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Grade K-6: Defining a Zero Waste Lunch

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School:

Polytechnic School

The Purpose and Essential Questions:

What was the primary purpose of this lesson for you as a teacher? The primary purpose for this service learning activity was to teach the students that we, as individuals, can make choices that have an environmental impact. For the students? The purpose of the activity was to teach our students that they can have a voice in important matters to our school, and that even though they are the youngest students in our school, they can take on a role of teaching others. For the community? The purpose of the activity was to define what it means to bring a Zero Waste lunch to our school population.

The Story:

Our school was examining their sustainable practices and looking for ways to improve. The Kindergarten teachers opened a discussion with their students on what this actually meant in a context that the children could understand. This lead to a discussion on what could be done in the classroom to save resources. Discussions such as this were taking place in all grade levels. It was decided that one thing Lower School students could do to save resources was to bring a lunch in reusable containers, a “zero waste” lunch. The Kindergarteners really grasped the concept and when it became apparent that many students and parents had questions about what exactly a zero waste lunch was, they decided that they would take on the task of defining it. They wanted to reach all the students in the Lower School. With the help of their teachers, they decided to make a video “commercial” to show at an assembly.

Service-Learning Theme(s) and Community Need**Service-Learning Themes:**

Environment

Community Need:

To save resources and become a role model for the Middle and High School students at Polytechnic School.

Community Partners:

The Kindergarteners enlisted the help of their parents in coming up with good examples of a zero waste lunch.

Place of Impact:

School

School Setting, Grade Level and Duration**School Setting:**

Urban

Grade Level:

K-3 (Early Elementary)

4-6 (Upper Elementary)

Target Population:

All Students

Duration:

1-4 weeks

Connection to Curriculum

Academic Subjects:

Art

English Language Arts

Life Skills

Math

Science

Social Studies

Speech and Communication

Technology

Theater

State Standards:

CA

Subject:

Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Definition:

1.0. Listening and Speaking Strategies Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions. Sentence Structure

1.1 Recognize and use complete, coherent sentences when speaking. Students listen and respond to oral communication. They speak in clear and coherent sentences.

Comprehension

1.1 Understand and follow one- and two-step oral directions.

1.2 Share information and ideas, speaking audibly in complete, coherent sentences.

2.0. Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics) Students deliver brief recitations and oral presentations about familiar experiences or interests, demonstrating command of the organization and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0.

2.2 Recite short poems, rhymes, and songs.

2.3 Relate an experience or creative story in a logical sequence.

Subject:

Math: Algebra and Functions

Definition:

1.0 Students sort and classify objects: 1.1 Identify, sort, and classify objects by attribute and identify objects that do not belong to a particular group

Subject:

Social Studies

Definition:

K.1 Students understand that being a good citizen involves acting in certain ways.

Subject:

Earth Sciences

Five Stages of Service-Learning (Procedure)

Investigation:

In order to gain an understanding of the need to save natural resources students were introduced to the topic via discussion, picture books, videos, and the website: Recycle City

Reflection:

Students verbalized their understanding of the subject through classroom discussions.

Preparation and Planning:

At first the focus was on what Kindergarten students could bring in their lunches that would not include throw away containers such as plastic baggies, boxed drinks, and pre-packaged foods. This opened discussions on purchasing large containers of food and drink instead of many small, individual packages. Students also learned what the word “wasteful” meant. Students decided that they wanted to let others know of their findings. It was decided that the best format was a video.

Reflection:

Classroom discussions were held. Students enjoyed sharing containers in their lunch boxes with others in the class.

Action:

Students, with the help of their teachers, used a Flip video camera to record their descriptions of a zero waste lunch. Students needed to prepare in advance what they were going to say as they shared their lunch boxes and contents for the camera. As the project blossomed, students cleverly displayed the words “zero waste” using a variety of materials. They also added a “zero waste” cheer.

Reflection:

Students enjoyed watching each other be filmed. Much discussion about individual and group presentations took place between takes.

Reflection:

Throughout the process students discussed what they were learning and how they would be helping the entire school. They talked about their excitement and their appreciation of their classmates when making the video.

Demonstration:

The Kindergarten students presented their video at a Lower School Assembly. Their pride was very evident during the presentation. The response from the audience was very positive. There are plans to show the video to the Middle and Upper School students at one of their morning meetings. This video will also be featured as part of the Educators Consortium for Service Learning (ECSL), a Los Angeles regional organization to promote high quality service learning. The group has taken as a multi-year theme the idea of blending service learning with technology and citizen journalism (with the citizen journalism concept being led by Cathryn Berger Kave and her work with EarthEcho International). ECSL features this video

Public Relations:

Action is being taken to upload the video to the school website so that it may be accessed by parents. Also the work being done with ECSL (as noted under Demonstration).

Assessment and Evaluation:

Teacher questioning was used to assess understanding of the subject. It was easy to assess concrete understanding of the concept by what the students brought to school to demonstrate a zero waste lunch.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps:

The teachers discovered how much fun the students had creating the video. Deciding to add the "bloopers" to the end of the video showed the teachers how well the students grasped the concept as they watched them thoroughly enjoy the humorous clips. The project was so successful that the teachers are planning future video activities. The Flip video camera is so easy to use that there is thought about letting the students actually do the filming.

About the Teacher:

Ann Nelson is the Kindergarten through 8th Grade Service Learning Coordinator at Polytechnic School in Pasadena, CA. Previously, she was the Lower School Service Learning Coordinator, a position held since 1992. Since 1994, Ann has been an active member, and has sat on the Advisory Board of the Educators' Consortium for Service Learning, an organization of public and private school administrators, teachers, and community service coordinators dedicated to fostering service learning. In addition, she has worked as a consultant for Facing the Future, an organization that believes in the transformative power of widespread, systemic education to improve lives and communities, both locally and globally. Ann has served on the Regional Planning Committee for the National Service Learning Conference, America's largest gathering of youth and educators involved in service-learning. She has also presented topics at the annual conferences on how to bring service learning into elementary classrooms. In addition, Ann has written service learning curriculum for grades Prekindergarten through 8th.

About the School:

Located in Pasadena, California, Polytechnic School is an independent, coeducational day school for students in kindergarten through grade 12. It was founded in 1907. With high academic standards as its cornerstone, the school has developed a broad curriculum with programs in the performing and visual arts, athletics, and community service. It is coed and nonsectarian, serving 855 students in grades K-12.

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