Statement of Purpose / Rationale

In kindergarten, children learn the basics that become the building blocks for all of their future academic endeavors. Letter sounds, numbers, visual discrimination, and scientific inquiry are just a few of the essential skills children continue to build upon in every subject. However, sometimes skills are not taught beyond the point of initial mastery. This is a problem because children may lose the ability to display and apply their knowledge of these competencies across the curriculum. Hickman and Kiss (2010) state, “If the aim of education is to fully activate the cognitive potential of the learner, ways have to be found to integrate knowledge from many subjects to achieve a fuller understanding than would be provided by content treated in isolation” (p. 1). One way to sustain proficiency of subjects and to meet the needs of learners is to incorporate cross-curriculum units into the classroom. All skills should be revisited throughout the year to ensure reinforcement and to allow students extra opportunities to display their understanding of learned skills. This is necessary in order to develop successful students that eventually become productive members of society. Cross curricular units also provide the teacher with optimal possibilities for variety while covering the required state standards or courses of study during the school year.

According to the Interdisciplinary/Cross-Curricular Teaching (1997) website, “Interdisciplinary/cross-curricular teaching involves a conscious effort to apply knowledge, principles, and/or values to more than one academic discipline simultaneously. The disciplines may be related through a central theme, issue, problem, process, topic, or experience” (p. 1). Like all well thought out curriculum plans, cross-curricular teaching has many components that should be considered and included when developing a unit. According to the Techtrekers website (no date), “Theme, grade level appropriateness, focus statement, objectives, materials and resources, activities, discussion questions, literature selections, culminating activity, evaluation, and related works of literature” (p. 1) are integral parts of a thematic unit. A thematic unit contains all of the parts educators use in their daily lesson planning even when they are only teaching one subject in its standard category.

However, when all of the subjects are combined to teach one theme, the planning of one of these units is obviously time consuming if it is done effectively and efficiently. Educators need to be sure that it is all worth the time and effort put into creating and implementing a cross curricular unit. If the benefits are worthwhile, teachers will be more likely to spend the hours creating masterful lessons to foster the development of the young minds in their classroom. According to Vogt (1997), there are many benefits to utilizing cross curricular units in a classroom:

Thematic teaching enables students to: acquire, communicate, and investigate worthwhile knowledge in depth, integrate and enrich the language processes of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking, practice reading different kinds of materials for varied purposes, use prior knowledge of the world and past experiences with language and text to create relationships among various sources of information, make choices, interact, collaborate, and cooperate, apply what they learn in meaningful and "real world" contexts, informally assess their understanding and application of what they are learning, participate and learn, regardless of ability, level of language development, or background, and learn effectively in self-contained, multi-age, or departmental classrooms. (p. 1).

With all of these positive outcomes educators will be more likely to look past the time consuming process of creating thematic units because they know the benefits outweigh the lengthy planning process they may otherwise shy away from. Many of these advantages are

considered positive attributes children should attain when they are young so they develop the characteristics that are valued in society. The abilities to cooperate, interact, and collaborate with others, for example, are just few sought after qualities of a successful student and employee.

Topics for cross curricular units should be chosen carefully and should encompass all of the components mentioned above. All units should strive to contain both math and science lessons and objectives because it is those subjects that are today’s global focus. A unit on plants is an excellent example of a topic that can reach beyond the obvious, limiting standards of science. Plants can be incorporated into all subjects deceptively focusing on one subject, while actually targeting other standards in math, language arts, health, social studies, and art. This plant unit will contain all of the aforementioned categories needed for a successful cross curricular unit. Furthermore, the value of the subject matter taught in the unit is extensive, as it reaches it will reach across all subjects to reinforce skills previously mastered. This will give students the opportunity to apply their previous understanding and utilize this knowledge in other areas, not just in the original intended subject in which the skill was initially taught. The goal for this unit is to introduce children to the basics of plant life while incorporating past skills into alternate areas of study. Children will learn about plants and use what they already know to enrich the activities and lessons created for the unit.

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