I think this is a great resource for place-based learning knowledge for teachers and community members.