

Pepper and Triscuit Go to School: Elementary School Students' Learning With and From Animals

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What did we learn?

In their classes and responses to our interview questions, students demonstrated the following:

- **conceptually specific knowledge of agriculture, livestock, and lifecycle**
- life skills such as **effective communication, collaboration, leadership, responsibility, and a strong work ethic**
- awareness of **environmental sustainability and ethical economic entrepreneurship**
- they are capable of being **co-researchers** (key methodological outcome).



The “Chores Crew” visits this chicken coop twice daily to attend to the chickens and to collect the eggs.

This pilot supported a current study funded by Alberta Education’s Research Partnership Program.



Jihoon is holding the Grade 2 classroom duck that hatched a few days before. Each classroom at NHCS is assigned to a different barn animal.

Why was this experience valuable to Jihoon?

*“As an undergraduate student studying education, it was a **unique and highly beneficial experience to collaborate directly with a faculty member, school personnel, children, and animals in a rural setting.** It provided me with an exceptional opportunity to **witness firsthand the profound impact that learning environments can have on students**” (Jihoon).*

Jihoon is now a Grade 5/6 teacher in Vancouver and has been inspired to have fish in his classroom. ☺

What did we do?

During the tenure of the award, we accomplished the following:

- 1 focus group with teachers
- Individual interviews with 3 teachers
- Individual interviews with 8 K-6 students
- Individual interview with 1 parent
- School observations

What was Jihoon’s role?

Jihoon had responsibilities in:

- applying relevant literature about children to contribute to the development of age-appropriate interview protocols and observational methods;
- providing expertise about engaging elementary student behaviour;
- interviewing individual students;
- observing children in ‘classrooms’;
- co-interviewing teachers and a parent;
- writing research memos and discussing with Bonnie interpretations of interview and observation data.

Reference

Spielmaker, D. M., & Leising, J. G. (2013). National agricultural literacy outcomes. Utah State University, School of Applied Sciences & Technology. Retrieved from <http://agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix>

What did we study and where?

“Not All Classrooms Have 4 Walls”

New Humble Community School, a K-6 rural public charter school, uses the **National Agricultural Literacy Outcomes** (Spielmaker & Leising, 2013) as a lens for delivering Alberta curriculum. The school motto reflects their **experiential learning** focus.

Students at this school don’t learn *about* agriculture; they learn *through* agriculture in the barns, garden, outdoor classroom, and in the community.

In this pilot, we explored **how learning through agriculture shapes students’ curricular learning and life skills development.**

Triscuit and Pepper are pygmy goats!

