

Earth Day Celebration

By Donald Brian Ansel

During the spring of the 2004-05 school year, North Dorchester Middle School students were studying the history of Earth Day in social studies and learning about our environment in life sciences. As a team, the math and language arts teacher and I decided to incorporate all subject matters into a service-learning project to celebrate Earth Day.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental or public safety need)?

Our 7th grade students cleaned up and beautified their own school environment for Earth Day. Students rotated through eight stations where they completed activities that benefited our local environment including:

- creation of a flowerbed where a tree was planted along with the flowers;
- planting seeds at a terrarium station of plants that would later be replanted to various spots around the school;
- working at a plant identification station where students learned about and identified native plants;
- making tie-dye t-shirts at a leaf plot station.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum (e.g. what course outcomes were met and/or how did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning)?

The Earth Day Celebration was an interdisciplinary project tied to multiple subjects such as language arts, social studies, math, and science. Existing course goals for all of those subject areas were met through the project.

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project?

As each student rotated from station to station, they were to keep a journal and record their thoughts and what they were learning at each station.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project?

Students wrote letters to local businesses and parents for contributions for our Earth Day Celebration.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project (e.g. non-profits, civic organizations, business that provided donations, etc.)?

Our 7th grade students invited students from the local high school to participate in our Earth Day Celebration. We had parent volunteers come in to help out with the different activities that were planned. The contributions that we received from the local and community businesses were outstanding.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project?

A team of teachers initially came up with the idea and began planning the project. Students also assisted with project planning.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project?

Students learned the history of Earth Day, the importance of protecting the environment, and skills in team work and cooperation.