

THE EDUCATION FUND'S 2007-2008 Ideas with **IMPACT**

M-DCPS Teachers Share Easy-to-Use Projects



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FOR EXCELLENCE IN MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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The Education Fund enlists the support of the private sector to improve Miami-Dade schools and bring excellence to public education. This work reaches all 350+ schools and all 20,000+ teachers in Miami-Dade Public Schools, and benefits thousands of students. Currently, The Education Fund offers more than a dozen different initiatives to help our public schools. The IMPACT II program, which encompasses this catalog and the companion Idea EXPO, is one example.



FOR EXCELLENCE IN MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CONTACT US: The Education Fund
900 NE 125th Street, Suite 110 , North Miami, FL 33161
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Visit us online at www.educationfund.org

*Please see special instructions on page 5 regarding making a donation through the United Way.

The Education Fund's IMPACT II: A Network of Ideas



IMPACT II is a program of The Education Fund that focuses on strengthening curriculum, student achievement and leadership in Miami-Dade County Public Schools by identifying and connecting teachers who exemplify professionalism and creativity in their classrooms. This comprehensive network has specially designed programs that encompass beginning teachers to experienced teachers.

Join the Network

Teachers who have developed successful classroom teaching methods are given grants to package and market their proven projects through the Ideas with IMPACT catalog, the Idea EXPO and Idea Packets that contain curriculum materials such as lesson plans, worksheets and resource lists.

Disseminator grants – Help teachers further develop and disseminate proven practices they have used successfully in their own classroom. Apply by February 15, 2008.

Ideas with IMPACT catalog – Explore this resource of new teaching ideas. Projects can be used exactly as they are or can be modified to meet a classroom's special needs. Contact the disseminator of the idea for more information.

The Idea EXPO – The Teacher Conference – Get new ideas and make connections with more than 75 experienced teachers during the IMPACT II project display exhibition and workshop sessions. Special features include

a keynote session on the achievement gap, a luncheon and free curriculum packets.

Adapter grants – Available for any project in the IMPACT II network of ideas from the past 16 years (listed at www.educationfund.org). Just connect with the disseminator of the idea, request an Idea Packet and apply to receive funds to implement in your classroom.

Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI)

The Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI) is an action research initiative that connects education policy with actual classroom practice to improve student achievement. Examples of this work may be viewed in The Education Fund's online research monograph archive at www.educationfund.org.

IMPACT II provides a monthly forum for teachers to formulate their research, publish their findings, strategize their dissemination and discuss current education issues. To learn more about becoming an action research fellow and

Join the Network • Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI) New Teacher Initiative • How IMPACT II Can Work For You

receiving a grant to conduct action research in your classroom, please contact The Education Fund at 305-892-5099, ext. 18. To apply, use the application form supplied in this catalog (postmark deadline September 17, 2007) or apply online at www.educationfund.org.

New Teacher Initiative

IMPACT II connects new teachers to veteran teachers, resources and a network of ongoing support from various programs of The Education Fund.

1) The Idea EXPO – The Teacher Conference has special features for new teachers including workshops on classroom management and opportunities to network with colleagues from across the county. It is an ideal forum to link up with veteran teachers and learn their tried and true teaching strategies.

2) Adapter grants are a quick and easy way to implement a disseminator teacher's idea in a beginning teacher's classroom. Along with the funds, you not only receive a detailed Idea Packet with lesson plans and resource list, but coaching from the disseminator teacher. Substitution coverage is available to visit a veteran teacher's classroom or vice-versa.

3) New teacher Web site of daily classroom specials, tips and "ask an expert" section is managed by national IMPACT II – The Teachers Network at www.teachersnetwork.org.

How IMPACT II Can Work For You

ATTEND the IMPACT II Idea EXPO – The Teacher Conference. Look for a conference registration form in the inserts of this catalog, register online at www.educationfund.org or call 305-892-5099, ext. 18 for more information. Kay Lovelace Taylor, Ed.D., will be giving a keynote address and a master teaching session at this year's Idea EXPO on Saturday, October 6, 2007.

BECOME an IMPACT II disseminator or an action research fellow and be featured in next year's Ideas with IMPACT catalog. IMPACT II awards \$750 disseminator grants to educators willing to share the successful teaching ideas they have designed and implemented in their classrooms. Fellowships in the amount of \$750 for action research are also offered. Apply at www.educationfund.org or use applications found in this catalog's inserts.

APPLY for an IMPACT II Adapter Grant to purchase materials to adapt one of the ideas featured in this catalog or past years' catalogs.

Here's how to qualify:

1 Select an idea (from past or current catalogs*) at www.educationfund.org.

2 Attend the EXPO and sign-up for a workshop on that idea.

or

Request an Idea Packet and discuss with the disseminator how to implement the project idea.

3 Complete an Adapter application online or go to page 5 of the insert.

** For information on the past 17 years of IMPACT II projects, visit The Education Fund's Web site at www.educationfund.org.*



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for special instructions.

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IMPACT II Idea EXPO
the "by teachers, for
teachers" conference

- Win a computer and other prizes
- Earn 10 Master Plan Points
- Choose from 70 workshops

See insert or register online at
www.educationfund.org

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These Miami-Dade County Public Schools teachers and administrators are helping The Education Fund through payroll deduction and other donation programs. Thank you for your support!

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You can designate The Education Fund as the recipient of your payroll deduction donation. Just fill out the contribution card and write in The Education Fund as your donation recipient and the amount you are donating to The Education Fund (please see note below). Then, send an e-mail to cyugler@educationfund.org or call 305-892-5099, ext. 21 so we can add your name to the list.

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When you buy the Education License Plate in Miami-Dade County, you are donating \$20 directly to The Education Fund.

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In other words, the money raised in Miami-Dade County stays in Miami-Dade County for the benefit of Miami-Dade County Public Schools students.

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Let's Get Cooking



Let's Get Cooking has "stirred up" student interest in properly following directions and picturing the final product to ensure that it "comes out right."

Let's Get Cooking provides authentic learning opportunities that involve reading, science and math. The recipes, which use readily available and inexpensive everyday products, provide hands-on practice with measuring solids and liquids and following step-by-step directions for no-cook/bake, edible and non-edible items such as Firecracker Fizzles, paper bowls and Little Miss Muffet's curds and whey.

Students look forward to the science recipes that allow them to investigate the properties of matter and produce results in the form of edible and usable items. Effortlessly they learn new vocabulary, work collaboratively and practice reading.

Let's Get Cooking has also increased parent participation and strengthened home-to-school connections, as parents not only volunteer to serve as "prep chefs" in the classroom but also help their children extend learning by trying out many of the recipes at home. Parents have also contributed recipes to the Let's Get Cooking repertoire.

STUDENTS

Let's Get Cooking can be modified to fit students in grades 1-3, in one class or an entire grade level. If parents are not available, older children in grades 4 and 5 can be invited to serve as "prep chefs."

STAFF

Kimberly Ottaviani, an M-DCPS teacher for 20 years, is a National Board Certified Teacher. She graduated from Edinboro University in Pennsylvania and received a master's in technology from Barry University. She has participated in The Education Fund's Great American Teach-a-Thon, Citi Success Fund and IMPACT II programs.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

This project can be implemented in any classroom. Some recipes require a microwave but the majority of the recipes use only everyday consumables, mixing bowls, cookie sheets, measuring cups and spoons. Other resources are recipes books from the media center, recipes found online, parent donations, and guest chefs from local restaurants.

STANDARDS

Language Arts
LA.A.1.1.2, LA.A.2.1.3

Mathematics
MA.B.1.1.1, MA.B.2.1.2

Science
SC.A.1.1.2, SC.A.1.1.3,
SC.H.1.1.5

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Life Lifting Literacy

"Music is a universal language that has been used to entertain, educate, communicate, inspire, and instill a sense of social and communal understanding," according to educators Ron and Nancy Brown. In this project, social studies and language arts are intertwined with historically significant songs to develop student interest in reading.

Some of the most moving folk songs ever to come from America are spirituals sung by blacks in the South in the days of slavery. The deep emotion and strong beat of the spirituals helped to make life a little more bearable in hard times. The words evoked feelings and memories all could share, and the rhythms of the chorus were often stressed by clapping hands.

The strong beat and rhythms appeal to the students and help them quickly learn a song's melody. They repeat each line after the teacher and follow the words on chart paper. Students who have difficulty learning words suddenly discover the ease in which they recognize words in print as they sing songs. They also discover that reading comes in a variety of forms.

STUDENTS

The flexibility of *Life Lifting Literacy* allows it to be used with students of all ages in small or medium groups. It has been used with a class of eighteen Kindergarten students and was especially beneficial for the low-performing students who struggle with word recognition. Vocabulary skills and DIBELS scores increased using this approach.

STAFF

Nancy Sale has been teaching for 24 years. She has received the Sierra Club Green Award and grants from The Education Fund's Citi Success Fund,

Teacher Mini-Grants and IMPACT II programs. She is an active member of The Dade County Science Teachers Association. This project has been used for two years. It has been shown to the public during Reading Day at the Mall and at a UTD Black History Celebration.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Music CDs, CD player, chart paper and books that provide background information on the songs. Performances with organizations such as the Dade Reading Council, United Teachers of Dade, sororities, fraternities, and civic associations motivate the

Music reaches meta-cognitive levels that are often not accessed by more mundane approaches to instruction. Life Lifting Literacy makes learning to read fun!



students to learn and attend class because they love to perform. When the song selection focuses on a specific time of the year such as Black History Month, St. Patrick's Day, or Women's History Month, special speakers can be invited to give students an understanding of the significance of the selected songs.

STANDARDS

Social Studies
SS.A.2.1.3, SS.A.3.1.3,
SS.B.1.1.3, SS.B.1.1.4

Language Arts
LA.A.1.1.0, LA.A.1.1.2,
LA.A.2.1, LA.D.2.1.3,
LA.E.2.1.0

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Radical Readers

Originally a Catherine Scripps Rodriguez Family Foundation Teacher Mini-Grant



Buddy reading requires little funding yet improves reading comprehension and writing skills. This is a positive weekly experience that children will remember the rest of their lives.

Radical Readers is an engaging supplementary activity that targets reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills as it seeks to nurture in students a lifelong love of reading. Fourth-grade students role-play the teacher and model “teacher like” questions and strategies as they go through the entire guided reading process with their younger reading buddies.

Students used class sets of trade books such as *Horrible Harry and the Dragon War*. They met biweekly and cooperatively predicted, inferred, and confirmed predictions on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Students kept an ongoing Radical Readers journal and wrote biweekly entries detailing the discoveries they made during meetings. At the end of each book, Radical Readers received a certificate for passing the accompanying Accelerated Reader test.

STUDENTS

Forty second- and fourth-grade students attended biweekly, 30-minute sessions where they interacted and engaged in various literacy activities.

STAFF

Marcia Cardona, a fourth-grade teacher, is finishing her master’s degree at Barry University. Marcia is an active member in the Dade Reading Council, a Teacher as Hero winner, and the recipient of the Dade Reading Council Literacy Grant. She is also Vice President of her family business. She is active in her church and organizes retreats for abused and neglected children.

Cary Cabrera, a second-grade teacher, has a master’s in reading and participated in IMPACT II last year. She is a Teacher as Hero winner, recipient of the Dade Reading Council Literacy Grant, and the Marguerite Radencich Graduate Scholarship. Cary is also an active baseball mom and vice president of a non-profit that benefits youth baseball.

MATERIALS &

RESOURCES

Writing materials, a variety of books, and award certificates.

STANDARDS

Language Arts
LA.A.2.1.1, LA.A.1.2.3.4.1,
LA.B.2.2.1.4.1

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Sponsored by:

Florida Matching Grants Program



Words of Wisdom: Vivacious Vocabulary Ventures

Many students read with fluency, but often don't understand the text because of difficult vocabulary. How can one improve students' vocabulary without resorting to rote drills? Memorizing words and their definitions is boring and temporary. Are there some stimulating and electrifying activities to promote vocabulary development?

Turn to *Words of Wisdom* for a plethora of activities that stimulate an interest in words. This project includes innovative, hands-on, and practical activities to learn and reinforce vocabulary, class games to make practicing an invigorating experience and home-learning tasks to achieve success. While these activities are mostly geared toward grades 2-5, teachers, tutors, university students, and parents working with all grade levels will find the suggestions in *Words of Wisdom* to be easily adaptable.

STUDENTS

Students in grades 1-6 have enjoyed these vocabulary activities for more than 33 years.

STAFF

Linda Askari Blanchfield, a Reading Resource teacher, has been teaching in grades 2-6 for more than 33 years. She has participated in IMPACT II with numerous projects and grants since 1991. Her published book, *Why Didn't I Think of That!* (Creative Teaching Press, 2002) was originally an IMPACT disseminator project in 1993. Linda is on the Dade Reading Council Board and organizes several of its events and projects.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Only a few items, such as index cards, permanent markers, and file folders, are required. Preparation time is necessary, but reasonable. The Idea Packet contains blackline masters of project materials that can be copied and lists of excellent support resource books and websites that offer free and inexpensive materials.

STANDARDS

Language Arts
LA.D.1.1, LA.D.2.1

This project shows ways to take the existing vocabulary words found in basal readers and textbooks and turn them into playful practice and meaningful moments!



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The William J. and Tina Rosenberg Foundation

Math Around the Block

This project promotes creativity within the mathematics curriculum by incorporating lessons that involve blocks along with language arts and social studies. For example, in a measurement lesson, blocks are used to find the perimeter of objects. Students first predict how many blocks to use, test their theory and then check it against their predictions and graph the results. An extension of this lesson repeats the process with a different shaped block.

Writing is linked to math when blocks are used to create scenes that are incorporated into stories, or to design a setting that matches a scene in a story. In yet another activity, students don construction hats when they enter the building zone to “recreate” a building they have researched on the Internet and for which they have drawn the blueprints.

An entirely different aspect to the project is the use of specialized blocks, such as Lincoln logs for a history lesson or pattern blocks to copy designs or works of art.

STUDENTS

Twenty first-grade students participated in the block center. The project may be adapted for students in pre-K through grade 3.

STAFF

Zeny Ulloa has taught for seven years. Before working for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, she was a religion teacher. She received blocks for her classroom from an IMPACT II Adapter grant from The Education Fund.

MATERIALS &

RESOURCES

A 5'x 8' rug area, a bookshelf to store blocks, children's math picture books from the library, and *Block Play* by Sharon MacDonald (available through Kaplan) are used. Speakers from the construction industry are invited to describe materials and systems used in their field.

STANDARDS

Mathematics
 MA.A.1.1.2, MA.A.1.1.3,
 MA.B.1.1.1, MA.B.1.1.2,
 MA.B.2.1.1, MA.B.3.1.1,
 MA.C.1.1.1, MA.C.2.1.1,
 MA.C.2.1.2, MA.D.1.1.1,
 MA.D.1.1.2



A classroom set of blocks adds a creative element to math functions such as measuring, number operations, spatial sense and algebraic thinking.

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Sponsored by:



Mathematical Novels

Originally a Citi Success Fund grant

This interdisciplinary project connects students to the mathematical strands by means of literature and accompanying hands-on activities. Reading tends to be taught as an isolated subject, which creates difficulty for students who lack the vocabulary to master concepts in math or science. This project uses organizational tools and strategies such as the KWL and Venn diagrams, as well as the use of quality literature, to make reading a natural part of mathematics.

For example, a lesson on geometry begins with the teacher activating prior knowledge by asking questions about the cover and title of the book, *The Greedy Triangle*. Then the book is read at a pace that all the learners can enjoy. A positive environment is created by the students responding to the book's humor. Then, after a discussion of the book, students work on their own triangle reference book. They make a step book that contains the six different types of triangles with their definition, illustration, and labels (e.g. legs, vertex, angle and side measurements).

STUDENTS

Forty-five fifth-grade students from low-performing to gifted, and including ESOL and ADHD, participated. This project can be adapted to fit various grades and ESE populations. It can also be used to differentiate instruction in the classroom.

STAFF

Vanessa Paneca is third-year teacher who is also the SECME coordinator at her school. She holds a certificate in Exceptional Education and has an ESOL endorsement. She graduated summa cum

laude from Barry University and is working on a master's degree in Educational Administration from St. Thomas University. She is a member of the International Reading Association, Dade Reading Council, Phi Delta Kappa Honor Society, and the Kappa Delta Phi Honor Society, and serves as an advisor to the Alpha Phi International Fraternity. Ms. Paneca is a recipient of an HP Technology for Teaching grant and The Education Fund's Adapter grant, Citi Success Fund and Teacher Mini-Grant.

Children's books are effective classroom vehicles for motivating students to think imaginatively and reason mathematically.



MATERIALS & RESOURCES

This project uses math literature books, pattern blocks, geo-boards, compasses, protractors, scales, fraction circles, Reflecta geometry mirrors, dry-erase mats, checks, deposit tickets, and the school lamination machine. A motivational incentive program used with this project is described in the Idea Packet. Parents and school staff donate checkbook covers and a bank representative can give a lesson on checking and savings accounts.

STANDARDS

Mathematics
MA.A.1.2.4, MA.B.4.2.2

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Florida Matching Grants Program



Twists and Turns

Mathematics has many branches. Algebra and geometry have many offshoots. Among these extensions are transformations, fractals and topology. The activities in Twists and Turns have been used for more than five years to enrich and extend geometry classes. The core concept of transformations becomes increasingly important as students progress beyond Algebra I. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has called for the inclusion of more fractals and topology in the secondary school curriculum.

The activities are interactive exploratory activities that encourage higher-order thinking skills. For example, in Mobius Operandi, students discover patterns in the Mobius strip based upon the number of twists and the location of cuts. In Anchors Aweigh, students develop a bulletin board-size anchor pattern fractal. In Doughnuts and Mugs, students develop a topological classification system. Online lesson extensions are also provided.

STUDENTS

Ninth- and tenth-grade students in regular and honors geometry participated. Some activities are also applicable to Algebra I and II courses.

STAFF

Marilyn Riggins has been a mathematics teacher at South Miami Senior High for 27 years. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and has received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching from the National Science Foundation.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Scissors, poster board, index cards and string are used in addition to standard classroom supplies.

STANDARDS

Mathematics
MA.A.5.4.1, MA.C.2.4.1,
MA.D.1.4.1

Technology has added new dimensions to the mathematics of growth and change. Fractals, transformations, and topology are newly in vogue topics that give students new windows into the beauty and breadth of the mathematics around us.



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An Eye for Science



This project is highly engaging for students and manageable for teachers with its inexpensive materials, small-group hands-on activities and surprising experiments. Activities such as Mirror Multiplication, Tasty Vision and Eye Spy bring the human eye and its functions into focus.

This project enhances the study of light and the human eye with stimulating hands-on activities.

Students assemble a model of the human eye, make and learn to use a spectroscope, and experiment with visual illusions that provide a clear understanding of how the brain perceives images.

From experimenting with blind spots to researching the history of eyeglasses to performing vision screenings, students work as magicians, scientists and doctors. In collaborative small group activities, students delight in using old CDs, black paper, cellophane paper, flashlights, mirrors and round fishbowls to conduct an assortment of novel experiments involving light and sight. The initial activity of making a model of the eye equips students with a working knowledge of how the eye functions, which enables them to grasp the concepts of light more readily.

STUDENTS

Thirty-six students with varied levels of achievement participated, including low-performing students. The project can easily be adapted for use with students in grades 3-6 in both small or large groups.

STAFF

Raylin Escobar graduated magna cum laude from Florida International University with an ESOL endorsement in 2002. She currently teaches an inclusion class and continually looks for ways to improve the classroom experience for all students through collaborative small group activities.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Black paper, CDs (free trial CDs, etc.) flashlights, cellophane paper, fish bowl, magnifying lens, toy car, and a computer with Internet access are needed. A presentation by an ophthalmologist adds to the project. Science teachers and the media specialist are other valuable resources.

STANDARDS

Science
SC.F.1.2.1, SC.B.1.2.2

Mathematics
MA.B.1.2.2

Social Studies
SS.A.3.2.1

Language Arts
LA.A.2.2.5

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Ben Sheppard Elementary
5700 West 24 Avenue
Hialeah, FL 33016

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Fax: 305-822-0558

Principal: John C. Lux

Sponsored by:

Florida Matching Grants Program



BIG Ideas + Science = Great FCAT Results

BIG Ideas is designed to add pizzazz to any science curriculum! The activities target the Sunshine State Standards as well as focus on the development of science skills through experimentation and demonstration. The topics of the hands-on activities in *BIG Ideas* touch upon the concepts within earth, life, and physical science. These activities are designed to supplement any established elementary science curriculum.

The experiments and lessons from *BIG Ideas* are easy to implement and a great way to introduce and reinforce new concepts in science. They are explicitly planned to include a materials list, step-by-step instruction, reproducible patterns and some extension activities. Although these lessons are used to entice students to study science, they contain a wealth of information that supports the National Science Education Standards.

STUDENTS

BIG Ideas is currently used with fourth- and fifth-grade students to supplement the current science curriculum in the full-time gifted program.

STAFF

Marlene Figueroa has been a National Board Certified Teacher since 1999 and has taught in the gifted program for 16 years. Her degree is in elementary education with an early childhood, gifted and ESOL endorsement. She is currently working on her master's degree in reading education at Florida International University. She has received grants from The Education Fund and has written grant proposals for the Dade Reading Council and Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Magnets, measuring spoons & cups, rocks, droppers, maps, construction paper, yarn, crayons, glue, index cards, chart paper and recyclable materials normally found in homes.

STANDARDS

If all of the project's lessons are used in conjunction with an existing science curriculum, then all of the Sunshine State Standards in science are covered.

The experiments and lessons in BIG Ideas are designed to add pizzazz to any science curriculum! They not only target the Sunshine State Standards, but are also easy-to-implement and fun!



Marlene Figueroa

mefigueroa@dadeschools.net

Coral Way K-8 Center

1950 SW 13 Avenue

Miami, FL 33145

Mail Code: 1121

Telephone: 305-854-0515

Fax: 305-295-9632

Principal: Dr. Pablo G. Ortiz

Sponsored by:



Classify It

Originally a Teacher Mini-Grant



Coupling technology with math and science into meaningful, authentic lessons piques the interest of students and makes learning more fun.

While studying about how living things are classified, students conducted research related to the five kingdoms. Students were divided into groups and each group chose one of the kingdoms to examine further. After viewing instructions on how to create and enhance a multimedia presentation, students used their observations, data and pictures gathered from the digital microscope and camera to create a multimedia presentation that they shared with their classmates.

A key goal was to reveal to students the many ways that mathematics and science are interrelated. Mathematics is integrated throughout the project as students collect measurements, record data and create charts and graphs of the information they collect during their scientific investigations.

Another goal was to increase students' computer skills and help them learn how to make sensible use of technology.

STUDENTS

The project was originally designed for two classes of fifth-grade students. The teacher team-taught with one teacher covering math and science and the other covering reading, language arts and social studies. The concepts taught in science were reinforced with reading materials during language arts. This project was also adapted for the second- and third-grade students in the gifted program.

STAFF

Marcelle Farley is a National Board Certified Teacher who holds a master's degree in elementary education and a specialist degree in Montessori education. She has taught at Joella C. Good for 13 years and currently teaches gifted students in grades 1-5. Ms. Farley is a member of the Dade County Science Teacher Association and coordinator of the SECME program at her school. As a technology mentor, she offers teachers opportunities to infuse technology into the curriculum.

MATERIALS &

RESOURCES

Proscope digital microscope, digital camera, multimedia projector, Microsoft PowerPoint, computers, specimens from each kingdom, and books on related topics.

STANDARDS

Mathematics
MA.B.4.2, MA.D.1.2, MA.E.1.2

Science
SC.F.1.2

Marcelle Farley

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Joella C. Good Elementary
6350 NW 188 Terrace
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Fax: 305-628-0460
Principal: Lizette Campa

Sponsored by:

**William L. Culbert Jr.
Trust**

Forensics Solves the Case of the High Achieving Students

Incorporating forensics into the middle school science curriculum enhances both student motivation and acquisition of scientific concepts. It also serves to strengthen problem solving and critical thinking skills. Since forensics incorporates key principles of biology, chemistry, earth science, and physics, it provides an ideal avenue for integrating benchmarks within the eight strands of the Sunshine State Standards in science.

The forensics unit exposes students to a wide variety of activities, such as role playing, writing, laboratory activities, and utilization of technology, in order to improve numerous academic skills. The continuous application of the scientific method to real-life crime situations requires the students to collect, report, and analyze data and then draw conclusions. Furthermore, in order to actually “solve crimes,” students must first master the scientific principles involved and then utilize higher-order thinking skills. As a result, students gain a greater understanding of many key science standards as well as first-hand knowledge of the inquiry nature of science.

STUDENTS

This unit was developed for advanced students in grades 6-7 who take only two years of Comprehensive Science in middle school. It covers numerous benchmarks that would otherwise be covered during a third year of Comprehensive Science. Nevertheless, this unit can be adapted to any middle school science class.

STAFF

Michael Weiss has been a Miami-Dade County Public School teacher for twenty-two years. He currently heads the science department at Riviera Middle School. He served for four years as a Curriculum Support Specialist in the Division of Mathematics and Science Education, where he provided workshops and modeled lessons for teachers throughout the county. He has received numerous grants, including Citi Success Fund grants from The Education Fund. He is also a Teachers Network Leadership Institute Fellow and holds an M.S. in Science Education from Florida International University.

Forensics exposes students to a hands-on, inquiry-based approach to science that incorporates real-world practical applications while integrating principles of Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, and Physics.



MATERIALS & RESOURCES

The versatility of this project allows it to be modified for various science classes. As such, the materials, supplies, resources, and benchmarks involved are identified in the particular activities found within the Idea Packet.

STANDARDS

This project covers the benchmarks within the eight strands of the Sunshine State Standards in science.

Michael Weiss

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Principal: Valerie Carrier

Sponsored by:



Light It Up



In this science inquiry, students prepare for the fifth-grade science FCAT as they do the work of a real scientist – actively exploring, recording their observations in a science notebook, conducting investigations, collecting and processing data and building explanations based on evidence.

Light It Up builds fundamental concepts in the physical sciences through direct experience with electrical circuits and technology design projects.

Using electrical “stuff” such as wires, bulbs, and batteries, *Light It Up* includes investigations that are both useful and fun.

This unit demonstrates the importance of integrating science notebooks and writing through inquiry-based science. Students are first introduced to the basic properties of conductors and insulators and the symbols used to represent parts in circuit diagrams. They then explore different kinds of circuits and learn about switches. Students put the principles of technological design to use when they design and construct a flashlight and wire a cardboard house.

Technology is integrated throughout the unit as students research and explore the Internet to find answers to their questions.

STUDENTS

Light It Up is for intermediate students of all achievement levels. Materials and procedures for this unit are based on groups of two and four. Some activities work best with a partner and other activities, such as wiring a house, can be done in a learning group of four. This approach provides a small forum in which students can learn from each other by sharing ideas, discoveries, and skills. It is designed to be taught over a nine-week period, three times a week with class sessions of 60 minutes.

STAFF

DeeDee Conte is a gifted facilitator who has been teaching in M-DCPS schools for 25 years. In addition, she was an Educational Specialist for the M-DCPS Division of Advanced Academics and has worked as an educational consultant for Carolina Biological Supply Company, conducting workshops throughout the U.S. on teaching strategies of science inquiry, using the “Science and Technology for Children” curriculum developed by the National Science Resource Center. She has also presented at local, state and national conferences in the areas of science and technology. Ms. Conte has received several

grants from The Education Fund. For this project no additional staff are required; however, an hour is needed to set up the lessons and to strip the wires for the circuits.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Most materials used are simple household objects. Other items, such as bulb and battery holders, may be purchased through Carolina Biological Supply Company.

STANDARDS

Science
SC.B.1.2.2, SC.B.1.2.3, SC.H.1.2

Language Arts
L.A.B.1.2, L.A.B.2.2

DeeDee Conte

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Bob Graham Education
Center

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Principal: Dr. Robin Behrman

Sponsored by:



Marine Conservation Projects

Free resources and funds for Marine Conservation projects.

HOW TO APPLY FOR ADAPTER GRANTS ON MARINE PROJECTS

- View/print IMPACT II Idea Packets (guides that include lesson plans, worksheets and resource lists) of Marine Conservation projects online at www.educationfund.org.
- Contact the author/disseminator of the project for advice on implementing the idea.
- Apply online at www.educationfund.org for a quick and easy Adapter grant (up to \$400) for any of the Marine projects listed on this page. An Adapter application is also found in the inserts of this *Ideas with IMPACT* catalog.

PROJECTS TO ADAPT

Building an Aquatic Think-Tank
Students learn by experience in an authentic context as they care for marine life. The class think-tank tackles issues of water pollution and overfishing.

Sherian Demetrius
sheriandemetrius@hotmail.com
North Glade Elementary

Hooked on Fishing with the Reel Family

Students study the health of an oceanic ecosystem using a blend of quantitative and interpretive tools as they collect data about fish populations from simulated fishing expeditions over several generations.

Don Derez, NBCT
dderez@dadeschools.net
Biscayne Nature Center for Environmental Education
305-361-6767, ext. 115

Ocean Adventures in the School of Learning

The ocean is the school-wide theme used in a wide range of interdisciplinary activities that supplement the curriculum.

Mary Sisley
msisley@dadeschools.net

Our Ancient Fossilized Rock Reef: An Exploration!

Students apply their study of marine organisms adapting to life on a local fossilized rock reef to the world of engineering.

Don Derez, NBCT
dderez@dadeschools.net
Biscayne Nature Center for Environmental Education

Reeling in Reading

Fishing is the lure used to reel in reluctant readers to a reading club. From their readings of Zane Grey's fishing books and *The Florida Sportman*, they examine the culture of Florida fishing.

Anna Menendez
amenendez@dadeschools.net
South Dade Senior High

Tropical Underwater Dreams

Students explore science content in the context of producing a variety show on tropical fish. In the process, they learn the importance of sustaining ocean habitats.

Mark Rosenkrantz, NBCT
mrosenkrantz@dadeschools.net
David Lawrence Jr. k-8 Center



Sponsored by:



Where Did the Sea Turtle Lay Her Eggs? A Case for a Forensic Geoscientist

Students learn to work as scientists as they analyze sand and determine the best beach sites for sea turtles.

Don Derez, NBCT
dderez@dadeschools.net
Biscayne Nature Center for Environmental Education

You and Me...Under the Sea

A year-long interdisciplinary study that focuses on marine life and how to maintain a healthy ocean environment. It includes detailed information on billfish conservation.

Margie Love
MML947@aol.com
David Lawrence Jr. k-8 Center

RESOURCES

Billfish Foundation
www.billfish.org
Publications available for classroom use on the biology and ecology of billfish.

MARS – Marine Animal Rescue Society
www.marineanimalrescue.org
Presentations to school groups.

National Ocean & Atmospheric Administration
<http://oceanexplore.noaa.gov>
Direct access to 240+ lesson plans on ocean life.

The Ocean Project
TheOceanProject.org
Educational resources and lesson plans on all aspects of the ocean.

Yamaha Contender Miami Billfish Tournament
www.miamibillfish.com
Annual April tournament has events open to the public.

Sea Turtle Search + Rescue = Conservation

Originally a Teacher Mini-Grant



Through their own interaction with conservation organizations and by tracking a protected wildlife species relevant to Florida, students learn firsthand how their studies can impact their environment. Teachers of any discipline can implement this project as in-depth as they want or need.

Learning about sea turtles through online tracking of conservation Web sites creates an exciting real-life application in which students can see their own impact on an endangered species.

In this project, students work in learning groups as environmental biologists researching sea turtle species behavior and physiology. Students learn the importance of conserving oceans and marine life and discover ways they can contribute to preservation and protection of mothers and babies. The class participates in virtual interactive nesting activities and “adopts” a nesting female turtle through www.seaturtle.org that they can continue tracking online.

STUDENTS

The project was designed for middle school (grade 8) students, although students of any age could benefit.

STAFF

Gwen Foote is an eighth-grade science teacher. She has a B.S. in Biomedical Science from Texas A&M; a B.S. in Elementary Education from Black Hills State College and the Oglala Lakota College; and a master’s in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Texas. She is certified in Special Education and has an endorsement from the Gifted and Talented Institute of the University of South Dakota. She has worked as a medical technologist, art instructor and has taught at the elementary and college level on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. She has received grants from NASA, Heard Museum, Toshiba, NSTA and numerous others throughout her career. She was recognized by the Oglala Lakota Tribe for her humanitarian and education efforts.

Ms. Foote also lectures to schools, youth and non-profit organizations on a range of topics including ecology, wildlife, Native American issues, human rights and environmental science. She completed a Sea Turtle Rescue internship at Southern Georgia University.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Computer with Internet access, compass, topographical maps, supplies for art presentations and mock nesting models. Overhead or LCD projector. Web sites include www.seaturtle.org, www.noaa.gov, www.cccturtles.org and www.seaturtles.org.

STANDARDS

Science
SC.B, SC.D, SC.F, SC.G

Mathematics
MA.A, MA.B, MA.C, MA.D

Language Arts
LA.A, LA.B, LA.C

Gwendolyn Foote

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Principal:
Dr. Allyn Bernstein-Sachtle

Sponsored by:

**William L. Culbert Jr.
Trust**

"Whoo..."

Whoo... is a meaningful real-life unit focusing on a discovery approach to science and developing students' opinions on important issues. Students start the unit dissecting owl pellets. When they find bones, they identify and classify them and compare them to their own bodies. Next, the students arrange the bones to form a skeleton. Along with integrated activities, the owl pellets teach students predator-prey relationships. Students can readily understand why owls need mice to survive, but this activity additionally clarifies why mice need owls.

The students' learning experience is enriched with the reading of the Newberry Honor novel, *Hoot*, by Carl Hiaasen. *Hoot* celebrates young people's ability to make a difference in society. Their quest is to save the burrow owls' habitat from corrupt developers. Students develop strong analytical skills as they research, discuss, and write about important issues raised in the book.

STUDENTS

"Whoo..." is designed for intermediate students, elementary grades 3-5. It could easily be adapted to meet middle school needs as well as the needs of small or large groups. Thirty-nine students in grades 3-5 with below-average to above-average reading skills participated in the initial project. They met twice a week for a period of four weeks.

STAFF

Carole Slonin, a gifted facilitator, holds a master's in Reading from Barry University and has been teaching for more than 31 years in grades K-7. She has participated in The Education Fund's programs since 1990. She has been a proud recipient of numerous grants – Citi Success Fund, Teacher Mini-Grant, Adapter Grants, and an Impact II Disseminator Grant – and participated in The Great American Teach-A-Thon.

Ms. Slonin has created many interdisciplinary units, presented workshops, assisted on many grant writing teams, and presently serves on the Teacher Advisory Board for Scholastic's Super Science magazine.

Even reluctant readers become motivated when they are involved in "Whoo..." – they love the science connection.



MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Suggested resources include the Internet and school media center for additional information; a planned field trip to the Everglades for grades 5 through middle school through MAST Academy; and a guest speaker from Miami-Dade AHEC Association with a presentation called "Bone Zone."

STANDARDS

Language Arts
LA.B.1.2, LA.B.2.2,
LA.A.1.14

Science
SC.A.1.2, SC.H.1.2

Carole Slonin

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Sponsored by:

Florida Matching Grants Program



Celebrate Us!

Originally a Citi Success Fund and TNLI Action Research Project



Incorporating students' culture into their lessons and homework assignments increases parental involvement. Breaching the cultural barriers motivates both parents and students to work together to complete the homework assignments, resulting in a positive impact on students' academic performance.

Celebrate Us was developed based on action research that demonstrated how infusing students' culture into homework assignments increases parental involvement, which in turn improves academic achievement. The project's plethora of hands-on activities covers all aspects of the students' heritage and culture. It begins with students maintaining a family journal and researching their culture, country of origin, and family heritage. Through research, technology, discussions, journaling, and the creation of an extensive report and presentation, students complete work in language arts, reading and social studies.

During this project, the students, parents, and educators not only embrace their own culture but are exposed, through presentations and festivals, to all the diverse cultures that make up the school's community.

STUDENTS

This project was designed to be adapted by almost any grade and achievement level. It has been used with Kindergarten, second- and sixth-grade students. The sixth-grade class met daily for Language Arts and Geography for five weeks. There were in-class lessons, independent activities and home learning assignments.

STAFF

Patti Ward graduated cum laude from Barry University with a B.S. in 1981. She received a Master's of Urban Education from FIU in 1992. She has 25 years of teaching experience in Miami-Dade County Schools. She has been selected as a Chapter 1 Teacher of the Year, MetLife TNLI Fellow, a directing teacher of five interns, as well as selected four times for "Who's Who of American Teachers." She has been awarded grants from Cedars Medical Center, Adopt-a-Classroom and The Education Fund's Impact II and Citi Success Fund programs.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Disposable cameras, journals and arts and crafts materials are used. Included in the Idea packet are journal ideas, references, resources, lesson plans, a grading scale and items to include in students' reports.

STANDARDS

Grades 3-5:
 Language Arts
 LA.A.2.2, LA.B.1.2, LA.B.2.2, LA.C.3.2
 Social Studies
 SS.B.1.2, SS.B.2.2, SS.D.2.2
 Grades K-2:
 Language Arts
 LA.B.2.1, LA.A.2.1, LA.C.1.1, LA.B.1.1, LA.C.3.1
 Social Studies
 SS.B.1.1, SS.B.2.1, SS.D.2.1
 Foreign Languages
 FL.A.3.1, FL.B.1.1
 Grades 6-8:
 Language Arts
 LA.B.1.3, LA.A.2.3, LA.B.2.3, LA.C.1.3, LA.D.2.3, LA.C.3.3
 Social Studies
 SS.B.2.3, SS.B.1.3, SS.D.2.3

Patti Ward

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 Fax: 305-949-4090
 Principal: Mark Mijuskovic

Sponsored by:



Holocaust Education

This collection of resources and IMPACT II programs on Holocaust Education is provided to ensure that the important lessons of the Holocaust are not forgotten and will be passed on from generation to generation. This vast array of programs by highly qualified teachers enhances the Holocaust curriculum for most grade and academic levels. Funding for all of the programs listed below is available through Adapter grants.

FUNDS AVAILABLE TO IMPLEMENT PROJECTS

- View/print the Idea Packets (guides that include lesson plans, worksheets and resource lists) of the Holocaust projects online at www.educationfund.org.
- Contact the author/disseminator of the project for advice on implementing the idea.
- Apply for an Adapter grant (up to \$400) for any of the Holocaust projects listed below on-line at www.educationfund.org. An Adapter application is also found in the inserts of this Ideas with IMPACT catalog.

PROJECTS TO ADAPT

Anne Frank: The Story (6-10, social studies, language arts)
Research and writing skills are taught as students keep journals throughout their study of Anne Frank: The Play.
Ilana Ascher-Alamo
Arvida Middle School
Mail Code: 6021
305-385-7144 305-383-9472 (fax)

Courage to Care Quilt Project (2-12, social studies)
A study of the Holocaust with its courageous victims, rescuers and resistance fighters is a precursor to the quilt project. Students then study people from other eras who had the vision and courage to make positive changes in the world.
Dr. Anita Meinbach
(contact *The Education Fund*, 305-892-5099, ext. 18)

Entombed, a Holocaust Remembrance (9-12, English)
Coupling the written word, "Entombed" by Bernard Mayer, a local author, with an audio recording (provided by

disseminator) is a powerful and effective teaching tool. Jewish life and survival tactics during WWII are told in a first person account.
Deedee Toner, Media Specialist
South Dade Senior High
Mail Code: 7701
305-247-4244, ext. 2252
dtoner@dadeschools.net

Never Forget (1-2, social studies, language arts) Lessons and activities based on picture books fulfill the requirements of the State of Florida mandate requiring Holocaust Education for primary age. *Lizette Kabak Weingard*
Virginia Boone Highland Oaks Elementary
Mail Code: 2441 305-931-1770
Lkabak@aol.com

Teaching the New Three R's: Respect, Responsibility and Remembrance (9-12, English, world history, American government) A series of activities using primary documents and first-hand reports which culminates in student presentations to their peers and a Holocaust survivor.
Jan Hartleben
(contact *The Education Fund*, 305-892-5099, ext. 18)

The Holocaust Remembered: A Multi-Media Showcase and Contest (6-12, interdisciplinary) Lessons from the Holocaust are applied to original projects in a variety of medium. A showcase, contest and a series of guest lectures, including Holocaust survivors and Allied liberators, educate the school and community on the Holocaust.
Deedee Toner
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dtoner@dadeschools.net



Sponsored by:

Robert Russell Memorial Foundation

The Robert Russell Memorial Foundation was created by Bob Russell, a long-time Miami leader. It was activated at the time of his death in December, 1983. It funds programs for youth in Miami and supports many programs benefiting the Jewish communities in Miami, the nation and in Israel.

RESOURCES

Dr. Miriam Klein Kassenoff
M-DCPS Education Specialist,
Holocaust Education
Director, UM Holocaust Studies
Summer Institute
Education Director,
The Holocaust Memorial
1500 Biscayne Blvd.,
Miami, FL 33132
305-995-1201
mkassenoff@dadeschools.net

Dr. Kassenoff provides information and workshops on Holocaust Education. She co-authored with Dr. Anita Meinbach: *Memories of the Night: A Guide to the Holocaust and Studying the Holocaust Through Film and Literature.*

The Holocaust Memorial
1933-1945 Meridian Avenue
Miami Beach, FL 33139
305-538-1663
www.holocaustmmb.org

A large environmental sculpture with a series of outdoor spaces designed to lead the visitor through a procession of visual, historical and emotional experiences. It provides cultural and educational programs for the community including field trips for students.

Holocaust Documentation & Education Center
(Museum to open in 2008)
www.holocaust.fiu.edu
305-919-5690
Rositta Kenigsberg
Rositta@hdec.org or
merle@hdec.org

Provides the following for educators:

- State of Florida Resource Manual on Holocaust Education
- Teachers' Institute on Holocaust Studies
- Student Awareness Days
- Speakers Bureau
- Writing and Visual Arts Contest (middle, high school)

USC Shoah Foundation
Institute for Visual History and Education
www.usc.edu/schools/college/vhi
213-740-6001

- An archive of 10,000+ online visual history testimonies of Holocaust survivors.
- Echoes & Reflections: a multi-media curriculum for high school students is available at www.echoesandreflections.org

We Didn't Start the Fire Scrapbook Challenge



“With so much emphasis on testing and isolated skill development in preparation for FCAT, it is refreshing to see an engaging project on U.S. History that challenges students to develop their research, writing and higher-level thinking skills.”

– John R. Doyle, Administrative Director,
M-DCPS Division of Social Sciences

Students are challenged to create a scrapbook with a chapter on each of the last six decades.

Each chapter must contain primary document research on every subject mentioned in Billy Joel’s 1989 song, “We Didn’t Start the Fire.”

Students also create chapters that identify for each decade a best-selling novel, four memorable national news events, the most popular film, a music performer/band, as well as one memorable sporting event. Students also include an essay analyzing what they believe Billy Joel meant to express with the phrase, “We didn’t start the fire.” This song review not only generates a study of modern US history and current events, but enhances analytical and critical thinking, research and study skills.

STUDENTS

During 2004-2005, 100 grade 8 students, and in 2005-2006, 120 grade 9 students – from both regular and advanced classes – participated. The 2005-2006 class was invited to display their scrapbook at Florida International University, where they had conducted most of their primary document research. This project may be adapted for Inclusion, Regular, Advanced and Honors students from grades 8-12, and used with both large and small groups.

STAFF

Monica Rosales began teaching in 2003 and has taught Bilingual Curriculum Content students, Inclusion, Regular, Advanced and Honors social studies. She was the 2004 Doral Middle School Rookie Teacher of the Year and was recognized in Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers and as a Marquis Who’s Who in America in 2007. There is no need for staff assistance on this project, although parent involvement is highly encouraged.

MATERIALS

Creative recycled materials such as magazine cut-outs are encouraged, but purchased scrap-booking supplies are also used. The Idea Packet contains a scrapbook rubric based on content and creativity to offset the purchased supplies, a student instruction hand-out, detailed grading scale and an Internet resource handout.

RESOURCES

A field trip to the media center at the local public library; Internet resources. (The Idea Packet contains a handout on distinguishing between historically reliable and unreliable websites.) Teachers may seek discounts or donations from local scrap-booking companies.

STANDARDS

Sunshine State Standards

Social Studies
SS.A.5.4.5, SS.A.5.4.6,
SS.A.5.4.7, SS.B.1.4.4,
SS.C.1.4.4

Language Arts
LA.A.2.4.6, LA.A.2.4.7,
LA.A.2.4.8, LA.A.2.4.4

NCSS Curriculum Standards
for Social Studies

I Culture; II Time Continuity
and Change; V Individuals,
Groups and Institutions; IX
Global Connections

Monica D. Rosales

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Principal: Tatiana De
Miranda

Sponsored by:

**Original Impressions
and
William L. Culbert Jr.
Trust**

Animate It

Originally an Assurant Teacher Mini-Grant

In a unit on space, students study living on the International Space Station (ISS) and design a Claymation movie to demonstrate their knowledge. Students worked with computers to research, gather and present information on living in space. The art teacher and the gifted resource teacher collaborated to engage students in this project. Under the direction of the gifted resource teacher, the students studied and discussed various aspects of space travel. They investigated what astronauts do on the ISS and considered factors such as gravity, air purity, and daily activities.

Students worked in groups to develop their ideas and create a storyboard. The art teacher assisted with designing the background scene and guided students in creating their models. Both teachers instructed and supervised students as they developed their backdrops, sculpted figures of wire and clay, posed the models, and took photographs that were uploaded to the computer. Students then learned to use animation software to create the movie. A special screening of the final production was shown to their peers.

STUDENTS

The project was designed for fourth- and fifth-grade students in the gifted program. The students worked in teams in every phase of the project.

STAFF

Nancy Mastronardi, the art teacher, and Marcelle Farley, teacher of the gifted, are both National Board Certified and hold master's degrees. They both teach at Joella C. Good Elementary and have worked together on many projects. Ms. Farley is a member of the Miami-Dade County Science Teacher Association and coordinator of the SECME program at her school. Mrs. Mastronardi has entered her students' art work in many competitions, where they have received numerous awards.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Twisteez colored wire, packs of clay, pipe cleaners, aluminum foil, garlic press, poster board, foam core board, monofilament fishing line, DVDs, cutting pliers, bending pliers, tripods, ClearOne Communications FlexCam, 100 Wigley Eyes, low-temp glue gun, glue sticks, animation software.

STANDARDS

Science
SC.E.1.2, SE.E.2.2
Visual Arts
VA.A.1.2, VA.B.1.2, VA.E.1.2

In this fusion of science and visual arts, students delve into life on the International Space Station and create an animated movie to document their learning.



Nancy Mastronardi
Marcelle Farley
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Sponsored by:



Teaching Classroom to Global Collaboration on the Web



These activities engage students in a global community through online collaborations that broaden their perspectives, promote cultural awareness, and encourage service – all while learning across the curriculum.

Educators realize the need to bring what they teach and how they teach into line with how the modern world works. For the 21st century, students need to know more about the world and become global citizens, work in teams with people from different cultures and learn technology skills. To facilitate this approach to learning, global Internet opportunities abound for collaborative projects in all subject areas. Students use the Internet to reach out globally in projects that range from posting tourism brochures on their cities in the City Quest Web site, to “playwriting in the round” with different classes writing one act of a mystery play, to exchanging cultural artifacts and picture essays in an ecological footprint project on sustainable development.

In other projects, students use math skills to investigate social concerns as they compare global water consumption and use the data to promote greater equity in the world around them. With Global Lab, classrooms join a collaborative science investigation and analyze local “study

sites” from biological, physical, chemical and geographic perspectives. In Lab’s Alive, experiments are held simultaneously in a number of different countries and in a wildlife migration project students throughout the U.S. and Canada analyze and exchange their findings on the Internet. Each of these units incorporates writing, math, science and language arts. In addition to these, there are many music, visual art, and movie Internet collaborations that appeal to students of all ages and help to promote a better understanding of the world.

STUDENTS

This project is suitable for grades three through nine for either classroom or school-wide use. The curriculum can be accelerated or simplified according to classroom-based objectives.

STAFF

Minerva (Mickey) Santerre has been teaching for 25 years and is a National Board Certified Teacher in Middle Childhood Generalist. She holds a Specialist degree in Science Education and is in the final stages of obtaining her doctoral degree. She is on the Advisory Board of the National Science Teachers Association in Special Education. She has received multiple grants from The Education Fund.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Items used are binders, folders, journals, still and video digital cameras, and DVD disks. Web sites include: www.learner.org/jnorth, www.joensuu.fi/eno/basics/briefly, www.us.learnonline.org, www.artifactbox.com, and www.futurecity.org.

STANDARDS

Science
SC.G.1.2.1

Language Arts
LA.B.2.2.1, LA.B.2.2.2, LA.B.2.2.3, LA.B.2.2.4., LA.B.2.2.6

Social Studies
SS.B.2.1.1, SS.B.1.3.2, SS.B.1.3.4, SS.B.2.3.1, SS.B.2.3.2., SS.B.2.3.3

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Sponsored by:



The ABC Quilting Bee

Originally an Assurant Teacher Mini-Grant



In this project that builds self-esteem and fine motor skills, a diverse student population researches, synthesizes ideas into images and draws to produce a work of art that is displayed to the public.

In *The ABC Quilting Bee*, a team of special education teachers guide students who are learning disabled, autistic, trainable mentally handicapped, and profoundly mentally handicapped through an exploration of the alphabet. First, the class chooses multiple alphabet books during a trip to the school library. The stories are read aloud and discussed, and a favorite book is chosen as the theme for a class quilt. The students research and identify one image for each letter of the alphabet. Their creativity is unleashed when they draft and then finalize a drawing illustrating their letter.

Using an innovative technique demonstrated by Dr. Jeanne Bergeron at the University of Miami/M-DCPS Summer Reading Institute, students create a quilt block of their image using cotton muslin fabric, permanent markers, and common crayons. The blocks are sewn into a quilt. The students experience the joy of being “real artists” when their work is shown for all to see at the school art show.

Given the wide choice of novelty cotton fabrics, this quilt idea can be extended to math lessons on number recognition and counting; social studies lessons on Black History heroes; language arts lessons on fairy tales; or any other subject area that lends itself to being drawn on a 6” muslin square.

STAFF

Ellen C. Skidmore, NBCT, has been teaching profoundly mentally handicapped students for nine of her 14 years in Miami-Dade County. She has been awarded The Education Fund’s Citi Team Mentor grant, IMPACT II Adapter Grant, and four Teacher Mini-Grants as well as other grants totaling more than \$115,000. She enjoys including others in her grant writing endeavors because of the friendships formed working collaboratively on interesting projects that increase student achievement.

STUDENTS

Approximately 150 pre-K through fourth-grade students with disabilities participated, along with 25 students who were not disabled. This project can be used with any grade in any discipline with minor adaptations.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

One and one-half yards each of cotton calico, white cotton muslin and thick quilt batting, thread, freezer paper, extra fine Sharpie markers, crayons, pins, scissors, and a sewing machine. It is helpful to know how to sew or to enlist someone who can.

STANDARDS

The project is adaptable to any subject matter that can be represented on quilt squares. The quilt has been used as a choice board in a pre-K class, as a culminating activity for the “Shake-a-Leg” educational experience and as a tool to generate chapter summaries of a novel.

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Sponsored by:

Florida Matching Grants Program



Mosaics and Your World



Students not only learn about world art and cultures by studying and creating mosaics, but they also improve sensory awareness, eye-hand coordination, receptive and expressive language, sequencing, and fine motor skills.

Through the use of varied materials in making mosaic projects, students of all ages and abilities can benefit from visual and tactile experiences integrated with basic content area focus. The exploration of color, space, textures and world cultures blend to stimulate learning on many levels. Awareness of the world, its peoples and traditions come into play as do the resources various cultures use to carry on traditions, adorn themselves, and create artistic and utilitarian objects.

Learning opportunities can be as simple as decorating a pot or as complicated as how to derive the materials used. In their research, students find mosaics are used in many cultures to decorate anything with a hard surface such as flower pots, picture frames, vases, and cups to furniture, floors and walls.

STUDENTS

This project was designed for a class of eight Profoundly Mentally Handicapped students, but clearly has the potential to positively impact students of all ages and abilities in a range of disciplines.

STAFF

Debra Gaudet has worked with developmentally disabled students in both the classroom and the community for 30 years. She has a M.ED. in Education/Special Education and is Nationally Board Certified. She has received numerous grants to integrate ESE students into the academic and social life of the school. Jasmine Fulton, a paraprofessional aide, assists with this project.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Mosaics can be made using wallpaper, paint chips, buttons, broken plates, plastic pieces, stone, clay, glass, magazine cut-outs, foam or felt pieces, construction paper and wood.

STANDARDS

Sunshine State Standards are covered for the Profoundly Mentally Handicapped students in the IEP (Individual Education Plan) goals developed for each student through the Assessment and Learning Profile (ALP).

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Sponsored by:

**William L. Culbert Jr.
Trust**

Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI)

An Action Research Program of The Education Fund

About TNLI

The Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI) is an action research initiative of MetLife Fellows from 14 nationwide affiliates. Each affiliate is comprised of highly accomplished teachers who are Nationally Board certified and/or have advanced education degrees. These teachers conduct practitioner-based research in order to better inform their practice and improve student achievement. The mechanism ensures that education policy making is informed by teachers so that the realities of schools and classrooms come alive for policy makers. TNLI empowers teachers by training them to utilize ongoing research to improve instruction and influence education policy decisions.

Action research is a process teachers can use to analyze the effectiveness of their instruction through data collection, observation, evaluation and reflection. Full-time classroom teachers research issues that affect their students and develop recommendations, document their work in papers and publications, and disseminate their work locally and nationally. To get the word out, teachers give presentations to school districts, school boards and national conferences and join influential task forces and advisory boards.

The university advisor to the program is Dr. Jill Farrell, director of Ph.D. and Ed.S. Curriculum and Instruction programs at Barry University in Miami. The program includes monthly meetings within a learning community focused on intensive training in conducting action research, readings and discussions on teaching strategies and practices as well as information on how to influence education policy decisions.

Topics Researched

Monographs of the research conducted by TNLI MetLife Fellows, along with their contact information, are posted on The Education Fund's web site at www.educationfund.org.



Research topics include:

- service learning
- habits of mind
- teaching social studies through art
- training teachers in hands-on science
- Visual Thinking Strategies
- Web-based tutorials
- looping ESE students
- use of forensics to motivate
- infusing homework with students' culture
- reflection strategies in professional development

Additional studies conducted by MetLife fellows from other affiliates of the Teachers Network can be found at www.teachersnetwork.org.

Apply to be a TNLI Fellow

If you would like to explore conducting research in your classroom and receive a \$750 grant to do so, please review the application in the inserts of this catalog or apply online at www.educationfund.org.

Superintendent's Urban Principal Initiative (SUPI)

The SUPI program works to inspire and prepare urban school leaders for future roles as principals. This effort also includes developing and retaining leadership teams at targeted high-need secondary schools. Action research, part of the SUPI team-based model, helps participants focus on improving student achievement and trains them in a data-driven process. As SUPI participants are immersed in the on-going systematic inquiry required of action researchers, they learn to challenge existing notions of what they know about students and classrooms. This helps to make their schools true communities of learning. With "action" as the operative concept, research is put into motion as educators learn by experience which approach is most effective in any given situation. Several of the SUPI team members also conducted research individually and joined the TNLI learning community for their monthly meetings. Their research is included with the TNLI offerings on the following pages. SUPI is funded by the Wachovia Foundation and the United States Department of Education. For more information, visit www.educationfund.org.

HOW WILL THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE WRITER'S RESPONSE FROM MY CLASSROOM WEB SITE HELP TO IMPROVE MY STUDENTS' WRITING SCORES?

Problem/Rationale

According to the National Writing Panel, technology-based writing has helped young people develop as writers on the new read-write Web. Grammar- and spell-checkers have aided proofreading, and desktop publishing has opened up new opportunities for graphic design and publication. Any author could become his/her own designer, distributor of real-world texts for actual audiences. Through my Web site I was able to find a way to not only motivate my students, but to help them improve their writing skills. The students responded via my Web site to a variety of writing prompts that enabled them to work independently and at their own pace. The goal of my plan was to embed technology in the classroom and to see how having the students write and respond to me via e-mail would improve their writing scores.

Research

When students are invested in what they are doing they produce higher quality work. According to the Center for Applied Research in Educational Technology, recent studies suggest that instructional technology is thriving today as

teachers and students are more computer literate and computers are faster, friendlier, and more accessible in schools. Most studies carried out during the 1990s found that enrichment programs have positive effects on students' writing skills and that instructional technology often improves teaching programs in mathematics and in the natural and social sciences. In fact, "simply giving students greater access to computers and Internet resources often results in gains in writing skill." Technology can enable the development of critical thinking skills when students use technology presentation and communication tools to present, publish, and share results of their projects.

Data/Tools

I utilized several means of collecting data. I used notes made on my students' writing, journaling, a writing rubric, writing entries, and monthly writing prompt assessment data. I met with each student after he or she had completed the response from the classroom Web site and established the certain skills the student needed to acquire. Through the use students produced a writing

response that would then be analyzed for further improvement. Monthly assessments were conducted to monitor progress and a final prompt was given at the end of the year to show the improvement that was made in comparison to the same prompt that was given at the beginning of the year.

Analysis

As a result of the project, my students performed better and they showed significant gains in their writing. Mary, an ESOL student, showed gains from the beginning of the year. She went from a one-paragraph response to a three-paragraph response with focus. Mac, another student, showed significant gains, going from a 2.0 to a 4.0 on a scale of 6.0. As we worked together and analyzed their writing, they became more aware each time of the improvements they needed to make. They also showed motivation in working on the Writer's Response from the classroom Web site. Through both guided and independent writing, both of the mentioned students were able to practice note-taking skills, identifying the major concerns embedded in their writing and making revisions. Additionally, the overall effect of incorporating technology as part of my classroom curriculum was positive because the students were able to work independently.

Policy Recommendations

The field of education needs to be one of the great sources of information and collaboration in the 21st century for students to become proficient writers, especially in a society filled with "texting" and "iMing," is a constant challenge. Students need to be provided with the tools

necessary to properly communicate with the world. Providing a source that is motivating and inviting will help the students of the 21st century. Writing and technology go hand in hand, and as educators we must take advantage of this and provide the exposure needed to help our students achieve.

- Time and funding is needed, especially for low-income students who do not have access to a computer outside the classroom, so they may take advantage of all resources available.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on technology, incorporating it into the curriculum, particularly as a part of writing.
- Professional development is needed to prepare our teachers so they may, in turn, prepare our students to use technology in connection with writing in the curriculum in order to have a society that will face the challenges of tomorrow.

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WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN NEW TEACHERS IN AN URBAN SETTING ARE PROVIDED WITH A SPECIFIC SITE-BASED NEW-TEACHER PROGRAM?

Problem/Rationale

Although new teachers are hired by their respective districts, they are trained by the specific school sites where they work on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, it is imperative that school sites prepare new teachers to teach effectively.

The literature documents the overwhelming need for teachers across the country. The research also indicates that new teachers are being placed in schools that are low performing and highly challenging. They are usually assigned to teach the students with the greatest needs.

Research

Although there is little quantitative research on the connection between teacher induction and student achievement, there are studies that suggest a strong relationship between the two (Allington, 2003; Curran & Goldrick, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). A study conducted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2001) suggested that teacher quality is the largest single variable in student learning.

According to Tognerni and Anderson (as cited in Wood, 2005), principals can enhance their effectiveness as mentorship coordinators by ensuring a good match of mentors to new teachers, providing sufficient planning time and release time for mentors and new teachers to work, focusing mentorship efforts on collaboration regarding the improvement of student learning, and providing new teachers with opportunities for professional development and rewards for their pursuit of those opportunities. Without administrative encouragement and support,

mentorship programs may be ineffective and have adverse, instead of positive, effects on the development of new teachers.

Wong (2004) concluded that the most successful induction programs share seven common characteristics:

1. Induction or orientation for four to five days before school starts,
2. A continuum of professional development,
3. Study groups in which new teachers can work with colleagues in a learning community,
4. Strong administrative support,
5. Mentoring,
6. A structure for modeling effective teaching,
7. Opportunities for new teachers to visit demonstration classrooms (p. 44).

Recruiting New Teachers (1996) reported that effective induction programs should have three plans of action:

1. View induction as a multi-year developmental process.
2. Ensure that school administrators understand how to meet new teachers' needs and concerns and how to convey to all staff members the importance of welcoming, guiding, and assisting new teachers.
3. Provide high-quality mentoring, backed by adequate funding.

Data/Tools

A number of data tools were utilized to evaluate the need for a site-based induction program. Interviews were conducted with the Principal and Assistant Principal in charge of Curriculum. Classroom observations were

conducted biweekly. New teacher surveys were administered during the last week of school. Finally, new teachers' attendance records were analyzed.

Analysis

Given that the school has been labeled by the State as a School In Need of Improvement and the District has labeled it a Zone School, professional development is an important component of the vision to improve the school. To that end, new faculty members are in greater need of specialized professional development opportunities. A site-based induction program was already taking place at the school, but I was not sure that the monthly meetings and the assignment of a mentor would meet the rigorous demands that new teachers would face.

After attending and speaking with a number of new teachers, it was apparent that a more personal approach was needed for a majority of the new teachers. It was also important to have an assessment tool that would enable new teachers to provide feedback about their experiences, mentors, needs, what worked well for them, and recommendations.

Classroom observations were welcomed and provided opportunities for discussion, redirection, and support. Very few of the new teachers to date have taken extensive time off from the job. The school lost one new teacher by resignation during the first semester; however, no exit survey was taken to determine exactly why he terminated his contract.

Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations are suggested for an urban site-based new-teacher induction program:

- Multi-year approach to induction
- Adequate time for each mentors and new teachers to plan together
- Modeling opportunities
- Smaller class sizes
- Mid-year and year-end surveys from new teachers on what works and what needs improvement

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SUPERINTENDENT'S URBAN PRINCIPAL INITIATIVE (SUPI)
action research project

WILL COLLABORATION BETWEEN A FIRST- AND FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER TO IMPLEMENT CONTENT-AREA KNOWLEDGE THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM AFFECT THEIR STUDENTS' CONTENT KNOWLEDGE AND READING?

Problem/Rationale

For years we have observed students struggling to meet standards in order to perform well on mandated tests. Research states that reading comprehension depends primarily on background knowledge. As educators, our goal is to build upon each child's educational foundation. This allows children to be successful and to foster a love of learning. The need to find alternative researched-based methods of improving reading comprehension skills within the mandated constraints of local, state and national policies has led us to believe that content knowledge is critical in raising student achievement.

The 720 students at Hollywood Central Elementary represent an urban, traditional elementary school in Broward County, FL. The students who participated in this study included an average first-grade class and a fifth-grade gifted and high-achieving class. Students of this particular community are a distinct combination of low socioeconomic backgrounds and eminently affluent families. Since more than half of the population qualify for free or

reduced lunch, the school meets the Title One criteria. There has been no previous research or implementation at this school with regard to teacher collaboration and/or student collaboration, nor any content-based integration. Our rationale for this action research was based on the need to increase students' scores in reading comprehension through the integration of content-based knowledge.

Research

According to E.D. Hirsch, Jr., "to become a good comprehender a child needs a great deal of knowledge." (2006). Wallis and Steptoe stated, "to better prepare students to thrive in the 21st century's global economy, they will also need an enormous wealth of knowledge." The conflict therefore arises when students are being instructed almost solely on reading strategies and not the broad knowledge base that results in true comprehension. Students who can decode may not necessarily have the adequate background knowledge to successfully identify the main idea in a paragraph or the ability to summarize a story. The "Matthew Effect" (Hirsch, 2006), in which children who are

poor comprehenders will continue to lag farther and farther behind their school-aged peers, will therefore continue to grow.

Data/Tools

Several data sources were used for this action research project. Students created KWL charts and completed pre- and post-tests. To gauge their affective domain, students completed the Reader's Self-Perception Scale. Surveys were given to students and their parents to determine the impact of their Books Buddies' relationships. Finally, a team of third-grade teachers who integrated the content throughout the curriculum were interviewed as well.

Analysis

The results of this study indicate that the majority of the students involved positively increased their reading comprehension. The most significant gains were evident in the first-grade students. There was also a significant increase in the comprehension of science-based vocabulary words. One unexpected result was the relationship that proliferated between the younger and older students. Their collaboration developed into an increased mutual motivation and interest in science. Through multiple observations and other instruments, it was apparent that the emotional intelligence of all of the students was affected as well.

Policy Recommendations

As a result of the NCLB legislation, we believe that the rigid focus on reading strategies has diminished the content areas in our nation's schools' curricula. This study highly recommends that *on a national level*, the content areas be incorporated throughout the curriculum. Students of the 21st

century must learn to think across disciplines, since that is where most new breakthroughs are made today. To prepare students for a global society, they must learn to be critical thinkers and problem solvers outside of the box. *At the district level*, students should be provided with cross-curricular programs that contain depth and rigor in all subject areas. With an interdisciplinary curriculum, the content areas can be immersed into the reading block and incorporated into the math and writing subjects as well. *At the school level*, teachers and administrators need to collaborate and be included in the development of school curriculum.

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WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN MATH AND ART WHEN MATH CONCEPTS AND SKILLS ARE INTEGRATED INTO ART CURRICULUM?

Problem/Rationale

In our state, the emphasis on scores in FCAT math, reading and science may cause some policy makers to see the arts as less than critical to our students' education. In my experience in the art room, I have seen that combining art and math activities encourages students to see connections to real life and experience the joy of learning. I strongly feel that including Visual Arts in the curriculum pays large dividends in the pursuit of higher academic achievement in core curriculum for all students.

My school is typical of the district. There are 868 students at Treasure Island Elementary in the community of North Bay Village, a part of the larger urban setting of Miami-Dade County. The population is 78% Hispanic, 7% Black, 11% White, non-Hispanic, and 4% Asian/ Indian/multiracial. Thirty-three percent of the students have limited English proficiency, and 80.5% receive free or reduced student lunch. Treasure Island Elementary made AYP (adequate yearly progress) for the school year 2005-2006 and earned an "A" rating from the state. My rationale for this action research is to demonstrate the academic value of arts education.

Research

Boyes and Reid (2005) summarize much of the current arts education research in the United Kingdom and United States. They present wide-ranging aspects of arts education research including the impact on student self-esteem, academic achievement, neighborhood renewal, enhancement of critical thinking skills, transfer of skills across curriculum, and the debate

concerning "art for sake of arts." Phillips and Bickley-Green (1998) report seeing improvement of student test scores through arts education. Chapman (1998) experienced positive results with integrated arts curriculum.

Data/Tools

Many data sources were considered in my research. At the beginning of the school year I reviewed pre-test FCAT math assessment in my fifth-grade classes and identified benchmarks and strands that could be included in art instruction. I compiled art lesson plans that address mathematical standards and began to add information on which math strands each lesson included. I recorded math interactions, both formal and informal, in my daily written reflections. I photographed artwork to document student success in applying art and math concepts. I conducted attitude surveys among fifth graders to determine how interdisciplinary instruction improved their attitude about math and art, and about how each subject impacts their daily life.

Analysis

On the pre-test FCAT math assessment, I discovered that classes who had received an art lesson in building a three-dimensional cube scored much higher on a solid geometry question relevant to the art lesson than other classes taught by the same math teacher but which did not participate in the hands-on art activity. This encouraged me to examine many of my art lesson plans to align them with math standards and to incorporate math vocabulary. I found that I had to use grade-level math textbooks to ensure that I



was using correct terminology and realized that there were new methods of instruction that would help in student art production. I researched the use of Edusoft, an online software company used by my school, to sort and analyze data for math assessment by strands. Preliminary findings were encouraging, and I hope to continue to show that interdisciplinary work with math teachers will encourage students to make meaningful connections across the curriculum and stimulate deeper understanding of both art and math.

Policy Recommendations

My action research project demonstrates that elementary students academically benefit from Visual Arts instruction by a highly qualified teacher. Educators should take advantage of various learning strategies such as hands-on and activities that engage the imagination and emotion as these are powerful ways to motivate our students. Art educators should incorporate math strategies when possible and use

appropriate math vocabulary. Training and orientation for new Visual Arts teachers in using math strategies should be included at district and school sites. Collaboration between math and art teachers will enhance the programs for both subjects and improve both student attitude and academic achievement.

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HOW WILL A DATA MONITORING SYSTEM BASED ON ASSESSED BENCHMARKS IN READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS IMPACT THE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS IN GRADES 6-8 AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?



Problem/Rationale

The 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act mandates that schools receiving federal funding are required to disaggregate their student performance data by race, gender, and socioeconomic status in order to provide progress information to the community and state. The accountability initiatives mandated by school reform measures have placed heightened emphasis on data analysis. The focal point of accountability and data-driven initiatives is to develop policies and procedures that deliver immediate information for the improvement of schools. My primary objective was to uncover the relationship between a data monitoring system on teachers' instructional practices and student achievement.

Approximately 640 students at Miami Edison Middle School were the subjects of this project, of which 83% are of Haitian descent and 15% African-American. Although at least 75% of the Haitian students are American born, more than half enter school as non-English speakers.

Research

According to a research analyst and writer for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management at the University of Oregon, data can be used for a multitude of purposes, including tracking of student progress, guiding teachers' professional development, instructional and curricular interventions, creating and assessing school improvement plans, and allocating district resources (2002). The most important facet of data-driven decision making is the instructional implication that it should be used as a guide for teaching rather than just a method of evaluation.

Collecting and analyzing meaningful data about the academic performance of students helps under-resourced, underperforming, and highly diverse schools identify achievement gaps, address equity issues, determine the effectiveness of specific programs and courses of study, and target instructional improvement (Wendy Schwartz, 2002).

Data/Tools

Numerous data collection sources were utilized during this action research project, such as a data monitoring table, checklists for teacher observations, teacher surveys, and professional development evaluation forms.

Pretests were administered to students to establish a baseline for the data collection. Teachers were provided with assessment data without directive as to how to analyze it. Students were assessed three times prior to the intervention in order to identify patterns of achievement. Before the implementation of the data monitoring system, a series of three professional development sessions was scheduled with the reading and language arts teachers. The intent was to introduce the practice of analyzing and disaggregating data for the purpose of differentiating instruction. After the trainings I compared the first district-provided interim assessment data to the second assessment to note any changes in student achievement. I then created a spreadsheet that noted October interim assessment data and January interim assessment data, including a column indicating change.

Analysis

The initial results of this project indicated that there was an increase in student achievement on district-authored assessments when teachers, administration, and support personnel analyzed and disaggregated data collectively. Teachers utilized the data to form small groups within the classroom to differentiate instruction. Each group had varied objectives according to their specific benchmark deficiencies. The students were afforded specific remediation opportunities which proved beneficial in subsequent assessments.

At the outset, the intervention demonstrated growth in student performance and positively affected the instructional methodologies of the teachers in that they were varied according to process, content, or product. This individualized approach to

instruction appeared to break the monotony of lecturing for the entire block. However, there were variables affecting the reliability of the intervention. The findings could not be replicated once the teachers were not observed or monitored as frequently in their pedagogical procedures. The differentiation techniques were no longer consistently employed and small-group instruction appeared to cease completely. Therefore, this researcher could not conclude with certainty that there was a direct correlation to improvement in student achievement with an impact on instruction as a result of the utilization of the data monitoring system.

Policy Recommendations

The policy implication of this research project is that educators need training in how to analyze, disaggregate, and interpret data, as well as training in how to identify relevant data. Current trends in education are shifting to include data-driven decision making, now commonly referred to as DDDM; however, school communities at large remain unapprised in how to indoctrinate this practice into daily school operations. Additionally, teachers need additional coaching in the area of self-efficacy.

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**SUPERINTENDENT'S URBAN
PRINCIPAL INITIATIVE (SUPI)**
action research project

DECONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING: ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE SELF-STUDY

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN A CLASSROOM TEACHER AND A UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATOR UTILIZE COLLABORATIVE AND SELF-STUDY PROCESSES THROUGHOUT A PROFESSIONAL GROWTH EXPERIENCE FOCUSING ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES (VTS) METHODOLOGY?

Problem/Rationale

Professional development to increase levels of professionalism among classroom teachers is an ongoing challenge. Teachers often seek to satisfy this need by participating in district-sponsored professional development trainings that are short-lived and surface in nature. Much of the literature indicates that this type of professional development is ineffective over the long term in engaging teachers in authentic study (Little, 1983). Opportunities that allow teachers to engage in learning communities through inquiry, collaboration and critical dialogue about teaching must be considered. Over the last decade, models have been developed that focused on efforts to bring groups of teachers together to work in collaborative settings. Collaboration has been identified as an element of successful professional development models, yet there is a gap between the anticipated and actual degree and quality of most collaborative relationships. This collaborative self-study examines one such collaboration where a university teacher and a classroom teacher examine the negotiation of goals and decisions and the impact on their relationship as they strive to deepen their understanding of the nature of successful collaborative relationships that support ongoing professional development in education.

This collaborative self-study built on separate studies done by each of the two researchers as they were involved in the teaching and learning of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), a specific arts-based instructional methodology that engages the individual in learning to think and communicate through art (VUE, 2000).

Research

Research on professional development models for teachers recommends engagement in collaborative relationships (Crowther & Cannon, 2002; Porter, Birman & Garet, 2000). Yet the collaborative relationship in and of itself will not improve learning. Guskey (2003) points out the variability regarding effective collaboration inherent in most professional development. Through collaborative self-study research, Farrell, Giordano, and Weitman (2006) arrived at a working definition, where collaboration is seen as joining two or more parties who share a common vision and who are equally engaged to achieve mutually defined goals. Utilizing the expertise of each member, they work interdependently, exhibiting honesty, openness, mutual respect, trust, responsibility, and support for one another.

Through individual and collaborative self-study, an examination of collaborative relationships that seeks to identify the characteristics of this structure and reveals the dynamic variables that sustain the purposes of improved teaching and learning can be useful.

Data/Tools

After examination and analysis of our previous studies, we investigated the literature on professional development models and collaboration. We then arrived at our "shared criteria and standards of judgment for establishing the validity of our research" (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) and proceeded to set up the parameters of our partnership. It was agreed that we would establish a pattern of de-briefing sessions after each VTS-centered interaction.

Throughout the duration of the new collaborative partnership,

collaborative processes were monitored and documented. Multiple data sources were utilized by each member, as each was responsible for collecting data related to collaborative actions, observations, anecdotal notes, e-mails, photo documentation, interviews, audiotape recordings and artifacts of student learning.

Analysis

As we individually and then collaboratively read through data sets, we noted insights, began to form initial codes, and grouped statements into meaning units. These led us to specify common themes and patterns seen in each of our data sets. As we whittled down the data and began to move our themes around, we found ourselves grappling with how to turn our data into evidence to "support our claims to knowledge" related to how our collaboration had been a source of influence on each others' practice, as well as others in our respective communities (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

Findings

The results of our data analysis, our continuous dialogue and our individual and collective reflection revealed certain persistent themes that we believe help to form the structure of our burgeoning ideas and theories about the significant role that collaboration plays in effective professional development models. These themes were:

- 1) shared goals,
- 2) values,
- 3) impact on the relationship,
- 4) transformation, and
- 5) influence on others.

Conclusion/ Point of View

The emphasis on interpersonal relations and the impact on cognitive processes emanating from the collaboration were essential in



helping each participant to reach a greater understanding of how social interaction informs our learning, and that of our students (Bandura, 1977). Educators at all levels exist in an educational architecture not of their own making, with a set of constantly changing specifications, and in order for teachers to successfully navigate this shifting terrain they have to be centered, motivated to be "the best they can be," grounded in self-awareness, and willing to maintain a reflexive stance that is open and accepting of new ideas. This stance is not achieved in isolation but requires sharing, modeling, reciprocity, time and multiple opportunities for collaboration and coming together in community.

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HOW WILL ON-SITE COACHING, COLLABORATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR NOVICE FOURTH-GRADE TEACHERS IN URBAN SCHOOLS IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN ORAL READING FLUENCY?

Problem/Rationale

In order successfully survive their introduction to teaching, novice teachers must be provided with support throughout their beginning years in this profession. How can teachers survive the year and increase students' reading skills as they learn how to relate to urban children? My focus was to support novice teachers through an on-site professional development component. Coaching and collaboration was provided in the classroom while instruction was taking place. This research took place at Pine Villa Elementary, an urban school located in south Miami-Dade County, FL. The professional development provided classroom coaching and collaboration in addition to immediate feedback to accommodate problem areas and evaluate reflective practices to become better educators.

The need for this focus was born when I realized that more than 60% of the staff at my school had little to no experience in teaching reading. In the fourth grade, teachers' experience ranged from one to two years. None of the teachers had any experience in teaching Reading/Language Arts. For many years, I had worked as a

reading coach. Having been in a literacy position, I had insight into what these five fourth grade teachers needed to know so they could assist their students in achieving fluency in reading.

Research

The professional development examined ways novice teachers could gain best practices in reading through on-site coaching and collaboration throughout the beginning year of teaching. "Coaches are the bridge between the visions and making the vision reality in the classroom," (Nancy Shanklin, director of the recently launched Literacy Coach Clearinghouse Web site, October 2006). The National Assessment of Educational Progress conducted a large study of the status of fluency achievement in American education (Pinnell et al., 1995). This study examined the reading fluency of a nationally representative sample of fourth graders and found that 44% of the students were not fluent with grade-level stories that students had read under supportive testing conditions. The National Research Council, as reported in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998),

states that the initial level depends on sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency.

After-school classes in Best Practices were conducted two days a week (Tuesdays and Fridays) beginning September 19, 2006. These classes were designed to meet the needs of the novice teachers in reading. Teachers were encouraged to give input and reflect in an encouraging and nurturing way. These classes played a key role in developing the novices' craft. I made informal observations of the beginning teachers' classrooms, followed by reflective conversations to discuss problems observed in the classroom. First, I surveyed teachers to assess their knowledge in reading. Next, I composed a schedule of activities to fit the needs of the teachers. Finally, I established an ongoing coaching and collaboration schedule to allow teachers the in-classroom support needed to provide the educational environment for students to learn. The collaboration's ultimate goal was to improve effectiveness in the classroom; help the novice teachers accomplish their goals in the classroom; and move them toward excellence in classroom teaching and toward becoming more accomplished professionals in the future.

Fourth Grade Oral Reading Fluency

Data/Tools

The data resources used included teacher surveys (pre and post), reflection sheets, classroom observation and discussion, and DIBELS.

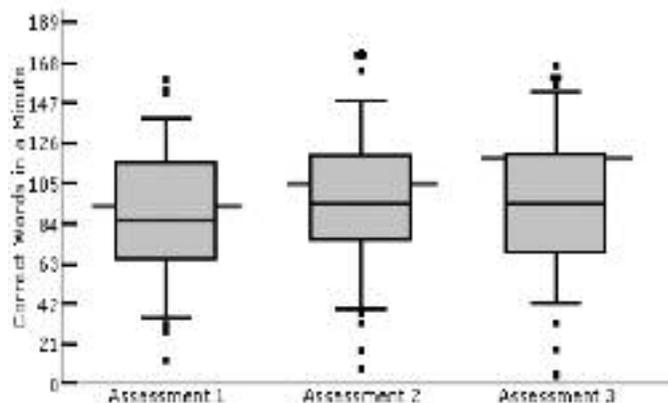
Analysis

The analysis of the findings revealed that the professional coaching/collaborative model was successful in promoting group relationship and social interaction among the teachers. This enhanced the teachers' classroom instruction which subsequently improved the students' oral reading fluency.

Policy Recommendations

Continuous, intensive efforts must be made to provide high quality on-site staff development for novice teachers, especially those in urban schools. Time and money is necessary and must be provided for at least the first three years to make ongoing coaching and collaboration successful. Support of novice teachers is of the highest importance if they are going to be successful.

Fourth Grade Oral Reading Fluency



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WILL INCORPORATING DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE “HANDS ON” SCIENCE ACTIVITIES IN A PRE-K CLASSROOM IMPROVE STUDENT READINESS SKILLS FOR KINDERGARTEN?

Problem/Rationale

The rationale for this action research was based on the critical needs of my students concerning the level of engagement in daily routines, lack of readiness skills evidenced in the pre-tests given at the beginning of the school year and the number of ESOL students in my classroom lacking a “pre-school vocabulary.” Matching students’ natural curiosity about science by planning daily, science-based, developmentally appropriate activities (such as interactive story reading, child interest-driven activities, music, movement, oral language activities, and hands-on exploration activities) can increase student engagement and advance the development of readiness skills. Science process skills used across the curriculum are observation, object manipulation, classification, making predictions and the use of verbal, musical, and kinesthetic languages to describe the properties of manipulated objects. Scientific culture can begin in Pre-Kindergarten, when children’s curiosity and desire to learn are at a high point, and will be enriched in the following years.

The sample in this project is a Miami-Dade County Public Schools Voluntary Pre-K (VPK), classified Title I, and using High Scope Curriculum. The class profile of the 18 Pre-K students in this research project is 39% Creole, 33% Black-Non-Hispanic, 22% Hispanic, and 6% Multi-racial (Anglo-Hispanic); 61% are ESOL; 12% are special education students and 22% are in the Speech Program. All are on free or reduced lunch fees.

Research

According to research, developmentally appropriate practices are age and individually appropriate (Aldridge, 1992); socially and culturally appropriate (NAEYC; Bredekamp and Copple, 1997) and contribute to children’s development by influencing development of knowledge in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual areas. An essential element of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) is child centered learning. Vygotsky supports that the teacher is the mediator and facilitator.

Students build effective mental habits by participating in science experiments, theorizing about causes and effects, hypothesizing explanations to account for observations, and analyzing and synthesizing whatever information is available (Kats, 1998). If children are engaged in investigations of things around them in the course of which they persist in seeking answers to their questions, and solutions to the problems they encounter, then learning increases and individual skills are increased and transferred to new situations when science process skills are emphasized in the classroom (Padilla, 1990). Piaget indicates in his research that learning activities should involve problems of classification, ordering, location, and using concrete objects appropriate to the level of motor or mental operations for the age of the child.

Data/Tools

Baseline data used for this research project are Phonological Early Learning Inventory Pre and Post Tests (PELI) and the Learning Accomplishment Profile Diagnostic (LAP-D) Pre and Post Tests (LAP-D subtests: Cognitive Counting, Cognitive Matching, Language Naming, and Language Comprehension). Data was collected from teacher lesson plans, the teacher’s reflective journal, students’ work, and daily key notes (anecdotes) used in the High Scope Program. Key notes were taken by the teacher, paraprofessional, student teacher, and volunteer.

Analysis

The LAP-D Post Subtests revealed that 66% of the class increased in age equivalent growth (AEG) of 6 months or more. Significant gains of over 16 months of AEG were made in ESOL and ESE students. Although the subtests showed 50% of the ESOL and ESE students tested blow their AEG, the gap in AEG has narrowed. After this project 12 students tested at their own AEG or higher. More student-attending behavior during science activities has been noted. Science vocabulary has been carried over to other activities. The analysis of the PELI tests is not available at this time. The strengths of the gains in AEG suggest that developmentally “hands on” science activities have positively impacted student readiness skills for kindergarten.



Policy Recommendations

The Miami-Dade County Public School system, through the State’s Voluntary Pre-K Program (VPK) program, has added a new component to the High-Scope Curriculum called Discovery Time, during which students explore scientific and math concepts. Further support should be given to train and prepare Pre-K teachers in science to best utilize this time. Little research has been done on the impact of utilizing science process skills in Pre-K; therefore I recommend further study in this area.

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HOW WILL GREATER STUDENT CHOICE OF THE TOPICS AND PURPOSES FOR WRITING AFFECT FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS WRITING AND THEIR WRITING ASSESSMENT SCORES?

Problem/Rationale

The 2006-2007 school year began with a lot of energy and excitement. Pretests in all subject areas were administered to establish baseline data to help drive teacher instruction. The writing pretests were an area of concern. The initial data showed that students were not applying the writing skills they appeared to have mastered in fourth grade. How can I motivate students to write and how can I get them to enjoy writing more? How can I inspire students to approach writing with excitement instead of seeing writing as a chore? Students might be more motivated to write if allowed to experience the different modes and genres of writing instead of being asked to strictly respond to structured prompt-driven instruction. While research showed that modeling effective writing and student practice is essential in the writing process, I focused my research on the implementation of writing strategies that offered students the opportunity to write from their own experiences and gave them more ownership of their writing.

Research

Research indicated that when students have greater choice and input to their writing, they are more motivated to write and that timely, precise feedback is a great way to motivate and encourage students to write more. The Florida Department of Education (2002) stated that students should use their own experiences and the things that are important to them to give them more ownership of their writing. They need to choose their own topics, write in journals or writing logs, and teachers should provide feedback on a daily basis. Rygalski (2004-2005) stated that students welcomed precise written and verbal comments on their writing and also stated that students need encouragement and a voice in the type of feedback they receive. Students needed guidance to make their own choices about what makes their writing better.

Data/Tools

A variety of data sources were used for this action research. A student survey that measured student attitudes towards writing

was given at the beginning and at the end of the research project. The surveys were compared to see if student attitudes towards writing had improved. Additionally, I compared the monthly writing assessment averages for the first five months of school to the writing assessment averages for the last five months of school, after strategies were introduced to give students greater choices in their writing. My observations of student conferences and independent writing monitored student attitudes and how students applied writing strategies that would make their writing better.

Analysis

All the data from this action research project indicated that when students were given more choice in their writing, they became more motivated to write and take chances. Their writing assessment scores clearly increased after writing strategies were implemented that allowed students the opportunity to choose the topic and the mode of their response. The monthly writing assessment average for the last five months of school rose to 3.9 out of six compared to an average score of 3.3 for the first five months of school. Students were incorporating more figurative language, dialogue, and fabulous descriptions. The student writing survey average score rose from 42 to 49 out of a possible 75 points. The high score rose from 65 to 70 and the low score for the group rose from 21 to 25. The most satisfying result of this research was the obvious change in student attitude from the majority of the students. Students responded to guided writing with poetry, narrative verse and with greater enthusiasm. Additionally, students voiced ambitions of becoming writers.

Policy Recommendations

This research supports proven instructional practices for writing as recommended by the State of Florida. Independent writing is an important component that needs to be a regular part of student writing. I would recommend that district- and school-level curriculum be developed that gives specific strategies and recommendations that allow for greater student choice and input in their writing. Teachers should make every effort to conference with students regularly and provide students with positive feedback and recommendations, which should also include the student's opinions and ideas of what will make his/her writing better.

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HOW CAN A MATHEMATICS COACH IMPACT MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION IN AN URBAN SCHOOL SETTING?

Problem/Rationale

The intent of this project was to determine the impact Mathematics Coaching can have on mathematics instruction in failing urban high schools. By providing targeted professional development, professional support and specific mentoring techniques with mathematics teachers, it is expected that the instructional experience for students and teachers will be enhanced and student achievement will improve. By establishing positive peer support relationships, providing direct and indirect professional development, modeling best practices and mentoring teachers, this writer set out to impact the instructional experiences of tenth-grade students in a struggling urban high school.

The school has a 100% minority student population; 71% receive free or reduced lunch and 20% are limited English proficient (LEP). According to the 2005 FCAT report, 84% of the ninth- and tenth-grade students at this research site performed below grade level in Mathematics.

Research

Although research has revealed that learners retain only 5% of the information they hear, 10% of what they read and 20% of what is presented to them in audio-visual format, traditional mathematics courses are taught primarily using these formats. Riggs & Sandin (2002) report that students learn best by doing. Despite these findings, mathematics is generally taught "at" students, as they sit by passively. Furthermore, research has shown that minority students in urban settings historically underperform non-minority students in mathematics. Culturally Responsive Teaching proponents suggest this achievement gap exists because minority students are not adequately served by traditional instructional methods (Gay, 2000). This finding is

especially pertinent for this study, as research site serves a 100% minority student population. The role of the Mathematics Coach as a mentor and provider of professional development is instrumental in supporting effective instructional practices (Lee, Fall 2004 & Spring 2005).

Data/Tools

As the tenth-grade Mathematics Coach, I sought to establish a relationship of trust and support among my teaching colleagues. To facilitate the use of Differentiated Instruction (DI), I designed and conducted professional development opportunities that helped implement various forms of cooperative learning, project-based instruction, computer-assisted instruction and creative delivery of the prescribed subject matter.

I observed the varied classroom interactions that existed between instructor, student, and the curriculum. I determined what professional development activities were needed and in what format they would be delivered. I conducted professional development activities and followed up with observations, debriefing, modeling, co-teaching and feedback. A best-practices newsletter was created to build camaraderie within the department.

I conducted formal and informal teacher surveys to determine the perception of the services I provided and student surveys to determine student attitudes toward mathematics. I monitored student performance on the biweekly assessment instruments to determine areas of strength and weakness and conducted data chats with the tenth-grade teachers. I created warm-up problems that were responsive to the data provided by the biweekly assessments. I kept record of services provided to teachers and of professional

development activities conducted. In addition, I kept a record of reflections, thoughts and ideas that arose as a result of interaction with teachers, students and other coaches.

Analysis

Upon reflection of the data, it is clear that many beneficial results unfolded as a result of this study. For example, teacher morale in the mathematics department increased. There was also an increased expression of differentiation in the delivery of the mathematics curriculum, as teachers increased the number of student presentations, project-based assignments and computer-assisted instructional activities. Further, review of the biweekly assessment data provided evidence that student achievement in each of the five mathematical strands improved over time. Discussions with teachers throughout the year, called "data talks," revealed teachers increased their use of the data to inform their instructional practices as the year progressed. At this site, 24% of the students are not promoted to the next grade and ten percent drop out before graduation. Preliminary results on the 2007 FCAT reported that 63% of the tenth-grade student population demonstrated learning gains in mathematics compared to their previous performance on this instrument.

There was a decline in the number of students who scored at Level One on the FCAT mathematics Test, the lowest level of performance on the assessment instrument. As a result of these findings, the writer concludes that the role the Mathematics Coach plays in supporting instruction can have a positive impact on teacher practice and, ultimately, student achievement.

Policy Recommendations

As a result of this action research, the writer expects to impact the quality and type of support provided to mathematics teachers throughout the district. Professional development offered by the district is challenged to prepare teacher leaders to be effective catalysts for change in schools. This can occur by building the Mathematics Coach's capacity to mentor and model effective strategies and to develop programs of empowerment that will bring out the best in teachers. This will require a commitment of resources to develop such teacher leaders and empower them to serve as competent change agents in urban and struggling schools.

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HOW DOES THE USE OF DISCUSSION AND CRITIQUE OF VISUAL IMAGES ENHANCE THE ABILITY OF THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS TO INTERPRET AND ANALYZE TEXT?

Problem/Rationale

In preparation for the FCAT, my third-grade students were challenged to interpret and analyze text through standardized assessments regularly administered throughout the year. However, even with instruction focused on FCAT strategies, students consistently fell short of desired learning gains. My students could read but were particularly deficient in detecting the author's purpose and main idea in reading passages, essentially having difficulty finding meaning. I reflected that perhaps they were not yet ready to analyze and interpret passages. I sought a preliminary step to achieving these skills by tapping into student learning strengths, motivations, and sound research aimed at eliciting the same critical thinking skills that the standardized assessments required. With the use of visual images, particularly works of art, I engaged my students in the process of analyzing and interpreting art to find meaning in what they saw. This alternative teaching

method provided an opportunity for critical thinking through a medium that was interesting, visually appealing, and thought provoking, and that elicited student responses.

Palm Springs North Elementary is located in the center of a large urban Hispanic community. The school houses 1700 students in grades Pre-K to 5 with a large population of ESOL students. More than 70% of the school's population is on free or reduced lunch. A heavily transient community, our school is consistently open for enrollment. My challenge was to provide my students, despite their various abilities and our growing class size, time to develop the critical skills needed to analyze and interpret text before exiting the grade.

Research

Research shows that when students read and write they are using the same critical thinking and decision making brain power

used when painting or responding to paintings. (Alejandro, Ann. *Like Happy Dreams – Integrating Visual Arts, Writing, and Reading*. Language Arts. Vol.71, January 1994)

Research shows that there is a strong correlation between the arts and academic success. (Fiske, Edward. *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts in Learning*. 1999)

Data/Tools

To conduct this research I requested the support of two outstanding art instructors who graciously provided me a collection of artwork. The students were given a pre-test with unlimited time to write about a particular painting. Each week, for six weeks, the students produced independent writings on a selected work of art. I conducted a series of lessons having the students discuss the meaning of colors and symbols, metaphors and similes, various kinds of stories told without words, and messages conveyed by the artists. I asked open-ended questions to facilitate class discussions. I observed on-task behavior, recorded the length and amount of time spent writing, and reviewed the overall quality of written analysis; specifically, evidence of detailed descriptions, interpretations and judgments. A post-test was given to have the students reflect on their growth as "art critics."

Analysis

After the first few paintings the students demonstrated evidence of critical thinking and analysis of text. Class discussions grew more animated. Writings transitioned from brief three-sentence descriptions to pages of artistic interpretation. Students developed judgments about the artwork, provided

evidence for their judgments, and made personal connections to the artists' message by drawing on their own experiences. The students not only demonstrated the same skills required in reading passages, but drew on them to improve upon their learning. This project was a success as it yielded positive results in an equitable manner. All students were actively engaged, and results were seen in little more than a month.

Policy Recommendations

This project recommends that the state open avenues for art instructors to be used as resource specialists, working closely alongside the regular classroom teacher to merge art with reading and writing instruction. A state recommendation would also be to provide students more art instruction on the whole. Students in my district receive one hour of art per week. This implies that art is relief time from the regular curriculum, when in fact art instruction is critical to accessing the way students learn successfully. Students are naturally drawn to the arts, which provide them valuable learning experiences. Teachers need to see the benefits of an art-infused curriculum as research shows that students who are regularly experiencing instruction in the arts become higher-level academic learners.

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HOW DOES THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION MOTIVATE CULTURALLY LINGUISTICALLY AND DIVERSE (CLD) STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING IN A GENERAL SECOND CLASSROOM?

Problem/Rationale

Teachers often struggle with creating lessons and classroom environments that focus and attract students' intrinsic motivation, thereby increasing the possibility that students will actively engage and increase their desire to learn independently (Sullo, 2007; Rogers, Ludington, & Graham, 1997). This failure pattern of non-engagement creates a cycle that reduces the likelihood of lifelong learning. Teachers have to implement assessment after assessment to fulfill the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act, which has often led to instruction that is centered on the test and test-taking strategies.

I believe this strategy of test-centered instruction will only lead to short-term gains, as the gains students have made in elementary school dissipate in middle and high school. The use of thematic instruction, however, has been shown to increase students' background knowledge. The second-grade students in this research project totaled approximately 120 students: 80% Hispanic, 10% Haitian, 8% African American, and 2% Asian. Ninety-five percent of these students are on free or reduced lunch.

Research

According to research on the ways humans remember information, the mind, after spending time steeped in facts about a topic, organizes and reorganizes memory points to retrieve and use later in spontaneous, independent applications. When you read, hear, experience, or see information about a new topic, you are more likely to be able to use that information independently if you apply a technique to rehearse it, such as taking notes, creating a nonlinguistic representation, or

asking questions (Pollock, 2007, p. 33). Meaning cannot be obtained or neatly extracted from a sentence. Meaning is always context dependent (Restak, 1988 p. 262). Therefore, new knowledge must be embedded in meaning.

Data/Tools

Several data sources were used for this action research project. A student interest survey and a parent questionnaire were given at the beginning and end of the project. These surveys were compared to determine students' changes in interests and parents' perceived changes in their children's interest. The student interest surveys and parent questionnaires indicated that students express an interest in learning additional things about topics or subjects previously discussed during the school year. The parent questionnaires indicate that parents altered their perception of their children's likes and dislikes. In addition, student samples of their self-directed, independent work along with anecdotal records were collected. These materials provided evidence of the activities students performed independently. Anecdotal records recounted incidents whereby students engaged in self-directed learning. In addition to these qualitative sources, results obtained from the students Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) scores were used.

Analysis

Results of this project indicate that by implementing an integrated thematic instruction, students had additional background knowledge that is centered on themes which are integrated throughout the various subject areas. This aided students in developing additional interests and connections to other



subjects. As the students obtained these additional interests and connections, they were able to use this knowledge to successfully complete standardized tests. Students' self-directed learning increased, as well. Students whose primary language is Spanish or Creole often began to bring additional books to class about the topic studied.

Policy Recommendations

As a result of the outcomes of this project, it is recommended that a curriculum be implemented that incorporates the use of integrating subject areas centered on themes. It is also recommended that collaboration between teachers and media center specialists be encouraged in order to provide teachers with available resources (i.e., books, websites, periodicals, film, CDs, DVDs). Support from school districts, school administration, state and local governments should be given to train and prepare teachers and media center specialists in the most effective and efficient ways to collaborate in a school setting. Educators should make a concerted effort to integrate areas of subject areas around themes.

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HOW CAN WE INCREASE THE READING COMPREHENSION LEVELS FOR 20 SIXTH-GRADE ESE INCLUSION STUDENTS?

Problem/Rationale

I have seen a decrease in sixth-grade ESE students' reading comprehension skills when they enter middle school. I chose this topic along with my colleagues because the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) revealed that only 35 percent of all sixth-grade students demonstrated mastery in all reading strands. As a result, sixth-grade students did not make Adequate Yearly Progress on the 2006 FCAT. Therefore, the need to increase reading comprehension for 20 sixth-grade ESE inclusion students was derived as this specific population did not make Adequate Yearly Progress.

The action research study took place at Brownsville Middle School, located in an urban area. The school is currently considered a Zone School, meaning that it is at risk of not meeting students' achievement level as outlined by the district and the state. It is a Title I school, with 98 percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Total student population consists of grades six through eight with an enrollment of 920 students. Student population at the school is 73 percent African-American, 26 percent Hispanic, and one percent Anglo-Saxon. School staff consists of 21 percent Anglo-Saxon, 55 percent Black, 19 percent Hispanic, and five percent Other. There are 13 novice teachers, of whom seven are in the Language Arts Department.

Research

Readers are active participants in the learning process. Participants who are fluent readers establish clear goals and monitor whether these goals are being obtained. Proficient readers use comprehension strategies to construct meaning from text such as previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarizing, and evaluating. Metacognition is a key component that good readers use in order to interpret meanings from text (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000).

Teachers have a direct impact on how students feel about reading. Teachers who set high expectations for their students and require them to do above the norm often produce students that are successful readers. Children who are aware of their own capabilities approach reading with patience, persistence, and confidence. These children feel that they will succeed and accept failure when it happens. However, the reverse is true for students that have difficulty in reading (Blair and Rupley, 1998).

Motivation is a key factor with students acquiring literacy and associating value with literacy. Students who are encouraged to read for enjoyment and for school functions are the better readers. Teachers who provide a wide range of meaningful literacy activities encourage the development of positive attitudes

toward reading. Allocating students' time for reading each day increases their thinking skills. Allowing students to select material and share with others is essential. Teacher modeling of reading stories have been proven beneficial. Once students are provided with the necessary tools, their reading will become easier (Burns and Griffin, 1998).

Data/Tools

A series of tools was used to collect data for this action research project. A reading interest survey was given to students to determine their enjoyment of reading. Teacher observations were done in order to vary the assignments which were given to students. Student work samples were collected biweekly and recorded tri-weekly. Numerous assessments were given such as Pretest READ180, Interim 1, Interim 2, and Teacher Tests. Each test result was compared to a previous test in order to determine whether growth was occurring and to modify the lessons.

Analysis

The results of this project indicated that there are important factors to consider when determining students' ability to comprehend and read text material. Various instructional reading strategies must be utilized in order to increase reading comprehension. Teacher Direct Instruction is a major component of facilitating students' learning because

emphasis is placed on scaffolding in order for students to learn the desired materials. Grouping students significantly increased awareness because students were able to learn from each other. Hands-on learning increased students' desire to learn because they were able to achieve success from the materials presented for completion.

Policy Recommendations

A school's instructional model should reflect teaching students state- and district-mandated benchmarks and not be focused upon any test directly. If skills are taught sufficiently, then students' mastery would be achieved and students would realize that school has not concluded because testing has ended.

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Apply for The Education Fund grants online at www.educationfund.org. Grant checks are written directly to the winning teachers, who are recognized at an Awards Gala.

TEACHER MINI-GRANTS

If you need funds to develop and implement instructional projects in your classroom, apply for a Teacher Mini-Grant from The Education Fund. Mini-Grants up to \$1,000 are awarded for projects that motivate and challenge students to learn. Go to www.educationfund.org for more information or to apply online. Deadline for applying is October 15, 2007.

IMPACT II ADAPTER GRANTS

Funds to implement IMPACT II projects developed by Miami-Dade County Public School teachers are available. Grants average \$250. IMPACT II projects are listed in this and past Ideas with IMPACT catalogs and at www.educationfund.org. Applications are due on November 1, 2007.

Attend the IMPACT II Idea EXPO on Sat., Oct. 6 to learn more about the projects you would like to adapt.

CITI SUCCESS FUND

This drop-out prevention program awards grants to help at risk students stay in school. The Citi Success Fund provides cash grants to K-12 educators for developing innovative programming that gives students an opportunity to succeed in school. Applications are due May 15, 2008.

These programs are just a few of the many programs of The Education Fund. See the list below for the people who volunteer their time to make these programs possible.



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THE TEACHER CONFERENCE

Saturday, October 6, 2007

Miami Beach Convention Center

8:15 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

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