PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAM REPORT
School Year: 2015-2016

PLT Title

Infusing SEL into Middle School Science Content

Blurb for PLT Conference Brochure

Infusing SEL strands into the hot-topic of genetically modified organisms (GMOs): Come hear how grade 8 students can practice perspective taking, form opinions around multi-faceted issues, and engage in civil discourse in the science classroom.

Contact Information *(Write * next to facilitator's name.)*

Name	School	Grade Level or Subject
Joanne Marks*	Chenery	Grade 8 Science
Jon Marks	Chenery	Grade 8 Science
Vanessa Bullard	Chenery	Grade 8 Science
Kristen St. George	Chenery	Principal

PLT SMART Goal

By the end of the 2015-16 school year, we will work with the other 8th grade science teachers to develop and incorporate two or more lessons that incorporate SEL directly into the Grade 8 science curriculum.

This PLT Goal is also

_X A Professional Practice Goal
__ A Student Learning Goal
__ Neither

Key Actions

1. Met monthly with PLT members
2. Identified curriculum areas where SEL concepts can be developed
3. Researched successful SEL lessons and strategies in the form of articles and websites for our own professional development
4. Evaluated other lessons that may contain SEL elements and determine which of them fit our curriculum
5. Collected a list of shared resources
6. Created one six-day mini unit that aligns with our current content standards and integrates specific SEL core competencies, including social awareness / perspective taking and responsible decision making
7. Shared sample student work with colleagues to evaluate the success of the lesson
8. Reflected on the implementation of newly created lessons with colleagues and began to make improvements upon them

Findings

By developing a six-day mini-unit on GMOs, we successfully incorporated SEL competencies into our science content.

- *Self awareness:* Self awareness was practiced through a before and after opinion survey. Survey data suggests that increased content knowledge and time for reflection throughout the unit allowed for students to change their opinions.
- *Self management:* Class-wide activities such as the number line and Town Meeting lessons required students to practice good self-management including respectful and controlled behavior despite hearing differing opinions.
- *Social awareness:* The entire unit was filled with debate where students needed to recognize others' opinions, that they might be different than their own and to communicate regularly in a respectful manner.
- *Relationship skills:* There were small group and full-class activities that allowed students to practice working together.
- *Responsible Decision Making:* The dynamic of the Town Meeting was such that students needed to respectfully and responsibly interact with their peers when expressing their opinions and considering the community question being discussed.

Our data suggests that students really benefited from this experience in science class. According to their survey results, watching Jimmy's Food Fight, reacting to quotes on the number line and participating in the Town Meeting were most helpful in forming their opinions. Most students expressed a positive experience with the town meeting as a way to consider perspectives of others. Overall, we feel that this unit enhanced our science content curriculum and inserted a human impact component.

Recommendations / Next Steps

- Based on this year's experience, findings and reflection, we plan to refine the GMO unit before presenting it again next year. One key change would be to incorporate a larger research component to provide more background information as students developed their assigned role.
- Use our work to guide the development of another unit that incorporates similar skills so that students get even more practice with it throughout the course of the year.