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“Exploring the Regenerative Student Community Fellowship at Westmont Elementary”

Abstract: The Regenerative Student Community Fellowship Program (RSCF) was created by Dr. Kyle Brown, director of the Lyle Center at Cal Poly Pomona, in 2012. It began with six sustainability fellows who aimed to develop a replicable model for university-primary school partnership. The fellows not only taught in the classrooms, but also empowered the community of Pomona to address environmental and societal challenges. By the year’s end, these six individuals were pivotal in assisting to develop a vision of a regenerative community in today’s environment. Thanks to additional funding, the Regenerative Student Community Fellowship Program will continue with six new fellows intent on create a positive change in the city of Pomona. The focus for the 2012-2013 school years revolved around creating pathways to college learning and relating issues concerning our environment and sustainability. With this new cohort, the focus revolves around project based learning, environment and sustainability, and mentorship.

Interestingly, as for the 2013 – 2014 school year, primary through high school students will no longer adhere to the old state standards that dictated how and what they learned. Now, new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been implemented and many schools are slowly adjusting to this new change. Originally, we were interested in exploring how the Regenerative Student Community Fellowship (RSCF) played a role in augmenting important qualitative traits in primary school students. After some thought, we thought it fitting to test the effectiveness of the program by evaluating the training mechanisms used to assist the fellows with their experience. During the Fall Quarter, fellows have undergone intensive training aimed at cultivating empowerment, fostering critical awareness and preparing them to be model leaders within a classroom setting. Examples of training activities include group investigation and discussion of approaches to empowering vs. stifling education, awareness of developmental assets that are critical to the healthy development of young people, awareness of stuck vs. regenerative communities, and analysis of common core state standards.

The purpose of the study revolves around two main questions: In what ways might CCSS support developmental assets essential for the healthy development of young people as well as the regeneration of communities? What role can environmental education projects (RSCF) play in this process at the primary grade levels? Through this study, we are looking to study the effectiveness of this program by observing the preparedness of the fellows in cultivating engaging curricula and the overall relevance of the Common Core State Standards.
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