Dear Portfolio Reader,

A look back at the last three years of my professional portfolio shows a consistent theme. Since 2010 my goals have been centered on project-based, integrated, and service learning units. My goal for this year states: I will make connections between my teaching and the real world by integrating subject matters (when appropriate) and providing opportunities for students to participate in service learning experiences. Through these connections students will realize the importance of what is being taught, thus improving the quality of their work. I will measure the success of this goal through student work samples from integrated units compared to work from traditional units and lessons. This year my students participated in two such units. One unit integrated language arts and social studies through an in depth study of the 2012 election. The second unit integrated math, language arts, social studies, and science through a research project about alternative energy sources.

The Elections 2012 Unit had more of a service-learning piece to it, while the Energy Unit integrated more subject matter. After the Elections 2012 Unit I observed a noticeable increase in my students grades in social studies. The eighth grade students were very invested in the unit because they were the ones organizing the mock election for the school. At the end of the first ranking period, right as this unit came to a close, I realized that none of these students had below a B- grade in social studies. While this can be attributed to many different things, I believe strongly that their investment in learning increased due to the fact that it a purpose outside of the classroom.

The Energy Unit, on the other hand, integrated many different subject matters and the students, grades seven and eight, were mixed for this project. Autumn and I worked very closely to make this integration happen. Considering this was the first project we completed together, I would say it was fairly successful. Judging by the students’ self-reflections, many of them understood the importance of this work. Some of the students made connections between the work they were doing and actual energy needs. Autumn and I were lucky enough to be able to debrief this unit with Kippy. Part of what we talked about in this debrief session was the need to use a community energy need as fieldwork if we do a similar unit in the future.

As I was reflecting on my goals for the last three years, I realized that I had basically combined my 2010-11 goal and 2011-12 goal into my 2012-13 goal. Not only did I want to integrate subject matters this year, I also want to add some service pieces to our units. I can honestly say I am still working on both of these aspects of Expeditionary Learning. My goal next year will most likely be of a similar nature. I am so glad to have the support of the Expeditionary Learning community to help me to teach the way I have been attempting to for the last few years.

Thank you for taking the time to explore my portfolio.

-Caitlin Hutt