Statement of Purpose

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I teach in a preschool/kindergarten building. Do to the ongoing budget cuts across the country in k-12 settings our building does not have as much paper available as we used to. Our paper supply is very limited and when our building runs out of paper we cannot get more. The class will study the problem of our dwindling paper supply and develop solutions that will help our class reduce the amount of paper that gets used in the classroom, and addresses the question: How can we use less paper at school?

John Dewey compared education practices (that are still alive and well today) to “inscribing records upon a passive phonographic disc to result in giving back what has been inscribed when the proper button is pressed in recitation or examination.” (Ornstein& Hunkins, 2009). How can we prepare students for their future lives through conformity? To prepare students for real world experiences, they must be exposed to real world experiences in school. Learners must be able to problem solve within the context of a group. In kindergarten, students are moving along a developmental continuum where they are just being introduced to the idea of working together with others as opposed to the world of parallel play with which they are most familiar. In school, students must be given opportunities to develop the social and cooperation skills that are necessary for the development of problem solving skills within the context of a group.

Charles Silberman, in Crisis in the Classroom, charged that “schools are repressive and that they teach students docility and conformity.” (Silberman, 1971). In order to achieve the ability to solve the problems of the future, students and teachers must break free from the cookie-cutter classroom in the past. In the world today, citizens must be aware of the current conditions of the environment and things that they can do to help improve or prevent future conditions. Students must learn skills to help them conserve both natural and man-made resources. Students also must learn the importance of working with others and communicating with real world tools in order to solve the problem being studied. In short, kindergarten students must learn to solve problems cooperatively with others.

In the beginning of the year when we were brainstorming some topics of study, the students were very interested in studying the rainforest. While looking at different maps and transportation costs the class decided it was too expensive to study the rain forest from our current geographical location. The students discussed things about how their actions affect the rainforest even if it is very far away. Students decided to study ways that they could improve their own impact on the environment. With our school building running out of our paper supply as a result of budget cuts this project is within the context of both the immediate local community and the larger world picture. Students are finding ways to help cut back on paper and save the school money on paper costs.

The course will teach students concepts of graphing, data collection, and measurement, as they collect paper and other recyclables and weigh, chart/graph, and discuss the information collected. Students will learn mathematical tools like those listed above to help determine if their solutions are working. Students will communicate with other students and experts in the community as they work together to solve our school’s paper problem. This course will provide experiences and tools for the students to be introduced to the concept of problem solving and how we work cooperatively to solve the problems the world presents. This is something that is lacking when there is an overemphasis on passing tests. As put by philosopher Mark Slouka, “It’s about the victory of whatever can be quantified over everything that can’t. It’s about the quiet retooling of American education into an adjunct of business, an instrument of production.” (Slouka, 2009).

## Bibliography

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