PORTRAIT OF A NEVADA LEARNER

Piloting the Portrait Case Study

School Name and District

Liberty Peak Elementary - Elko County

Names of Individuals and Roles

Chrissie Blanchard, Assistant Principal
Shannon Porter - 4th grade
Carrie Pollard - 2nd grade
Jessie Thomas - K

Introduction

We are working on a “Genius Hour” project in K/2/4. Students are exploring different career topics and then exploring the different aspects of those careers ie - different jobs relating to an overall field of study. Our kindergarteners are exploring careers through play. This all relates to our overall theme of “Who am I?” Many students are realizing that they can be interested in more than one career field or path. They are excited to explore and learn about career fields they might not have previously thought about.

Intended Impact

- One of our intended impacts is for students to grow and understand that they can have many different parts to “Who” they are.
- Another is that the students' self-efficacy grows and they become more engaged with learning and their role in their education.
- We hope to serve as an example of policy change; including areas where students have interests but not adding more work load to the teacher plate.
- Some students have already changed their learning practices, in that, what they thought they knew about themselves and their interests wasn’t actually what they are interested in. Some have changed roles in their “Genius Hour” project because they learned that they were better suited for a different role.
- Our teaching practices have changed as well. Allowing students to explore more on their own rather than a presented lesson on a more generalized topic.

Project Work

After collaborating with members of the team, we were able to see that our values fell within promoting students' self-efficacy and an understanding of who they were, what they could give to others, and how they could persevere when faced with challenges. We felt that building these skills could occur in a variety of ways from lower elementary to higher elementary. We brainstormed what this might look like in the lower grades (play and discourse), mid-grades (guided topics of study based upon interest surveys), and upper elementary grades (guided topics of study, research projects, and project-based learning). We were also able to collaborate with our local CTE coordinator to gain insight of resources, possible avenues for community involvement, and for information of what this might look like as students leave the elementary school. Upon implementation, students were exposed to student-led instruction; topics were chosen with them in mind and the pacing followed their leads. The impact was great. Students highly anticipated our "Genius Hour" time, collaborated well with others, and began to see their strengths as a valuable asset to the classroom, school, and community.

Next Steps

- Keep working on the next project for "Genius Hour"
- Start off in the fall with a project, hopefully the first few weeks of school.
- Get more of our colleagues involved in the "Genius Hour" project

Lessons Learned

- Student engagement increased more than I/we was/were anticipating. Students begged to keep working and continually ask if/when they can work on their projects.
- Students are learning that they can be interested in more than one career path and topic of study to allow them options as they begin to narrow down their choices in middle and high school CTE courses.
- We loved the amount of student engagement this has brought to our classrooms. One of our lessons learned is to begin the "Who Am I" project at the beginning of the school year because we feel it will increase student engagement for the year and increase self-efficacy.

Project Artifacts: Case Study Information

4th grade students worked together to plan/design a bridge to solve the problem of deer crossing. They read about this in different parts around the country, identified if it was a need in our community and what they could do to help.

4th grade bridge planning

4th Grade bridge building

Kindergarten student showing her engineered rocket.

Kindergarten Rocket

After learning about astronauts, a kindergarten students talks about a telescope she designed.

Kindergarten Telescope

Kindergartener discusses his model fire engine after learning about various community helpers.
Kindergartener shows his fire engine

Kindergarten students working together to play kid scientists. Teacher is capturing video of student discourse.
Kindergarteners playing scientist

After reseraching how to grow their own food, and growing vegetables in the classroom, 2nd grade students share what they would like to do with the research they have done and how they can help the community/world they live in.

2nd Grade entrepreneur

2nd Grader Researching how to feed others

2nd Grade Vegetables

2nd Grade Farm to Table

After discussing engineers and scientists, Kindergarteners were asked to design something that could help the earth.

Kindergarten Solar Panels

Kindergarten pollution