

## **“What’s Your Source?”**

### **Service Learning Energy Unit Reflection**

The “What’s Your Source?” integrated service learning unit my team teacher, Lindsay Bolduc, and I completed with our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes this year taught our students many valuable lessons about research, group work, and presentation. Their problem solving, critical thinking, and social skills were put to the test throughout this 8-week unit. By the end of the unit, each group of students took pride in the research work they had done and the fact that they knew enough about their particular source to teach others what they had learned.

Lindsay and I kicked off the unit by sharing with the students the basics of eight different energy sources including coal, geothermal, biomass, oil, tidal, hydro, wind, and solar. Each student then rated their top five choices of energy based on which ones they were most interested in. We were able to create groups of researchers by using these ratings so that all students were researching an energy source they were interested in knowing more about.

Throughout the research process the students used critical thinking skills to come up with questions they had about their energy sources. They asked and answered questions through their research using a group wiki where all notes were kept. As the project went on the students created multiple artifacts to demonstrate the information they had been finding. They created a history of their source, economic reports, creative writing pieces, public service announcements, and 3-D models of their source at work. With all of these pieces, especially the 3-D model, these students were practicing problem solving skills.

Finally the students created invitations to send out to anyone they wanted to invite to the energy fair we had as a culminating project in which they would display all the work they had completed. Here the students shared with community members, principals, teachers, the superintendent, family and friends what they had learned about their source. In order to get ready for this event, the students not only made sure they had the knowledge of the subject area in order to teach others, they also practiced communication skills with each other and with their teachers.

The “What’s Your Source?” energy project provided many opportunities for the students to push their limits both academically and socially. Many of the students learned how to better communicate with their peers through group work. They learned ways to become more informed citizens through research. They dealt with problems along the way such as crashing computers or 3-D models not working up to standards. This project not only taught the students about science, social studies, language arts, and math content, it also taught them how to use the critical thinking, problem solving, and social skills that they will need throughout their lives.