April 1, 2012

Dear Portfolio Reader,

The professional goal I wrote at the beginning of the year stated, “I will work to create integrated and interdisciplinary units that address the questions and concerns our students posed at the beginning of the year. Upon reflection, at least 80% of our students will feel that their questions and concerns were addressed through this year's academic units.” As stated in my portfolio, we started the year asking the students what exactly those questions and concerns were. We used *Curriculum Integration: designing the core of democratic education,* by James Beane as a guide to these beginning of the year activities. This professional reading was a great starting place for me in terms of working towards my goal.

Throughout the year Lindsay and I have been looking at the district curriculum as well as state and national standards along with the questions and concerns our students stated at the beginning of the year. With the two units I have showcased in my portfolio this year, I believe we have done well not only integrating our subject matters into interdisciplinary units, but also using the standards as a guide to figure out how to teach the students more about their questions and concerns. While these interdisciplinary units are both very different, they satisfy many district, state and national standards, all the while hitting on many of the questions and concerns set out by our students.

As we plan and implement more projects of this nature, we are continually learning different strategies and skills that, we feel, make the projects better and better. One thing we have learned this year is how to simplify learning targets and project rubrics so the students know exactly where we are headed throughout the weeks we are working on each project. As students become more and more familiar with the process of this project-based learning, it is a lot easier for us to implement. While at first they seemed overwhelmed and stressed about the size and scope of these projects (as did we I’m sure), now they understand how to budget time, work in groups, and take pride in the work they will be showcasing in the final projects.

One piece of my goal that I have not completed yet is the reflection students will do dealing with whether they feel we have learned about their questions and concerns this year. We are currently in the process of finishing the Human Body and Government unit. Once this unit is complete, we will have the students think about the year as a whole and what they have learned in all of their core content classes. We will ask them to reflect on whether or not they feel these questions and concerns were addressed. It is our hope that at least 80% of the students will feel that many of these questions and concerns were dealt with through these units. I certainly feel that way as the teacher of these units.

Thanks for taking the time to peruse my portfolio. I really appreciate it.

-Caitlin Hutt