

Place-based Learning Initiative Write-Up

Teachers: Kelly J Breton

Subject(s): Social Studies

Community Collaborators: Cooperating team teachers, directors of the local farmers market, local farmers, and parents and students of the community

Essential Question: How do our choices to buy local products support local economy, and in turn benefit our community?

Overview

1. Describe the NEED existing in your community that the initiative addresses.

The small, local economy of Skowhegan and surrounding areas is largely contributed to through local farms and the farmers who run them. This initiative enables us as teachers, to make our students and their community more aware of local resources and locally grown foods that are available to them by introducing students to the idea of supporting local farmers and their farms. We in turn bring an awareness to the benefit of fresh foods and the positive impacts that come with it. It makes students aware of the opportunity that they have to support small businesses and farms. They can have a better understanding of how they and their families can support their local growing economy.

2. List your goals and objectives for this place-based endeavor?

- Make students aware of environmental impacts (both positive and negative) of buying locally or imported foods.
- Make students aware of the effects of their local economy on their families and community as a whole.
- Educate students on ways that they themselves can participate and support their local economy
- Educate students on how effective the use of positive propaganda and media materials can help to stimulate and educate a community about local resources.

3. Procedure: List the activities/procedures undertaken in the various phases of your learning unit

1) Introduction of information: differences between global and local economies, impact of their families food choices on the economy, positives and negatives of buying locally versus globally, what resources students have within their own communities, ways they can begin to take a more active role in supporting their community and local businesses.

The following are examples of how information was relayed to students:

-Guest speakers-to educate students who they are supporting when they buy locally and about who/what businesses are the foundation that supports their local economy.

-Research and article analysis

-Students partaking in direct and hands-on activities within the community...i.e. helping to pick crops for the local food bank

-Students were able to collection information from survey data and see the connection of how it represents the opinion of their community.

II.

Surveying and Comparison: Local produce vs. global

Students Participated in a blind taste testing comparison of local apples grown at an apple farm locally and those grown in another country. Students tasted each of the samples and expressed their opinions on a survey generated by the class, at an earlier date. Students rated each sample on a scale, using criteria that they determined would be most important to a consumer. The creation of the surveys and the taste tests took place in the social studies classroom. The follow up data analysis and percentages were determined in each student's math class.

4. Teachers can empower students by allowing them to "exercise their own powers and responsibilities"(Bloomer). Community Projects seek to encourage and enhance this student empowerment.

Describe how your students were able to direct their own learning throughout the activities in which they were engaged.

-By creating a hands-on project environment we as teachers stretched our community project theme across the curriculum as well as into the students' homes. Students were able to see how connections are made from subject to subject, school to home, and home to community. By engaging students in individual assignments, group projects at school and within the broader community, students were given various opportunities to make links to how their choices to support the local economy can not only help to support local vendors, but enrich the experience of living in a small community. They can see that it is in this small community that they can in fact make a difference, providing a sense of pride for their work and their community.

5. Who are your community partners or individuals in the community who are assisting students with this initiative?

- The local leaders of the Skowhegan Farmers Market
- Local Farmers

21st Century Skills —describe how the following skills are embedded in your Place-based Initiative:

6. Teaming and Collaboration:

Students were grouped in various ways throughout the project. Small groups, classroom sized groups and at times the “Pine Team”. Students were often put in an environment where they were working in heterogeneous groups of all abilities, grade levels and learning styles. Many times students were put in groups with peers they had never directly worked with. We as a staff felt it was important to get the students to experience this project in a way that fostered open minds, creative ideas and teamwork. Classroom projects such as the taste test and survey making provided opportunities for students to learn and practice working together, thereby acquiring the necessary skills to be productive in the larger themes of the community project.

7. Technology Integration-how specifically did your student use technology throughout the phases:

- Students used laptops and the Internet to research articles regarding local vs. global economy, organic vs. non-organic, “food miles”, resources etc.
- Students used laptops to create word processed documents, survey forms and display data based on their research and observations.
- Students used laptops, hardware and Internet tools to create a webpage, designed to educate and promote buying local foods and products from Skowhegan Farmers Market.

8. Interactive Communication (including multi-media presentations)

- As a classroom teacher, I used a program called Note share to “share” current articles with my classroom students. Students were able to access web pages and/or teacher written notes to use within smaller groups as on individual projects.

- Students participated in a blog that was linked to our Pine Team community. Here students could display knowledge or insight that they had gained.

9. Literacy strategies used by students (in your content)

- As a classroom teacher, I used the “Sum-it-Up” literacy strategy and incorporated this method with learning about topics related to our community project. Students were given articles to read and with guidance from the classroom teacher, were able to summarize the most valuable information from the article.

- Students participated in many “Think-Pair-Share” activities. The project-type environment allowed for students to work with peers to exchange ideas and combine their creativity.

Assessment

10. How is this initiative benefiting the community:?

This initiative benefits the community by encouraging the support of local farmers and vendors. Dependant upon the support of community members, these local farmers and businesses create jobs for community members and produce incoming revenue for the town. Through this initiative students have learned the benefits of supporting local economy. Not only are they more aware of the effects of their personal choices on the local economy, but they also bring their ideas back to their families and friends. By collecting data surveyed from the community students have been able gain insight for themselves, and also share that knowledge with the broader community. This initiative has allowed students to see how they can become involved within their community, in a positive way. Understanding what their local economy needs to thrive and participating in finding ways to make that possible, shows them that they and their peers can be a valuable asset to the community.

11. Describe the student projects you will be submitting for publishing as a result of this Place-based initiative.

1) **Farmers Market Survey**-This survey was completely created by students. It was the students who came up with the questions, voted on the most appropriate and useful questions and formalized the survey. Students then took the surveys home and

completed them, with an adult who is responsible to buy food, within their household. Students then returned the surveys to school, and proceeded to analyze the data. We will be using this data on the project based website to help educate viewers on the local farmer's market. There is a copy of the survey final results and an example of a completed survey.

2) **“Sum-it-Up” Article and Activity**- This was used in the beginning phases of the project. The introductory phase was a time when students were learning about local vs. global economy. There is a sample article and an example of student work included.

3) **Community Project-based Website**- This site is still under construction and awaiting some final pieces that will be contributed by other groups on the community. This is the cumulative result of our project phases, but will not be completed until the earlier part of June.

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4) **Taste Test Survey**-This is a copy of the survey, produced by students to evaluate taste, texture, smell and the appearance of organic vs. non-organic apples. Students used the survey to collect and analyze data.