Pepper and Triscuit Go to School:

Elementary School Students' Learning With and From Animals

Principal Investigator: Bonnie Stelmach, PhD, MA, BEd Research Assistant: Jihoon Jang, BEd, BSc





Triscuit and Pepper are pygmy goats!

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.

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



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?

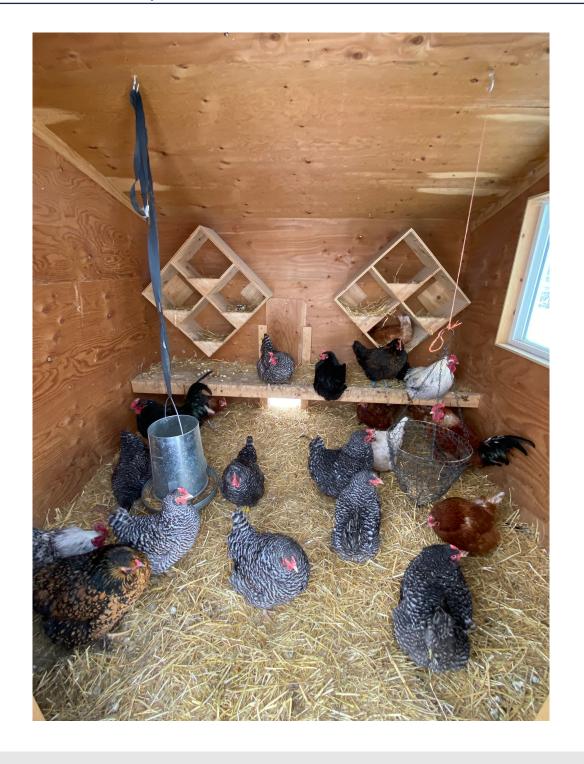
"As an undergraduate student studying education, it was a unique and highly beneficial experience to collaborate directly with a faculty member, school personnel, children, and animals in a rural setting. It provided me with an exceptional opportunity to witness firsthand the profound impact that learning 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 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 coresearchers (key methodological outcome).



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

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