



Developing a sense-of-place in middle school students through service learning : a case study
by Patricia Jay Ingraham

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
in Education

Montana State University

© Copyright by Patricia Jay Ingraham (2001)

Abstract:

This qualitative case study examined a service-learning project created by ten eighth-grade students in a rural K-8 school during the spring of 2000. The school was located in an isolated resort community in the Rocky Mountains. The teachers and the community struggled to find ways to motivate middle school students to learn. Service learning appeared to be a positive way to teach these students.

In the spring of 1997, the eighth-grade students learned that a hundred year old cabin was to be destroyed and a shopping mall was to be built in its place. The cabin, which had become a landmark, was located at the entrance to the community. With the help of the school and the community, the students moved the cabin to the school grounds where it would be restored and used as an outdoor education facility. This event created a series of service learning projects the school referred to as "The Cabin Project." Each year, the eighth-grade students developed a service learning project that supported the two main goals of the original "The Cabin Project": 1) to restore the cabin and 2) to learn about the history of the area and its unique environmental features and share this new knowledge with the community. The service-learning project for the class of 2000 was to create a booklet for children who vacationed in the area. The booklet was to give what the students believed was interesting information, which might not be apparent otherwise. The booklet was to be distributed throughout the resort area.

This case study examined the effect this service learning project had on the students and how they deepened their understanding of where they lived. The data was collected through interviews, videotape, student and teacher journals, a teacher survey and documentation from previous projects. The research found The Cabin Project developed a sense-of-place in the community and was supported as a positive way to teach middle school students by the school and community.....

DEVELOPING A SENSE-OF-PLACE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS
THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING:
A CASE STUDY

by

Patricia Jay Ingraham

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Education

in

Education

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Bozeman, Montana

July 2001

D378
In 46

APPROVAL

of a dissertation submitted by

Patricia Jay Ingraham

This dissertation has been read by each member of the dissertation committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

Michael Brody

Michael J. Brody
Signature

7/23/01
Date

Approved for the Department of Education

Robert Carson

Robert Carson
Signature

7/23/01
Date

Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

Bruce McLeod

Bruce R. McLeod
Signature

7-23-01
Date

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree at Montana State University, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. I further agree that copying of this thesis is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with "fair use" as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Requests for extensive copying or reproduction of this thesis should be referred to University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, to whom I have granted "the exclusive right to reproduce and distribute my dissertation in and from microform along with the non-exclusive right to reproduce and distribute my abstract in any format in whole or in part."

Signature

Date

Patricia J. Ferguson
July 23, 2001

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this dissertation was a much longer process than initially anticipated. My determination to see this project through to its completion came from the support and encouragement of those special people in my life.

To the members of my committee Gloria Gregg, Scott Davis, Robert Carson and Ann de Onis, thank you for your continuous support and words of wisdom. A special thanks goes to Michael Brody who chaired my committee. His endless patience, constructive criticism, and faith that "this will get done" were most appreciated throughout the process. His understanding of what is important in education and his willingness to share his ideas gave greater depth to this dissertation.

To Joan Traylor, who through her hard work and utmost determination, created The Cabin Project, thank you for creating a sense-of-place in all of us who participated in this endeavor throughout the years.

To friends and family who supported me in this pursuit, thank you for standing by me and encouraging me to keep going.

To all my colleagues, both here in the west and those back east, thank you for not being afraid to take the risk to create programs which worked for adolescents and also provided service to the community. You were the inspiration for my desire to spread the word about service learning. Throughout the years, you made a difference.

To my parents, Donald and Dorothy Hamilton, who modeled the importance of service to others, thank you for your constant love and support.

To my husband, Wendell, and our children, Drew and Amanda, thank you for enduring the journey with me. Your patience, love, support and encouragement kept me going when I wanted to stop. This dissertation would not be a reality without all of you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
The Place and Situation	1
Middle Level Trends.....	4
Rural Settings and a Sense-of-Place	6
The Problem.....	11
Purpose of the Research.....	14
Curriculum	15
Learning	15
Teaching.....	15
Governance	15
Significance of this Research.....	15
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	17
Middle School Students	18
Sense-of-Place.....	21
Service Learning	22
Meaningful Learning	34
Meaningful Learning Through Service Learning	38
3. METHODOLOGY	44
A General Description of Qualitative Research.....	44
Background to The Cabin Project.....	48
The Case Study of the 1999-2000 Cabin Project.....	53
The Procedure	54
Curriculum	54
Learning	54
Teaching.....	54
Governance	55
Interview Questions for Students.....	61
Interview Questions for Teachers	62
Interview Questions for Community Members	62
Teacher Survey	63
4. CASE STUDY DATA.....	64
Curriculum	68
What Academic Subjects Were Integrated Into The Project?	68
How Do the Students Study a Sense-of-Place?	76

Learning	79
What Skills and Concepts Align with Content Standards?.....	79
Content Skills for Writing.....	79
Content Skills for Science.....	81
Content Skills for the Arts	82
Content Standards for Library Media	83
What Was the Understanding of Service-Learning as The Students Began This Project?	84
How Were the Students Actively Involved in This Project?	86
Teaching.....	88
What Do Teachers Need, Beyond the Normal Curriculum, to Participate In Service Learning?	88
Do Teachers Need Additional Training?	90
Governance	92
How Did the School Community Provide Support for This Service- Learning, and How Did They View It as a Teaching Method?	92
How Did the Community Support This Service Learning Project, and How Did They View It as a Method of Teaching?	94
 5. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE STUDY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	 97
Summary	97
Curriculum	99
Learning	100
Teaching.....	104
Governance	105
Recommendations.....	108
Curriculum	108
Learning	108
Teaching.....	108
Governance	109
Future Study.....	110
Curriculum	110
Learning	110
Teaching.....	111
Governance	111
Multiple Roles in Participant Research.....	112
Conclusion.....	113

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Implementation Plan for Service Learning: The Cabin Project.....	29
2. The Four Commonplaces and Service Learning.....	42
3. Outline for Qualitative Research Study	61
4. Curriculum for Service-Learning Project: Developing a Sense-of-Place.....	69

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. The Cabin at Its Original Site	49
2. The Cabin is Placed on the Flat Bed Truck	50
3. The Cabin En Route to the School.....	51
4. What is Service Learning?.....	85

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined a service-learning project created by ten eighth-grade students in a rural K-8 school during the spring of 2000. The school was located in an isolated resort community in the Rocky Mountains. The teachers and the community struggled to find ways to motivate middle school students to learn. Service learning appeared to be a positive way to teach these students.

In the spring of 1997, the eighth-grade students learned that a hundred year old cabin was to be destroyed and a shopping mall was to be built in its place. The cabin, which had become a landmark, was located at the entrance to the community. With the help of the school and the community, the students moved the cabin to the school grounds where it would be restored and used as an outdoor education facility. This event created a series of service learning projects the school referred to as "The Cabin Project."

Each year, the eighth-grade students developed a service learning project that supported the two main goals of the original "The Cabin Project": 1) to restore the cabin and 2) to learn about the history of the area and its unique environmental features and share this new knowledge with the community. The service-learning project for the class of 2000 was to create a booklet for children who vacationed in the area. The booklet was to give what the students believed was interesting information, which might not be apparent otherwise. The booklet was to be distributed throughout the resort area.

This case study examined the effect this service learning project had on the students and how they deepened their understanding of where they lived. The data was collected through interviews, videotape, student and teacher journals, a teacher survey and documentation from previous projects. The research found The Cabin Project developed a sense-of-place in the community and was supported as a positive way to teach middle school students by the school and community.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Place And Situation

Surrounded by majestic mountains and sloping foothills, where the river winds its way through a narrow canyon and the wildlife outnumbers the residents by the thousands, sits a small rural K-8 school with less than 100 students. The school is located in the northern Rocky Mountains on the fringe of a major resort, which hosts thousands of tourists coming from all over the world to enjoy and to experience the pristine landscape and natural beauty. Protected by mountain ranges on all sides, the area is about an hour's drive from the closest fast-food restaurant.

The school educates the children of the families who work in the area, and it serves as the community center. Within a 30-minute drive from the school is a national park. The development and growth in this resort is increasing steadily. People are moving into the area from all over the country. Some are looking for a more peaceful way of life, away from the hectic city, and others are there to prosper from the growing opportunities in tourism and housing development. Regardless, this once-quiet community of less than 750 permanent residents is now turning into a world-class destination resort. Since this area does not have a minimum of 500 people within a square mile, according to state law it cannot be an incorporated town or village. Subsequently, there is little infrastructure available that brings people together as a community; nor is there one vision for the

future. The visions for the community come from the numerous interest groups. Housing developers are looking to provide quality homes in beautiful surroundings with nature right outside the backdoor. Numerous local district boards try to keep some sense of order balancing various visions of the future, but it is difficult.

For many new residents, finding their niche in the community is challenging. Many families search for a sense of belonging. The adventure of leaving the more populated areas, leaving family and friends is exciting, but creating new roots can be difficult. While the adults in the community struggle to find a sense-of-place, the school struggles to find a way to meet the needs of their middle school students as they search for their place in school, the community, and the world. Many students come from much larger schools where there are numerous programs and activities to keep them involved, as well as many different groups of students with whom to become friends. In this little school, there is only one group; with a class size of 10 or less, everyone hangs out together or one stays alone. As one middle school student put it, "I have more brothers and sisters than I need. I like being an only child when I go home."

This community was first settled in 1891 by homesteaders looking for gold. In 1974 it was established as a summer and ski resort community. A large portion of the population is transient service oriented or part-time second homeowners. There are less than 1000 registered voters. By definition the area is considered rural because of its small population, its isolated location, and so few resources. Members of this community come from diverse locations and socio-economic levels. A few years ago, the majority of residents came from neighboring states. Now, people come from both coasts of the United State as well as Europe and Asia. The new residents often look to the school for

social interaction and involvement for some. Their search for belonging and need to help others is fulfilled when they volunteer at the school. Participating in activities at the school satisfies many of their social needs. There are no traditional education resources available in this community such as museums, playgrounds, historical sites, or library.

The traditional curriculum, programs, and activities at the school no longer meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Students, who come from all over the United States, and whose previous school experiences provided a greater variety in programs and activities as well as social interactions, find this rural community a very different experience. This has caused the teachers and the school community in general to reevaluate how to educate their middle level students.

In their search to improve educational programming for these students, teachers incorporated a place-based academic education program into the existing one. This helped the students develop a sense-of-place for where they lived. The program assisted teachers in creating a curriculum that deepened the students' understanding and appreciation of their surroundings. This idea of a sense-of-place is now being extended into the community to help share the history and the unique environmental features that are found of this area through a service-learning project called The Cabin Project.

The teachers first learned of a place-based program through a science school in another state where the instructors refer to it as a sense-of-place curriculum. According to the former director of the program, "The curriculum strives to provide lifelong skills that help people understand natural processes, human history, and an awareness of others who share the planet so that the students may feel a part of, not apart from, the life experience." The intent of this program is "to provide students a sense of stability and

belonging so they may handle the changes they will continually face as they grow up in an ever-changing world" (Archibald, 1996, p. 4).

Middle Level Trends

Creating a meaningful educational experience for the middle school students has been a challenge for teachers for decades. Adolescence is a unique stage of child development that has been overlooked until about 20 years ago. The school experience for this age group should meet their academic, social, and emotional needs. The traditional junior high framework treats these students as younger high school students. The K-8 programs treat them as older elementary students. In either case, many of the young people in grades 6-8 were not having their needs met and began turning away from school to find activities that held their interest. There was an increased concern by educators and parents that as the students became bored, restless, and disengaged they would turn to other less-desirable activities. As students tuned out, the teachers found it more difficult to motivate them to learn. The traditional approach of instruction, with the teacher at the front of the classroom, was no longer effective with a student of this age. Teachers needed to interact with their students and give them experiences that went beyond the classroom walls. This gave the adolescent first-hand experience and a sense of belonging in the real world (Krystal, 1999).

Studies on adolescents determined that in seventh grade, students began to move away from school and the academic world. New interests started to outweigh school, especially social opportunities. School was seen by many adolescents as a place to meet and to mix with others. Getting an education was the last reason for them to be

there. Many students were in school only because by law they had to be there. Their lack of motivation and enthusiasm to learn was of concern to both parents and teachers. By connecting students to their community, they developed a deeper moral code and a sense of civic pride as they learned that their actions have a positive effect on the community (Krystal, 1999). If students were not given these connections, they often became callous, lonely, and sought less appropriate activities in which to engage. Some decided to drop out of school.

Keeping adolescents engaged and excited about learning is a challenge. It takes time, energy, and a willingness to look at the traditional classroom differently. Restructuring the education of the middle grades should include team-teaching, interdisciplinary studies, and no tracking (Steinberg, 1993). As adolescents begin to exercise their independence from their families, they need to have a safe and supportive framework in which to explore new ideas, values, and experiences. They often find themselves living between two worlds: too old to be considered a child and too young to engage in adult activities. Teachers need to remember that the child standing before them is an adult-in-the-making and their interaction is very important to the overall development of the student (Steinberg, 1993). Schools that realized the need for a positive psychosocial environment began to see greater success. Instead of teacher versus students, students who saw themselves on the same team as their teachers exceeded the academic expectations set for them (George & Oldaker, 1985). Young adults need to find meaningful experiences from which they can grow and find a connection with their community so they can develop a positive attitude, a civic responsibility, and a feeling of being needed and respected (Krystal, 1999).

In Turning Points, The Carnegie Council Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, recommended, "every middle school student should be included in service-supervised programs to help others in the community or the school as part of its core instruction. These service activities will promote values for citizenship and enrich the instructional program by sharing resources found in the community" (1989, p. 4).

Rural Settings and A Sense-of-Place

Traditionally, schools in rural America, by design or by necessity, were dependent on their community. Schooling reflected local values, and in many cases, the program was established to support the needs of that particular community. The community and the school were interdependent. The schools were expected to educate the children, and the community provided the emotional and spiritual support. Unfortunately, in more recent times, the latter has been neglected (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995).

Rural schools were often identified as the center of the community. While it is difficult to define what is considered rural, there are two main characteristics that distinguish these areas: geographic isolation and low population density. Many rural schools became self-sufficient because of the isolation from other resources and the limited population, which created an interdependence between the school and the community (Sher, 1977). Local control and community involvement are well rooted in rural areas. In the Northern Rocky Mountain region, more than 50% of all schools are considered rural according to the 1998 National Center for Education Statistics report. These rural areas are seeing major changes in their communities because of the desire of

suburban and urban residents to move to a less-hectic environment. With this come new challenges for rural educators as they try to meet the growing needs of their students.

One of the ways to assist in this endeavor is to help the students understand one's place. This promotes the learning power by combining the intellectual activities with real-life experiences, and it addresses the shortcomings inherent in our departmentalized view of knowledge. Learning about place brings people together as they settle into a new way of living where they are, and builds on their individual knowledge of self. "The more students understand the community in which they live: its social structure, its economy, its history, its music, and its ecology . . . the more they become invested in that community" (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995). In 1897, John Dewey supported this idea of place as an educational tool in his essay My Pedagogic Creed. Dewey suggested school and its relation with the larger community and all of its functions become part of the curriculum.

In his work "Ecological Literacy," Orr (1996) discussed the difference between a resident and an inhabitant of an area. The resident is temporary to the area and puts down few roots, cares little, and is more interested in what gratifications will be found. An inhabitant tries to acquire information about a place and looks to become part of the community. As individuals move from being residents to inhabitants, they create physical and biological patterns. As they gain knowledge of where they live, they develop a nurturing relationship with place and are less likely to destroy it. In fact they will work to protect it.

Currently, the inhabitants who lived in one location for generations are moving away, and families from cities and larger towns are arriving into rural communities to

find a simpler lifestyle and/or economic prosperity. These population/demographic changes are causing rural communities to restructure and meet new expectations. In many cases, the traditions and rituals that were celebrated for generations are lost as new families bring in new ideas. At the same time, the new families struggle to develop a connection to the community.

Students from rural areas are growing more restless and are looking to move into larger towns as soon as they are able. They believe opportunities lie elsewhere. As one group is working hard to get out of the rural community for a better life, another group is arriving looking for a quality of life that provides a more tranquil existence. Many newcomers struggle with small town "quaintness" and are challenged to find things to do without the options of a larger town (Stern, 1994).

This struggle is most evident in the small, isolated resort community in which this research took place. In a sense, this project takes place in a modern boomtown of the west. In this particular community, the traditions have yet to become established. The history of the area is being lost and what little remains is not always passed on to the new residents who live there. One way to bring people together, aid in this ongoing adjustment, and help establish a sense-of-place within the community is to engage community members and students in activities that expand the walls of the classroom. By connecting the community with its youth, a feeling of being needed is created.

The middle school is a logical place for these adolescents to begin to connect with the larger community. In the article, "Positive Paths for Young Adolescents" Schultz (1999) describes this connectedness as the key for academic and personal health. This connection allows adolescents to derive satisfaction from people and organizations with

which they gain support. Engaging in community projects, which include extended family members, friends, the school, and other organizations, creates connections in which adolescents gain acceptance and self-confidence. As students participate in these activities, they observe others willing to take risks, to solve problems, and to work toward a specific goal. Through these activities they learn the value of effort, and they learn ways of being competent learners. The success and failure of a project enables the student to see that making mistakes is acceptable and one can learn more from the experience than anticipated. By connecting adolescents with caring adults, they gain by observation and experience important life skills (1999).

Going beyond the school for support in educating adolescents is an important strategy (Schultz, 1999). Participating in activities that are useful to others helps adolescents develop the feeling of self-worth and belonging. It also allows them to learn about the democratic process as they work cooperatively as a team. Adolescents need to be connected to positive caring mentors as they explore their roles in a bigger world (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992). In rural areas, the community can provide accessibility and a safe learning environment; thus, rural schools are in a position to take advantage of a community-school connection to a greater degree than suburban or urban schools (Stern, 1994).

Nationally, service learning has been given considerable attention in order to create better learning environments for our youth. Service learning combines community service with academics and connects students with community members to fulfill a local need. Community connections help middle school students to grow in productive and successful ways. When students are engaged in activities, which combine learning with

real situations, the impact of the experience is significant to their academic, social, and emotional development. Providing them with opportunities to participate in community projects has proven to be a positive way to keep adolescents on the road to success. Their desire to be creative, productive, and valued will help carry them through this difficult time in their development (Fertman, 1996). When rural school students focus on their community and its various needs, they have more reason to see the value in their hometown rather than wanting to move to the bigger city at the first chance (Stern, 1994). Developing a sense-of-place in middle school students may be another strategy to keep them engaged, interested, and open to new challenges.

The Problem

This qualitative case study examined a service-learning project for eighth-grade students in a K-8 rural school. The school is located in a small, isolated resort community in the northern Rocky Mountains. The faculty at the school and the community as a whole had been concerned about the middle school students not working to their potential. In addition, once these students went to the high school, there was a 70% dropout rate. Five years ago, the school held a goal-setting meeting. Community members, parents, and faculty worked together to develop goals and direction for the school. The number one concern from all groups was: how could the school maintain the interest of the middle school student in learning and ultimately, better prepare them for success during their high school experience? How could a school, with limited resources and funding, assist their young people to become more resilient: to be

socially competent, to improve their problem-solving skills, and to develop a sense of autonomy and purpose? It was obvious that the needs of the middle school students were not being met.

In 1997, through a service-learning project called The Cabin Project, the middle school students began developing a sense-of-place for where they live by learning about the rich history of the area and its unique environmental features. Service learning takes community service a step further and incorporates a school's existing academic curriculum into the activities. As a result of the original project, the middle school students became enthusiastic about restoring a 100-year-old cabin and learning about their community. Since 1997, the eighth-grade students created a new service-learning project.

The academic program of this school meets the state accreditation standards because alternative standards were created and approved by the State Board of Public Education. The school had minimal resources and had difficulty maintaining a full program due to its isolation and fiscal restraints. Behavior problems, lack of enthusiasm, and a disinterest in learning among the middle school students were common issues discussed among parents and teachers. Due to the small enrollment and economic limitations, the school offered only limited academic programs.

From sixth through eighth grade, these students spent their days in the same two classrooms with the same two teachers. By their eighth-grade year, they were ready for something different. The community felt the students were capable of more than what they were producing. Students seemed to be satisfied with doing only the bare minimum of work, and the assignments they did complete lacked a sense of pride. To compound

the situation, the students did not possess the social/emotional skills necessary for moving successfully from a small, K-8 school into a large regional high school with over 1700 students.

Until recently, staying in high school until graduation was not a priority for many of these students. They were anxious to get out into the work force to make money. They did not get involved in high school activities or programs. For some, their reality became the dream of becoming a world-class skier or snowboarder. They grew up on skis and had been racing most of their lives. Their vision for the future revolved around a very narrow view of opportunities. Because it took over an hour to travel into town to attend the high school, many chose to finish their education by going through a correspondence school program to gain a GED. Others used correspondence courses to finish their academic requirements and graduate from the regional high school.

Residing in a fast-growing resort in an isolated part of the northern Rocky Mountains provided a unique living situation for these students. For 20 years, there were two main resorts in the area. Today, not only are these resorts expanding their facilities but, in addition, there are four new major resorts being developed. Three national hotel chains were breaking ground, and the phrase "destination resort" appeared in advertisements in international tourism markets. Housing construction is rampant. Since this area is not an incorporated town, few limitations are placed on the development that is under way. Most of the community residents are new to the area. Many come from all over the world and some take advantage of the investments in development. Many of the families work for one of the resorts or own a service business that caters to the tourists. The high mountains surrounding this area create isolation problems for the residents

regardless of age. The students are not exposed to the everyday occurrences and traditions that happen in an established town or city. While this does not appear to be a concern during the elementary years, the teachers found the students were at a disadvantage at all levels of their social, emotional, and academic development and were not ready for the challenges of the regional high school. There were limited after-school activities in which the students could participate. Although there was access to skiing, fly-fishing, hunting, and hiking out their back door, these activities can be expensive and often are not readily available to many local children.

Most of the middle school students were first-generation residents. Their families came from all over the country and brought with them diverse experiences and traditions. They view this community as a new up-and-coming place for recreation. Without roots or an understanding of their hometown, many students lacked a sense of belonging. As development of this pristine area increases on a daily basis, the sights from the past continued to diminish. Missing from the community's experience was the rich history that existed for over 100 years.

Each year, since the cabin was moved to the school grounds, the eighth-grade class has created a service-learning project which promotes the two main goals of The Cabin Project—learning the rich history of the area and about the complex ecosystem in which they live, and sharing it with the community. In other words, developing a sense-of-place in the students and community. The Cabin Project became the vehicle for the service-learning project in which our middle school students share what they have learned about the history and the environmental issues of the area with other students and the larger community.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to do an in-depth case study on the 1999-2000 service-learning project involving 10 eighth graders, their teachers, and two community members. The project supported the original The Cabin Project and promoted its two main goals: to develop a sense-of-place for the community and to preserve the heritage of the area by sharing the history and the environmental features. This naturalistic case study focused on the effects this project had on the students and their attitudes toward school and their academic performance. The researcher examined holistically the service-learning process following the Quest International Skills for Adolescence format. Quest International is an independent, nonprofit organization that creates innovative programs to help young people develop skills, attitudes, and values they need to become healthy, positive adults. In 1984, Quest joined with the Lions Club International and developed a program for middle school students to instill basic civic values such as honesty, integrity, respect, responsibility, and service to the community (1992).

This study was designed to determine how effectively The Cabin Project, a service-learning activity, fulfilled its goal of developing a sense-of-place in the participants. The researcher sought answers to the following questions in relationship to the four commonplaces: curriculum, learning, teaching, and governance (Gowin, 1991).

Curriculum

1. What academic subjects were integrated into the project?
2. What was needed to study a sense-of-place?

Learning

3. What skills and concepts were aligned with state content standards?
4. What was the understanding of service-learning as the students began the project?
5. How were the students involved actively in this project?

Teaching

6. What do teachers need, beyond the normal curriculum, to participate in service learning?
7. Did teachers need additional training?

Governance

8. How did the school community support this service-learning project, and how did they view it as a method for teaching?
9. How did the community support this service-learning project, and how did they view it as a method for teaching?

Significance of this Research

Service learning is a relatively new approach to education, particularly for middle school students. The research concerning service learning is in the beginning stages. Information gained about the effectiveness of this service-learning project will increase

the amount of information available to teachers and others interested in this method of learning.

The main goal of this research was to describe in detail The Cabin Project and discuss how this experience affected ten middle school students and share this information with the local residents. Since the program is in its fourth year, it is important for the school community to assess the program to see if the goals are being achieved. A thorough examination of The Cabin Project as a service-learning program will provide the local school community with information needed to decide if the program should be continued, as it exists, or if it needs to be modified. Since service learning is not part of the state curriculum at this time, there does need to be local support for this program to continue as part of the curriculum.

This service-learning project may serve as a model to inspire and assist educators and members of community organizations, particularly in rural areas, to join together to develop meaningful opportunities for middle school students as they serve their community using information found in their backyard while developing a sense-of-place. The information about service learning in middle schools in rural communities is especially limited. The more examples of service learning there are documented the better teachers can learn how to implement this approach.

This research provides insight in how to incorporate service learning into existing academic programs. It shows how service learning supports the tenets of meaningful learning through the commonplaces: curriculum, learning, teaching, and governance (Gowin, 1981) and how service learning can be supported as an appropriate method for teaching middle school students.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community leaders and educators are turning, once again, to involving students in service activities as a means for school reform and are rediscovering that young people can improve the vitality of a community. This is particularly evident in rural areas, where isolation, limited resources, and depressed economic conditions exist. As educators seek to meet the intellectual and physical needs of their students, they are realizing the emotional needs are equally important. In the past, it was the role of the community to support children's affective development. So it is not surprising that as one looks for ways to meet the needs of our adolescents, schools are turning to the community to assist with providing learning experiences which deepen the understanding of one's place. Allowing students to connect with the community as a means of learning, complements the individual discipline-based programs taught within the classrooms with a more experiential approach. The more insight into the social structure, the economics, the politics and the environment in general, the closer and more connected one feels to his or her community in the long run (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995).

Finding meaningful opportunities for learning for middle school students has been part of school reform for the past two decades. When teachers combine service and academics, it can create a winning combination by engaging students in assisting the community. As adolescents begin to feel valued by participating in service, their

attitudes, motivation, and achievement improve. This method of combining learning with community service is called service learning.

Middle School Students

When examining school reform issues for middle school students, one must look at the positive potential this age group possesses. Children in this age group, which ranges from 10-15 years old, are beginning to develop their adult personality, values, and beliefs. They are adventurous, curious, eager, and full of life. Unfortunately, adolescents receive many negative comments from the community. They are often misunderstood.

There are key components that should be part of a program for improving student achievement at the middle-school level. These components support the social, personal, and intellectual growth of students. Adolescents have distinct characteristics, which are different from any other age group. Intellectually, they are moving from what Piaget calls the concrete operations stage of thinking to the more formal operations (Wadsworth, 1996). As students make this transition, they need concrete examples to assist them in developing intellectually. Physically, middle school students are growing rapidly. They are restless and many have awkward coordination. Their maturity levels vary greatly, and there is often a two-year disparity between boys and girls. Socially, adolescents may be less concerned with what their parents say and more with being accepted by their peers. Self-concept, identity, and the need to belong are of the utmost importance. Emotionally, students are self-conscious, are filled with self-doubt and insecurity and are experiencing a wide range of emotions.

Throughout all this turmoil of moving from child to adult, adolescents need to know they are capable and respected by others. According to Adria Steinberg (1993) in Adolescents and Schools: Improving the Fit, there is a growing mismatch between the needs of a middle school student's development and the practices of the classroom. The rapid growth experienced by adolescents creates a number of developmental needs that must be met if students are to grow in a healthy manner. They need to have diverse experiences that enhance their search for a sense of identity. They need time with peers and adults to test and talk about their ideas and concerns. They need to participate in meaningful activities, which encourage leadership opportunities, develop responsibility, and improve self-esteem.

Adolescents also need to interact with adults other than their parents; yet they need their parents for affection, boundaries, values, and help in solving problems. They have enormous energy and need productive ways to release this force. Adolescents benefit from opportunities to succeed and build confidence. Middle school students require nurturing environments where they are treated with respect and dignity; they succeed best when methods of instruction give them opportunities to be active participants. They need a place where competition is minimized and cooperation is encouraged in order to practice their skills without criticism (Steinberg, 1993). Middle school students have the energy, idealism, and seriousness of purpose to serve effectively. Yet in today's society, they lack a legitimate role in the larger social framework in which they live. They no longer contribute to the maintenance of their

families' businesses as they did during the Industrial Age. They have entered an era that focuses on the individual (Perkins & Miller, 1999).

Turning Points, a report by The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, (1989) gave recommendations on the best teaching strategies for middle school students.

Included in the list were the following characteristics. These practices support service learning as a viable component of an effective middle school program:

- An environment that enables students to develop abilities, to learn to love learning, to find facts, to weigh evidence, to draw conclusions, to determine values, and to open their minds to new information;
- An environment that encourages a partnership with their communities and provides service opportunities;
- An environment that develops an out-of-school educational program that allows students to experience their environment;
- An environment that emphasizes guidance and human relations and pays attention to the development of mental processes and attitudes needed for constructing knowledge through citizenship, lifelong competence, and effective leisure.

Middle school students work best when they can use their energy and are allowed to actively engage in an activity. They need to be involved in their learning, participate in hands-on activities, be allowed to make choices, discover new approaches to solving problems and work collaboratively in small groups (Carnegie Council, 1989). The saying "children are not vessels to be filled, but fires to be lit," describes the needs of the adolescent learner perfectly. In order for them to learn, they need to have social interaction and new opportunities to construct knowledge based on knowledge already acquired (Abbott, 1995). In the article Children Need Communities-Communities Need

Children, Abbott reminds the reader that young people were needed on a day-to-day basis prior to the Industrial Age (1995). There was a greater need for higher order thinking skills in order to do things better. During the Industrial Age, the need for young adult support diminished since the machines did most of the work. There is a growing need to recreate these opportunities that encourage our young people to develop social responsibility and enhance their social skills (Haggerty, 1995).

In the late 1970's the researcher, Rutter, and his associates studied 12 junior high schools in the inner city of London. This study has become well known because it confirmed the central components of the middle school concept and school effectiveness. The study found a strong correlation between academic success and the psychosocial environment. Teachers and students who shared the same educational perspective were the most successful academically. These schools supported the social side of learning, and teachers and students grew to see themselves as part of the same school group or team (George & Oldaker, 1985).

Sense-of-Place

Having a deep understanding of where one lives is the essence of sense-of-place education. A sense-of-place education gives the students lifelong skills that help them to understand the natural process of nature, human history, and how the different species can share this planet (Archibald, 2000). By giving the students a deeper understanding of where they live, they are developing a sense of belonging. They will build on this knowledge as they face an ever-changing world. Students who study in a sense-of-place

curriculum become rooted in the locale. They become more connected to their community.

According to Edward Wilson, (2000) we possess an innate excitement and pleasure from experiencing nature. It is important that we understand it in order for us to preserve and protect it for the future. The sense-of-place curriculum is rooted in the traditional disciplines of classroom study: history, geography, life science, earth science, language arts, and the arts. What makes this curriculum unique is that the students have "hands-on, student-centered, real-world learning experiences based on what they have in their school yard, community, or watershed" (Archibald, 1996, p. I-9). This approach to education allows teachers to create learning experiences that make sense to children.

Technology will continue to advance and change our existing world. It will be common for an individual to work in a state thousands of miles away from where he/she lives. It is fast becoming common for people to communicate with anyone, anytime, and anywhere. In some ways, these changes help to disconnect people from one another. As we communicate more, the world is becoming less local, and the human touch may be lost in the process. Individuals may have a more difficult time finding a sense of belonging. By teaching skills that support a sense-of-place, students will be better prepared for these changes and will be able to make better choices about preserving and conserving local environment.

Service Learning

Over the past 10 years, service learning has been given significant attention at all levels of education. It is a method of teaching which combines academic content with

community service. It instills social responsibility, good citizenship, and personal competence (Conrad & Hedin, 1989). Service learning is rooted in two traditions: the American tradition to provide service to the community and the experimental approach to pedagogy. This method of learning gives students a purpose to learn. Table 1 outlines the 5 steps of service learning and the goals, actions, and outcomes that might occur during a project. Throughout history, leaders have voiced the need for service to others. It has become the American way. The value and importance of service to others dates as far back as the writings of Thomas Jefferson (Waterman, 1997). In some learning opportunities, students are involved actively in discovering relationships among ideas for themselves rather than receiving this information from their teachers. They are engaged in the learning process.

John Dewey (1916) believed the community was an integral part of a child's education because what was learned in school must be used outside those boundaries to advance and better society (Waterman, 1997). School will take on a different meaning in the 21st century. In order to create lifelong learners and an ethic of service, schools will have to broaden their vision to include activities that foster school-community relationships (Silcox, 1993). Ralph Tyler in Basic Principles of Curriculum (1949) strongly recommends that educators provide students with opportunities that they can deal with wholeheartedly. Other suggestions include that teachers become coaches and relinquish control and trust the instincts of the students. Students take the lead in the planning process (Kinsley, 1990). John Lounsbury (2000) the father of the middle school concept, suggests parents have the opportunity to observe middle school classrooms and

then become the advocate for adolescents. Parent and community members have a very narrow view of education. It is up to the schools to change this paradigm.

Service learning enhances and supports the ideas of school reform efforts for middle school students. Cooperative learning, performance instruction, assessment, and interdisciplinary curriculum are all intertwined in service learning. As students connect to the community, they begin to see that their classroom studies have more meaning and purpose. An additional benefit is that the community begins to view the adolescent in a more positive way. As students participate in solving real community problems, they see their efforts making a difference, and the community begins to view them more positively. By connecting adolescents with caring adults, there is less likelihood that they will turn to less-desirable activities. As the major contributors, the students developed leadership skills and learned valuable lessons on working collaboratively. For these students, playing an active role in a service-learning project gave them purpose, responsibility, ownership, and enjoyment in their education (Fertman, 1996).

According to John Dewey (1916) active learning, which connects students with the real world, enables them to gain control over their environment, confront problems, and deal with social issues. The end result is that they are able to use past experiences and their intellect to find solutions, which will help them as well as their community (Meier, 1987). As students search for independence, they also need clear expectations and defined limits. By participating in activities that help to make meaningful connections between themselves and the world, the students develop a moral code and a sense of civic pride. Deborah Meier, Director of Central Park East in Harlem, New York states, "if

mutual respect is the bedrock of a healthy democracy, then it must be at the foundation of schooling" (1995, p. 135). Through service learning, students heighten their awareness of civil responsibility. Having a purpose and being needed helps middle school students make the transition to caring, thoughtful young adults. Service learning qualifies as an excellent strategy for improving middle school student achievement. Middle school students have energy and care about important issues. They have a sense of idealism that helps in finding solutions to serious problems (Fertman, 1996).

As adolescents begin to find schoolwork artificial, and school no longer holds the students' interest, service learning engages them. They need to become motivated participants in their own learning. Students gain a clearer sense of personal meaning as they help others and assume significant roles in their schools and communities. Young adolescents are capable of far more than adults often assume. Adolescents want to contribute; they need adults who believe in them and provide them with appropriate challenges, opportunities, and support. At a time when this age group is moving away from their parents, they need the guidance of other caring adults to assist them in thinking and sorting through the complex situations which they face (Krystal, 1999).

Since a service-learning project is built on local needs and circumstances, each project is a unique experience. Decisions on how the project will proceed are made collaboratively among the participants. It begins with a community need and ends with a community solution. The creativity and the imagination of the participants are the project's only limit. Allowing students to have time to be creative and imaginative is important to their overall well being as well as improving their problem-solving skills.

Combining classroom work with service and social action means learning by doing and giving. It is through the giving, that "the 'why' questions students ask are answered" (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991, p. 741). As adolescents become engaged in the activity, they use and integrate their skills and knowledge without realizing they are still learning.

It is through the reflection process that the students are able to connect their actions with the academic learning. The reflection portion of service learning is a key element to the process. It helps students obtain a sense of worth and assists them in using higher order thinking skills. Reflection is most effective when guided by the project advisor, and the exercises include role-playing, discussions, and writing journal entries and articles for publication. Reflection is more than retelling the experience; it is helping the students in connecting their actions with knowledge to create new knowledge. By letting students know their reflections are valued, they are encouraged to share their feelings more openly. Reflection is a process. Students begin by writing about their experiences and gradually start writing about their feelings, their ideas, and other links that support the experience. Throughout the reflection process the teacher serves as a facilitator to help develop this skill (McPherson, 1989). Before and after each service activity, the students are drawn to the learning objectives, and time is devoted to reflecting on the project (Waterman, 1997).

Unlike volunteerism, service learning has a strong link to the educational benefits of the activity. It goes beyond charitable events and affords the student an active learning experience in the workplace (Brown, 1998). In a service-learning project, educators and community members help students attain and use new knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Students use the content learned in the classroom in authentic settings, which serves others. The experience develops a deeper and more meaningful learning opportunity and links the community to the curriculum in ways that bring new meaning to the academics of school (Schukar, 1995).

There are three broad benefits from participating in service-learning projects for students: (1) to enhance learning through action, (2) to promote personal development, and (3) to foster civic responsibility and contribute to the community (Waterman, 1997). For adolescents, a service-learning project gives meaning and relevance to a traditional curriculum. Kahne and Weisheimer state, "Service learning provides students not only with the opportunity to help those they serve, but it promotes self-esteem, develops higher order thinking skills, provides authentic learning experiences, and incorporates the use of multiple abilities" (KAPPAN, 1996, p. 593). A service-learning experience helps to create a concern for others and to instill the importance of making a contribution as community members. It is not simply charity, but a deeper understanding and building of relationships through partnerships. It develops an understanding of being a responsible citizen and provides genuine help rather than token assistance. It moves adolescents from focusing on-self (Kahne & Weisheimer, 1996).

Service learning is a method and not a program; thus, no two service-learning projects are alike. Nonetheless, there are key characteristics that are considered a necessary part of a service-learning project:

- Each activity must have an academic tie. Students will have the opportunity to develop skills and further understand concepts, which they are learning in the classroom.

- Each activity should be meaningful and should improve a community need. The students have a voice in its development from the start.
- Each activity should be community-based and members from the community should be part of all phases of the project from planning, to carrying out and evaluating.
- Each activity should include a time for reflection. It is during this time students are given to think about what they are doing that they learn the most and are able to engage their higher order skills. It is through reflection that they see the positive effects they are having on the community and that they can make a difference.
- Each activity should have a time(s) for celebration to recognize accomplishments and build teamwork. It is time for others to recognize the work being done is valued (Key Elements of Service Learning).

When students have the opportunity to interact with community members outside of a school setting, the child/adult relationship changes to a more mutual respect of colleagues working together on a project. When adults share their thoughts, their concerns, and their interests, they help to open and expand a student's mind. Service learning induces both partners to foster caring and critical-thinking skills.

There are five basic elements to the service-learning experience: development, preparation, implementation, evaluation, and celebration. Table 1 outlines what activities take place within each category.

Table 1. Implementation plan for service learning: The Cabin Project

Steps for a Service-Learning Project	Goals	Action	Outcomes
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand service learning • apply academic knowledge to a community need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to explain the value of service learning • to identify a community need • to identify possible projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to work cooperatively to decide on a community project • to have a clear understanding of the project
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to set goals • to identify community support • to itemize needs • to set up an advisory board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to discuss and establish goals • to list individuals as resources • to develop a time line • to identify tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand the importance of planning • to create academic and SL goals
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to create a list of resources • to establish weekly meetings • to establish a time for reflection • to complete the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to maintain a journal • to fulfill responsibilities • to research materials for project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to share project locally with community
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to establish an evaluation tool • to create document for keepsake • to identify academic skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to record comments • to maintain anecdotal records • to assess project with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to reach original goals of The Cabin Project
Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify the success of the project • to recognize teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to write letters of thanks • to write newspaper releases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the students connected with the project on some level • the value of service learning was identified • the method of service learning was appropriate

The Development stage is when the students decide on a specific project, which meets a community need. The Preparation stage is when the service activity is linked with learning outcomes and goals. This stage provides the organizational structure to the

project, and it connects the participants with the project and starts building the bond between the students and the community. In The Cabin Project, students read a book about the canyon. Afterward, they discussed ways to share the history of where they lived. Speaking to the locals about their project also helped them to connect with the community.

The Implementation stage is the actual involvement in the project. The activity engages actively both adults and students and should be challenging and meaningful. The service-learning project must address a real community need. The students should experience the feeling that what they are doing is making a difference. In The Cabin Project, the students realized that as their community continues to grow and develop and the focus of the community turns to recreation, the history of the canyon could be lost.

The Evaluation stage is the regularly scheduled portion that strengthens both the service and the learning. As the students evaluate their progress with the project, they reflect, assess, connect, and learn about themselves. Students process and synthesize information and ideas they gain through their service and link this experience with their lives. It is an ongoing process. In The Cabin Project, the students were given time to reflect on their experiences after each session as they created the play "Life in the Canyon." An eighth-grade student wrote, "I never thought we could really write a play, but we did. It was hard, but we learned a lot about all the people who lived in this area." Evaluation is an ongoing process for all participants. It assists the participants in deciding what is the necessary next step in completing the project. At the end of the project a

formalized evaluation is developed to measure the success of the project. In The Cabin Project, this stage was often overlooked until the final product was completed.

The Celebration stage is sharing and acknowledging the work of the students and the results of the project. It creates and nurtures the feeling of caring about others and brings all the participants to show a sense of pride in their accomplishments (Fertman, 1996). The night of the "Life in the Canyon" performance brought the school and community together. Everyone was encouraged to dress in "early canyon attire" and the students were pleased that many of the guests wore attire appropriate to the era.

Service learning is becoming an integral part of the existing eighth-grade curriculum. In The Cabin Project, the students strengthened their writing skills by creating the play and improved their speaking capabilities as they participated in the production. History, art, science, technology, and music were also subjects that were integrated throughout the experience. The students realized what they learned in the classroom was relevant in the real world, and the project provided the opportunity for them to see a bigger picture. The comments from the audience after the production reassured them that their purpose of educating others had been met.

One of the students was given the task of creating the program for "Life in the Canyon" and reflected out loud to her teacher, "After this, I could be a secretary." Service learning encourages thinking across the boundaries of the traditional disciplines, and the students become more adept at integrating their learning goals.

In 1993, Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform [ASLER] established 11 standards of quality for service-learning projects. These standards provide a framework for teachers, students, and the community volunteers to create a project:

- 1) Effective service-learning efforts strengthen service and academic learning and should begin with clearly stated learning goals and should be appropriate with the student's developmental level.
- 2) Effective service learning provides opportunities to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment, which encourage risk-taking. The community becomes their laboratory and it can provide opportunities for students to develop self-reliance as they learn to work cooperatively. Through serving, the students learn to plan, to analyze problems, and to find solutions.
- 3) Effective service learning provides time for preparation and reflection during the project. These two components are key to the educational value. Preparation for the project enriches the students' experience and prepares them for the experience and reflection is the framework students use to process and internalize the new information. Through reflection, students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and form opinions. Reflection helps students to learn about themselves through self-assessment and goal setting.
- 4) Effective service learning celebrates the students' efforts and they are recognized by their peers and the community for their success. Students share what they do as well as what they gained during the experience. The work of the student is validated, and the community gives credit to their achievements and appreciation for the time they gave. This is often done in the form of a celebration of the completed project.
- 5) Effective service learning gets students involved in the planning. Students play an important role in the planning of the project based on the needs of the community. The students make decisions with the teacher and the advisory committee as the facilitators.
- 6) Effective-service learning contributes in a meaningful way to the community and the following features should exist:
 - The work must fulfill a community need. It must be real.
 - The activity must be developmentally appropriate.

- There is a tangible or visible outcome, which demonstrates the learning outcomes.
- 7) Effective service learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation includes detailed documentation of the project.
 - 8) Effective service learning connects school and community in new and positive ways and reduces the barriers that often separate the two. Students learn that they can play a contributing role in their community and community members become partners in the education and development of students.
 - 9) Effective service learning is understood and supported as an integral element in the life of a school and its community and receives the support of both the district and the building administrator.
 - 10) Effective service learning maintains skilled adult guidance and supervision, which are essential. Time for professional development, to learn the necessary skills, is key to a successful project. Since students are often given time off school grounds, proper supervision must be taken into account.
 - 11) Effective service learning gives training and staff development that includes the philosophy and methodology of service learning and ensures that program quality and continuity are maintained. Many of the teaching techniques are in contrast to what is taught in methods courses. Teachers should participate in service-learning activities as part of their training.

Service learning “rekindles an idea brought originally to life by John Dewey in the 1930s: that schools should be democratic laboratories of learning, closely linked to community needs. These learning labs create new roles for students and teachers, make use of action-based instructional methods, and lead to the learning of meaningful, real-world content” (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991, p. 741). Dewey viewed education as process-oriented and child-centered. Students learned through experiences and not from subjects being presented to them. By encountering the world and gaining control of their environment, students learn to problem-solve, deal with social issues, and allow their intelligence to grow. Service learning supports this theory of education and

provides another philosophical challenge to traditional ways of thinking about education, particularly when it is directed to middle school.

A report, from The Council of Chief State School Officers, The Close Up Foundation, Earth Force, and the National Society for Experiential Education, supports service learning as an experiential learning experience, and it is believed to be one of the most powerful learning contexts of all. Having a student "learn by doing" is the best form of learning in general, but particularly for adolescents. Results of this national study showed that students involved in service learning scored significantly higher in core-subject grade averages (English, math, social studies, and science), and had higher educational aspirations. To support this idea even further the "Learning Pyramid" created by the National Training Laboratories of Bethel, Maine, showed that students retain 5% of the material they hear from a lecture, 10% from reading, 20% from audiovisual, 30% from demonstrations, 75% while practicing by doing, and 90% by teaching others (Boston, 1997). Service learning engages students in meaningful activities where students are active learners and obtain knowledge through their personal experiences (Payne, 2000).

Meaningful Learning

According to Gowin, "Meaningful learning is constructed from the student's actions, conscious thought and feelings. It is knowledge that the student controls and owns. It is this knowledge that most likely will be retained by the learner" (1981, p. 31). This technique for learning is the very essence of service learning. Service-learning

activities provide interactive learning experiences. This helps students and teachers to learn how to learn, share ideas and feelings, and analyze situations (Krystal, 1999). These concepts about learning also support the ideas of Piaget. It was his belief knowledge was built by the activity of the child, and the teacher served only as stimulator or guide. Learning took place only through the child's attempts to understand the complexities of a situation (Worell & Danner, 1989). Involving students in active, self-directed learning and experiences that involve cognitive conflict through discovery, exploration, and invention is the method that Piaget felt best fit the needs of the middle school student. It was his belief that there was a strong link between cognitive development and affective development, which influence the behavior of adolescents (Wadsworth, 1996). Supporting Piaget's theory, but expanding it further is Novak's theory of meaningful learning that integrates feeling, thinking, and action into the learning process. "To educate is to change the meaning of human experience" (Gowin, 1981). In order to learn there must be feeling. When meaningful learning and feelings connect through an experience, it then becomes valued. This Gowin (1981) interprets as "felt significance" (p. 48). He believes this is what education is meant to provide. When there is value, there is a connection. Education is at its best when it creates a connection between thinking, feeling, and acting. When a student makes a meaningful connection between his or her personal constructs and the academic concepts being presented, there must be feeling in the process in order for the education to be significant. The learner then becomes a self-interested and self-directed learner (Gowin, 1981).

Novak, (1998) in Learning, Creating and Using Knowledge, states “meaningful learning results when the learner chooses to relate new information to ideas the learner already knows and it is based on three requirements: (1) there is relevant prior knowledge, (2) the material is relevant and meaningful to existing concepts, and (3) the learner is willing to learn in a meaningful way” (p. 19). Knowledge that is meaningful and has been constructed from actions, feelings, and thought is knowledge that is controlled by the individual. There is a sense of ownership and power (Novak, 1998). When students take ownership of their education, their intelligence grows. The brain is innately motivated to search for meaning. As it connects and integrates the complexities of the activities, there begins to be understanding. “Genuine meaning links thought and feeling, mind, and body”(Caine & Caine, 1997, p. 115).

When teachers are learners, and learners are teachers, then education can be effective. When teachers and students share in the experience and learning is shared, the responsibility for learning rests with the learner not the teacher (Novak, 1996). This is often seen during cooperative learning activities. This learning is authentic and honest, as teachers and students work together to share meaning. Understanding heightens when there is an emotional component. Gendlin calls this felt meaning, the “aha” of bringing different thoughts and ideas together. In-depth understanding of information requires both feeling and thought (1981).

As teachers recognize that they have a profound influence on their students, they need to go beyond the traditional roles of student and teacher. When teachers and students engage in collaborative planning, reaching decisions that respond to their

concerns, and support the aspirations and interests of both of them, the added benefits are significant. This approach to teaching reinforces the qualities of democracy and helps students learn to honor the rights of others. The emphasis moves from competition between students to collaboration and cooperation among them.

John Dewey believed that the democratic ideal of education should include shared interests, freedom in interaction, participation, and social relationships. Engaging students in a service-learning project support these ideals and helps students make connections between democratic ideals and real-life situations. In a democratic classroom, teachers and students share in collaborative planning, reaching decisions that respond to the concern and interest of the involved parties (Apple & Beane, 1995). In a service-learning project, students take the lead in decision-making based on real concerns of their community. Teachers, students, and community members share ideas and find solutions together. Deborah Meier writes in her book The Power of Their Ideas (1995) "by nature we are social, interactive learners" (p. 153). "We learn naturally by observing and talking to others; yet this type of intellectual exchange is allowed rarely in today's classrooms" (p. 15).

Schools are institutions that promote isolation at all levels, rather than collaboration. Service learning breaks down these boundaries and opens up continuous opportunities for learning in meaningful ways and the knowledge gained will remain with students longer than the traditional methods of rote memorization and repetition. Our young people are being brought into a culture that no longer offers the stability of rituals,

traditions, and activities that validate and reinforce their role in society. We need to show these adolescents they are an asset and an important resource (Glenn & Nelsen, 1987).

Meaningful Learning Through Service Learning

Integrating service learning into a middle school program not only improves the overall academic program, but also helps to motivate, engage, and excite this age group. According to Harry Finks, director of Lakeside Middle School and author of The Middle School Handbook (1990), "Middle school students are the most positive, most energetic, and the most valuable volunteers around. They respond positively to this trust and see the opportunity to be of service as a privilege as well as a responsibility" (p. 49). Young adolescents need these opportunities to be responsible, to demonstrate their growing capacity for self-control and self-management. When this age group learns through meaningful experiences, they rise to the challenges and succeed at a higher level than expected.

Learning through service helps students to develop independence and assume leadership roles by working beside community members and making decisions that will make a difference. Service within a supportive community allows young people to experience belonging rather than being lost in a bureaucracy (Perkins & Miller, 1999). When young people are involved in service, the community's perception changes from them being the cause of the problem to being the source of the solution. Engaging in service gives the students a feeling of fulfillment and accomplishment (Fertman, 1996).

Every child wants to believe that he/she is successful and can contribute in some way. Not meeting these needs often results in alienation from school, loss of general self-esteem and a sense of belonging, and leads to destructive methods of coping, including delinquency and drugs.

Service projects and project-based learning strategies capitalize upon young adolescents' creative expression and need for meaningful participation within a community. Such a curriculum combines the needs of young adolescence with societal expectations and forces teachers to provide learning experiences. This promotes a healthy self-image and positive relationships, academic stimulation and challenges, and moral and physical development. Through service learning, students learn the skills of abstract and hypothetical reasoning to a greater degree than by traditional methods. They also gain the ability to synthesize various sources of information (Perkins & Miller, 1999).

Educating reshapes human beliefs, behaviors, and actions through meaningful experiences and materials that support the idea of achieving excellence. Work in the classroom is often short-lived and unrealistic. It is the process of learning that brings value and meaning to the experience. Service learning supports this concept. How the learner connects with the experience determines whether or not knowledge is gained. A teacher's role is to extend, change, and give new meaning to an experience, but it is the learner who controls what the learning experience will entail. It is the learner who exercises the power to turn the experience into a meaningful one. Learning can take place without meaning, but it is through meaning that concepts are truly grasped and sustained. "Education," according to Gowin, "is the process by which learners come into possession

of their powers for the exercise of intellect, emotion, imagination, judgment, and action” (1981, p. 46). When students make a meaningful connection between personal constructs and the concepts in academic disciplines, education becomes a valued experience and learning increases.

Education takes place when people come together over a curriculum in their social roles of teachers, learners, and governors. It is Gowin’s (1981) belief that through the interaction of these four commonplaces—curriculum, learners, teachers, and governance—an educational event occurs. This theory on education “claims that the change is in the meaning of human experience” (p. 37). Traditionally, predetermined products such as tests and papers measured a student’s achievement in education. If there needed to be an increase in performance, then there was to be an increase in the number of tests, papers, and materials read. This process looks at the external components and does not identify the internal emotions or feelings that also exist and contribute to the learning experience. “To teach is to change the meaning of a student’s experience” (Gowin, 1981, p. 42). Through education, we combine thinking, feeling, and acting in order for meaning to take hold. Through service learning, students are placed in real-life situations, which will challenge them academically, socially, and emotionally. As they work together for a defined purpose, the adults and the students begin to build mutual trust and respect (ASLER, 1993).

One of the outcomes of service learning is the change in the teacher-student relationship. Both participants gain a deeper appreciation for each other. Since the students take the lead in most of the project, the teacher is able to step back and see the

students in a different way. They work together for a common goal, and their roles intertwine as they complete the tasks at hand (Kinsley, 1993). At the end of the activity, it is the student's responsibility to take what was learned and share it with others. It is at this point, one sees if the experience was successful. While the teacher assisted in providing guidance and direction, learning can only take place based on the actions of the learner. Through a service-learning project, students learn to become resourceful. They take an interest in what they are learning because they find that what they need to know will be helpful and have a purpose in life.

In service learning, the educational materials/curriculum needed depends greatly on the project being developed. What is learned will depend on the task at hand and the amount of knowledge that already exists. Integration of the disciplines takes place naturally. The curriculum is defined by the work that needs to be done. The teachers, students, and community members are all learners in the process. During the project, it is the time used to reflect on the experience that provides documentation for the structure of knowledge being created, and the curriculum is created as the activity unfolds. All participants reflect on the experience on a daily basis. It is through this reflection that students find solutions to their problems, make connections, and develop new ideas. Using community members as the experts brings a level of excellence and competence to the experience that may not exist within the classroom.

Governance is the power over the process of learning. Curriculum has power over teachers, teachers have power over students, and students have power over their learning. These three commonplaces must work together in order for learning to take place. It is

the governance, which provides the guidelines and structure to assist in developing the shared meaning. It provides a map of how to proceed so participants are moving in the same direction and maintain the same focus. It can be based on national, state, and local guidelines. All four commonplaces must interact since they each have a quality needed by the others (Gowin, 1981).

Table 2 illustrates how the four commonplaces-curriculum, learning, teaching, and governance- support the steps and activities of this service-learning project.

Table 2. The four commonplaces and service learning.

	Development	Preparation	Implementation	Evaluation	Celebration
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore community needs • define key terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define the community need and develop project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep a journal for reflections on project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify through reflections what students learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create an event which will share project with others
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify academic skills and concepts being used • create lessons to support learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify what skills and concepts need to be taught • identify where the disciplines integrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • record what skills and concepts the students are learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report on the skills and concepts learned with the State standards on academic disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create an event which will share the project with others
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decide who will participate in the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • list what skills and concepts are needed to be taught 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjust project based on specific needs of class and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess project with feedback from students teachers and community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a permanent record of the event
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get approval from administration and school board for the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • align skills and concepts with school curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet with advisory board regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share the outcomes with school board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share outcome with others through an exhibit, articles, or attending conference

When educational experiences reflect the developmental characteristics of the age group and link an emotional connection, the level of excellence is heightened. Providing service learning opportunities to middle school students allows them to apply their

classroom learning to life situations. This creates a means for recognizing they are contributing citizens and can make a difference in their community. Through service learning adolescents gain respect for their accomplishments and gain recognition from adults, which is not usually given to them.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A General Description of the Qualitative Research Approach

Since the 1960s, qualitative research has continued to gain credibility in education. As educators began to look at the process of education rather than the product, qualitative research provided information which quantitative research through statistical means could not. A key philosophical assumption for qualitative research is the understanding that reality is constructed by individuals who are interacting with their social worlds (Merriam, 1988). Unlike quantitative research that examines the components of a whole, qualitative studies reveal how the parts fit together as a whole, and meaning is found in the experiences of the participants. Qualitative research is anecdotal. The researcher is the key instrument for collecting and analyzing the data versus using an inanimate tool to collect the information as seen in quantitative research. Qualitative researchers describe in detail with words and/or pictures what is happening rather than using numbers. They are often participants in the event and can adapt techniques to the circumstances (Merriam, 1988). This participation often involves gathering volumes of data from interview transcripts, field notes, videos, photos, and written documentation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Using a qualitative approach to educational research provides insight into the how's and why's of the educational process and not just the fact that a change has or has not taken place. Merriam states, "While quantitative research tests existing theory,

qualitative research builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses or theories” (1988, p. 7).

The human touch is what qualitative researchers are most interested in studying.

Looking at data from varying perspectives gives the researcher insight to situations, which otherwise might not be noticed. It has the flexibility to allow the study to unfold, and it can accommodate for the changes that happen within the study (Merriam, 1988). The goal of the qualitative researcher is to understand human behaviors and the process of constructing meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). According to Hoepfl (1999), there are 8 basic characteristics to qualitative inquiry that create a framework for the researcher. These characteristics are based on descriptions from Patton (1990), Bogdan and Biklen (1992), and Lincoln and Guba (1985):

- 1) Qualitative research uses natural settings as the source of data; the researcher attempts to observe, describe, and interpret settings.
- 2) Qualitative researchers use inductive data analysis.
- 3) The qualitative researcher acts as the human instrument of data collection.
- 4) Qualitative research reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the “presence of voice in the text.”
- 5) Qualitative research has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individual who experiences them.
- 6) Qualitative research pays attention to the idiosyncratic as well as the pervasive, seeking the uniqueness of each case.
- 7) Qualitative research has an emergent design and researchers focus on this process as well as the outcomes.
- 8) Qualitative research is judged using specific criteria for trustworthiness (Hoepfl, 1999).

A common choice for qualitative researchers in educational studies is the case study since it focuses on a particular program, person, or event. It is a detailed explanation of a phenomenon. Stake (1995), one of the first educational ethnographers, defined a case study as a "bounded system" (p. 2). It is a particular individual or program under investigation. There are different types of case studies, but observational and intrinsic case studies are most common in the school setting. Stake points out that defining a case study can be problematic. It should be defined by the event studied and not the methodology used. A case study allows the researcher to learn about a complex circumstance, using "how and why" questions, which focus on the process rather than the results.

This type of research is also called naturalistic because it takes place at the site of the action and provides the reader with the opportunity to develop a deeper appreciation of what took place. In a case study, it is not the researcher's responsibility to find the correct interpretation or perspective, but to give an in-depth description, which in turn allows the reader an expanded range of interpretations (Mertens, 1998).

According to Eisner and Peshkin (1999), there are three advantages of a case study: (1) accessibility, (2) seeing through the researcher's eyes, and (3) decreased defensiveness. Through someone else's experience the reader is able to learn about a situation, which may not otherwise be accessible to him or her. Through case studies one experiences vicariously a unique situation. Seeing through the eyes of the researcher may provide the reader with a different view than expected, or the reader may notice something that otherwise might have been missed. Through in-depth descriptions, the

reader may experience a broader perspective than was predicted originally. As the data is collected, there is an unruliness to the project, which can mislead the researcher into another directions. Chenail reminds the researcher about the value of keeping the qualitative study “plumb” and keeping the research directed to the basic and simple reason for doing the study (1997).

Case studies are less likely to produce defensiveness and a resistance to learning in the reader. The reader through this experience can easily screen out any information that may not be appealing or useful. In addition, because it is about one particular event or situation, the experience is less threatening (Eisner & Peshkin, 1999). Having the researcher as part of the study may lead to problems particularly in the area of bias. Invalid observations, being judgmental and subjective, are concerns for which the researcher needs to be aware. While bias may not be eliminated, there are ways in which these can be kept to a minimum. The researcher walks a fine line between being an observer and a participant. On the one hand, this may lead to subjectivity; and on the other, it helps to develop a more in-depth study (Gay, 1996).

A qualitative study, in particular a case study approach, was chosen to examine The Cabin Project because this form of research would provide an in-depth view of a group of 10 middle school students, one teacher, one student teacher, three community members, and the researcher in a rural community as they participated in a service-learning project. It was the researcher’s intention to examine how this service-learning project helped these 10 eighth graders develop a sense-of-place for their community. Through this research, the reader can experience the more human qualities and reactions

of the students, the teachers, and other community members as they participate in this service-learning project. A quantitative study could not reveal these dimensions as effectively.

Background to The Cabin Project

In the fall of 1996, the eighth-grade students and their teacher received training in the service-learning approach to learning especially as it relates to environmental topics. This program helped students feel more a part of their home and gave them a deeper understanding of the natural world around them. Termed a sense-of-place education, this approach provided ideas and ways of learning that would be lifelong and also transferable from place to place. Students and teachers were encouraged to move the boundaries of the classroom out into the schoolyard and the community to develop a greater understanding of where they lived (Archibald, 1996). It is a place-based approach to teach more about human impact-positive, negative and neutral—on one's neighbor whether human, animal, or plant. Spending time in a place, to truly experience what exists, helped students build a relationship with their home. Using all of the senses to get to know a place allowed the emotions and feelings to interact with the scientific information gathered by the students to deepen the understanding of the place as part traditional old middle school curriculum (2000).

During the spring of 1997, students learned the 100-year-old cabins, which were at the entrance to this resort community, were going to be torn down and replaced by a shopping mall. Many of the students were first-generation residents to the community

and recognized that the cabins had become a symbol of the community. The cabins represented the history of the area. The students wanted to prevent the destruction of the cabins. With the help of their teacher and the school administration, the students started to work on saving at least one of the cabins. The materials from the other cabins would be saved and used as replacement wood or sold to raise funds for the restoration. Figure 1 shows the cabin at its original site before it was loaded on a truck to travel three miles to the school. This effort began The Cabin Project.

Figure 1. The cabin at its original site.



The students created oral presentations and a video to explain the purpose of The Cabin Project. They explained how and why moving the cabin would benefit the community. These two activities were used to gain the community's support. Through their presentations, the students gained enough financial support to move one of the cabins, on a flatbed truck, down to the school grounds where it could be restored. This two-month project provided the students with numerous learning opportunities, which they would otherwise never experience. They created a partnership with the local

American Legion Post and the Women's Club. The students made phone calls to set up appointments to speak with business owners about the project, and the women from the Women's Club drove the students to their appointments. Because of the one-to-one contact with the students, the community began to show enthusiasm for the project and offered either in-kind services or donations. The students raised just under \$10,000 to finance the beginning of the restoration.

On the day the cabin was to be transported to its new site, students assisted in the actual move by preparing the structure so it would be stable enough to withstand the three-mile journey. With the leadership of a community member who was in the construction business, students, teachers, parents, and residents worked together on the project. In addition to preparing the cabin for the move, they were also responsible for cleaning up the area once the cabin was removed. It was a tiring, but a rewarding day for those who participated. Figure 2 shows the cabin being placed on the truck and Figure 3 shows the cabin traveling down the road to the school.

Figure 2. The cabin is placed on the flat bed truck.



Figure3. The cabin is en route to the school.



During this phase of the project, the faculty noticed significant changes in the attitudes of the eighth graders. They were more involved, focused, and motivated. Their behavior had improved, and the usual eighth-grade antics that came with spring semester were not as noticeable. The students seemed to have a purpose, and the entire school benefited from their enthusiasm.

As the project was getting under way, the teacher who was coordinating the activities heard about service learning as a method of teaching. She learned that service learning engages students in community service and integrates this service with the existing core curriculum. After further investigation, the teacher took the initiative and wrote a Learn and Serve America mini-grant and was awarded \$3000 for The Cabin Project.

Since 1997, each eighth-grade class and their teacher have picked a service-learning activity using The Cabin Project as the vehicle to learn about historical concepts and environmental features in the area in which they live. Then they share this new

knowledge with the rest of the student body and the community. Each year, the students ask community members to assist them in the project. Through this activity, the students and the community together develop a better understanding of a sense-of-place for where they live.

During the third year of The Cabin Project, the entire school wrote a play based on a book describing the history of the area and performed it for the community. The story depicted life in the canyon from the early Native American settlers to the early 1900s when gold miners and loggers first settled in the area. The story continued from 1900 when the area was known for dude ranching to the 1970s when it was developed into a major ski resort. Members of the community provided music and square dancing lessons, and participated in the narration of the story as the students shared the rich history of their canyon. A video of the production was created and proceeds of its sale went to the cabin's restoration.

The Cabin Project, as a service-learning program, began opening new doors for learning as the students and teachers created a connection to the community. It was an avenue for them to integrate schoolwork with real-life situations. They were motivated, involved, and excited about what they were doing. Students were developing an interest in learning and were creating a better sense-of-self. The faculty noticed the eighth-grade students were more positive about attending the high school. The students discussed with them the idea of participating in some of the summer activities and camps available to them, and they were considering trying out for sports. There was a newfound enthusiasm from these students, and the teachers needed to find ways to keep this alive. This study

was, in part, motivated by the prior apparent successes of The Cabin Project and was seen as an opportunity to better understand the complexity of such an endeavor.

The Case Study of The 1999-2000 Cabin Project

This case study examined an eighth-grade class' service-learning activities in the third year of The Cabin Project. A qualitative study was chosen to document this service-learning project in order to look at this project holistically. It was as important to investigate the process of this program, as it was to examine the outcomes.

The students followed the five stages of a service-learning project as outlined in the Lions International Club-Quest program (1992): development, preparation, implementation, evaluation, and celebration. The service-learning project for the spring of 2000 was created and developed by 10 students, who were also the entire eighth grade, with the guidance of their teacher and a student teacher. The 1999-2000 project supported the school's overall service-learning activity, The Cabin Project. The researcher, who was also the school's sole administrator, was interested in documenting this project as it pertained to the main goals of The Cabin Project: to develop a sense-of-place in the participants and share what was learned about the history of the area and the unique environmental features with the community. This case study examined how effectively The Cabin Project fulfilled its goal of creating a sense of place through service learning for these middle school students.

The school is located in the northwest corner of the United States in a remote mountain resort community. The school is one of the many rural elementary schools

throughout the state that exists as its own district. The district was established in the early 1900s when the area was settled by the first homesteaders. During the year of this research, the school had an enrollment of 96 students.

The Procedure

This case study was designed to document the outcomes of eighth-grade service-learning project. The researcher investigated how effectively this project met its goal of creating a sense of place in middle school students through service learning. The research questions were categorized based on the four commonplaces of education: curriculum, learning, teaching, and governance (Gowin, 1981). The research questions were:

Curriculum

- 1) What academic subjects were integrated into the project?
- 2) What was needed to study a sense-of-place?

Learning

- 3) What skills and concepts were aligned with state content standards?
- 4) What was the understanding of service-learning as the students began the project?
- 5) How were the students actively involved in this project?

Teaching

- 6) What do teachers need, beyond the normal curriculum, to participate in service-learning?
- 7) Do teachers need additional training?

Governance

- 8) How did the school community provide support for this service-learning project, and how did they view it as a teaching method?
- 9) How did the community provide support for this service-learning project, and how did they view it as a teaching method?

A case study was chosen as the research method because it would provide an in-depth explanation and a deeper understanding of this service-learning project. As a formative study, it gave feedback to those who were coordinating The Cabin Project to help improve the program. There was an expectation that the information gained would be shared with the school community and others who may find the results of interest. The data were collected from interviews, videotape, journal entries, a teacher survey, field notes, and newspaper articles found in the school's archives. This data was used to describe the actions and feelings of the students, teachers, and community members as they engaged in this learning experience.

The service-learning project began in mid-January of 2000. The students met for a minimum of one and a half hours per week. It took a total of eight working sessions to complete the project over a three-month period. All of the research for this study took place in the science room at the school. The initial intent of the project was for the students to go out into the community, but this year the community members came to the classroom. There were 10 eighth-grade students, four boys and six girls. Six of the students attended the school since kindergarten and lived in this community since birth. Two of the students were new to the school this year and did not have any understanding about or had not participated in any of the previous service-learning projects.

Academically, all of these students were average and above in content areas, and there were no students with special needs.

One eighth-grade teacher taught math, science, and future problem solving at the school for the past eight years. She was also the eighth-grade advisor. One of the expectations of her job was to assist the eighth-grade students in making a successful transition into the high school. This teacher was a native of the area with over 10 years teaching experience. She had returned to teaching after her three children were in high school and college. During her tenure at the school, she participated in many professional development opportunities that enhanced the math and science programs. She was a mentor for a regional science project and also initiated the partnership with the science school. In addition, this teacher participated in other large projects in the community. The other eighth-grade teacher taught English and reading. She came to the school after having recently graduated from college in Michigan. She worked at the school for seven years. One year she was an aide and then became a middle school teacher.

Since the math and science teacher was also the coordinator of the service-learning projects, the other teachers at the school only participated in the projects when they were asked. No other teacher at the school volunteered to participate or initiated another service-learning project for their class. During the 2000 service-learning project, there was a student teacher that participated. She was working toward a 7-12 science endorsement and her cooperating teacher was the coordinator.

Since the service-learning project followed the procedures as outlined in the Lions International Club-Quest program, there needed to be an advisory committee. The

advisory committee members consisted of the English teacher, two current parents, the administrator of the school, and a community member. The students chose the committee members. They were to assist the students in completing the project and giving advice when needed.

The researcher was responsible for the data collection and also fulfilled the responsibilities, as the school's principal and superintendent. This individual had been the school's administrator for five and a half years and was the co-coordinator of several previous The Cabin Projects. The researcher had an ongoing involvement in the service-learning projects and helped with writing the Learn and Serve America mini-grants for this project.

Prior to moving to the west, the researcher had previous experience as an administrator, had been a third-grade teacher and also a special education teacher at an independent day school on the east coast. During that time, she was involved in service programs involving middle school and upper elementary school students. The projects engaged the students in learning about marine life and in educating the community about improving the conditions of the Long Island Sound. At the time, the term "service learning" was not familiar to her. The N-9 grade school where she worked, placed a strong emphasis on community service, and the students spent a good deal of time helping in the community. It seemed the students gained from the experience and a community need was met.

Since there was an informal atmosphere in the building, and the students were comfortable having the principal in their classrooms, sometimes observing and

sometimes teaching. They were not surprised when they were told the principal was doing research on their project. Most of the students knew the individual had participated in other eighth-grade projects and expected some participation.

Data for this research were collected through field observations during the project. Formal and informal interviews with students and teachers were conducted throughout the eight sessions and were recorded through notes or tape recorder. Representations samples from the students' and teachers' journals were kept. Videotaping was used during two of the sessions. The videotape primarily showed the interaction of the participants as well as individual behaviors.

The comments and reflections from journals gave valuable insight into students' feelings about the project. The journals were reviewed on a weekly basis. When similar thoughts and ideas from more than one source were identified, the information was coded and reported here. The students were given a grade for the project that was in lieu of their history course. The teachers informally assessed each student based on his/her performance on the project, and the results were used to document student achievement. A simple rubric, created by the teacher, indicated whether the student did/did not do the following tasks:

- showed interest in the project
- was cooperative
- participated in the decision-making process
- finished his/her task on time
- took pride in his/her work

- showed willingness to help others

The scoring was based on a 1-3 scale with 3 being the highest and 1 being unsatisfactory. A student could receive a maximum of 18 points. Although there was not a separate grade given to this project, the students knew that their behavior and performance would be reflected in their conduct grade.

Qualitative research generates volumes of data, and it was a daunting task to make sense out of what had been collected and analyzed. First, the data was coded into categories to respond to the four commonplaces: curriculum, learning, teaching, and governance. Then the data was further categorized to answer the research questions. Deciding what to keep and what was not relevant was a complex task.

An effort was made to incorporate transferability and consistency into this study. These are all-important aspects of a qualitative study, and according to Merriam, are used in place of validity and reliability (1988). In each interview the participants were repeatedly asked to clarify their comments. In most cases, the researcher repeated what they stated to ensure a clear understanding of what they meant.

Knowing the history of The Cabin Project gave further insight to this particular project and its participants. Having the knowledge of the needs of middle school students and the teaching method of service learning from literature reviews, personal experience, and dialogues with colleagues allowed the researcher to better understand the complexities of this study.

Validity of this research was supported through triangulation, which views the same subject from various methods of data collection. Triangulation supported the

interpretation of the project, and it provided additional credibility. As LaCompte pointed out, "This is a strength of this approach to inquiry" (1993, p. 341). Obtaining data in a variety of ways decreased the opportunity for the researcher's bias and increased the study's objectivity. There was most likely a bias about service learning as a method of teaching middle school students based on prior experiences; yet as researcher, every effort was made to eliminate bias. There was a responsibility to provide evidence and reasons for the researcher's interpretations and insights in this case study.

Permission to conduct this research was sought from the School Board before the research began. Permission was granted to pursue the study with the understanding that there would be anonymity for the participants and the results would be shared with the school community. The eighth-grade parents knew the students would be participating in The Cabin Project. At the time the project began, a letter went home explaining the research on this year's project and asking permission to work with the students. Since the school community is so small, it was important for all members of the staff to be aware of the project even though they were not involved directly. At a faculty meeting, an explanation about the case study was given. The eighth-grade students had an opportunity to meet with the researcher about the research before the project began. Table 3 outlines the research questions, the methods of data collection and how the data was analyzed for this case study. Using Table 3 as a guide, the researcher looked for the answers to the research questions and documented The Cabin Project in a case study.

Table 3. Outline for Qualitative Research Study

Purpose of the Research: How effective does The Cabin Project fulfill its goal of creating a sense of place through service learning for middle school students?

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Curriculum: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What academic subjects are integrated into the project? 2. What is needed to <i>sense of place</i>? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document the subject areas in which the students are engaged in through field notes, reflections, and observations. • Document activities and materials that support a <i>sense-of-place</i> curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a web to illustrate integration of subjects. • Describe how students developed a sense-of-place.
Learning: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What skills and concepts are aligned with state content standards? 2. What is the understanding of service-learning as the students began the project? 3. How are students actively involved in this project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document skills and concepts used through observations, reflections and field notes. • Document student understanding through journals, field notes, video, and interviews. • Document how the students are actively involved through observations and their reflections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a chart to identify areas of alignment. • Look for students' growth in understanding with project development. • Note opportunities for leadership roles and decision-making skills used.
Teaching: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do teachers need, beyond the normal curriculum to participate in service-learning? 2. Do teachers need additional training? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document through interviews, reflections and informal discussions what was needed. • Document pros and cons from teachers through interviews and field notes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a list of what teachers who participate in service learning activities need. • Create a list of the barriers and advantages of service learning.
Governance: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did the school community provide support for this service-learning project and how did they view it as a teaching method? 2. How did the community provide support for this service-learning project and how did they view it as a teaching method? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather documentation that shows support from the board and community. • Gather documentation through interviews, reflections and focus groups. • Gather information from newspapers, donations, memos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe variety of support from board and community. • Illustrate how service learning is valued in this community.

During the process, interviews took place with students and other participants, a videotape of the sessions was made and two types of journals were recorded. The following interview questions were used as part of the research.

Interview Questions for Students

- 1) Why do you think service learning is beneficial for students?
- 2) How has this experience helped you understand a sense-of-place?
- 3) What skills have you learned through this experience?
- 4) Describe your experience working with community members.
- 5) Why should this program be continued next year?
- 6) Other comments.

Interview Questions for Teachers

- 1) Why do you think service learning is beneficial for students?
- 2) How has the idea of a sense-of-place been integrated into the curriculum?
- 3) Describe the service-learning experience.
- 4) How did students gain an understanding of a sense-of-place?
- 5) What training was needed to be successful?
- 6) Other comments.

Interview Questions for Community Members

- 1) Why do you think service learning is beneficial for students?
- 2) How has it helped your understanding of a sense-of-place?
- 3) How did you perceive the students before this project?
- 4) How did your perceptions change?
- 5) Should the school invest in service learning as an important part of the middle school program?
- 6) Other comments.

During each session, a video camera was used to record the activities of the sessions. As a research tool, the videotape was invaluable to assist the researcher in remembering what took place. However, as soon as the students realized the video camera was on, they became anxious, self-conscious, and would not speak. Therefore, the researcher decided to turn the video camera off and rely only on field notes, journal entries, and interviews to capture thoughts and ideas. Later in the study when the students were working actively on their page, they were more at ease having the video going. The video revealed which students were participating and which were not. Moving around the room and joining in on or listening to various student conversations was very helpful. Student journals were collected and reviewed weekly. Pictures and newspaper articles provided additional background and gave the history of the other projects.

Teacher Survey Questions:

In order to collect more data from the teachers, an open-ended survey was distributed to the staff. There were asked to respond to six questions:

- 1) What is your understanding of service learning
- 2) How do you see The Cabin Project benefiting our middle school students?
- 3) How does The Cabin Project develop a sense-of-place?
- 4) Explain why developing a sense of place may help our students
- 5) What other ways has The Cabin Project benefited the school and community?
- 6) What are the barriers that concern teachers when planning service-learning projects?

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDY DATA

This case study examined the service-learning project called The Cabin Project at a rural K-8 school in the northern Rocky Mountains. The purpose of this research was to determine if The Cabin Project of 2000 developed a sense-of-place for 10 eighth-grade students who participated in this project. The study also examined the original goals of The Cabin Project: (1) students learning about the history of the area and the unique environmental features and share them with the community, and (2) restoration of the 100-year-old cabin and its relocation to the school site. This research is organized around the four commonplaces—curriculum, learning, teaching, and governance—(Gowin, 1981) as it pertained to the five steps of service learning (Lions Club Quest International, 1992)

The 1999-2000 academic year service-learning project was divided into two sections. The first section was in the fall of 1999, the students completed a five-day canoe trip to re-enact a portion of Lewis and Clark's journey. The students wrote and performed a play about their experiences. In the second section, students created a booklet for visitors, which explained the geographical area and its ecology. The booklet was the culminating activity for the eighth graders.

The beginning of The Cabin Project corresponds to the development stage of the service-learning process. This stage helped the students understand the concept of service learning as well as gave them guidance as they decided on the activity. The

preparation stage was the most frustrating for the students because it was developing the project itself: setting the goals, obtaining the materials, recruiting people, and determining the timeline. The students had to learn to work together. It was during these sessions, the students realized they had to organize their discussions and decided to use the Student Council form of Parliamentary Procedure. The most time-consuming portion of the project was the implementation stage. This stage was when the students actually worked on the project and where the students took ownership of what they were creating. Once they began to see their ideas becoming reality, the enthusiasm for the project increased. The final aspect of The Cabin Project comprised the evaluation and celebration.

During the development stage, the students started to learn about service learning, and they began to develop an understanding of a sense-of-place. The students:

- learned about the main goals of The Cabin Project and reviewed the previous three projects;
- explored the community's need to learn more about the history and environmental issues of the Canyon;
- read about other service-learning projects done by other middle school students;
- decided tourists needed to know more about the area;
- made recommendations on how to deliver the message: video, brochure, booklet, or a play; and
- wrote in their journals about what they thought service learning was and what were the needs of the community.

During the preparation stage, the students organized themselves to have one person write on the board any important information, someone to make phone calls, and others were asked to collect brochures. The need to give everyone a job came after the first session when there was much discussion, but nothing was accomplished. The students came up with the concept of everyone being responsible for one job, and the majority rules when an idea was put to a vote. The students:

- decided to make a booklet for kids;
- reviewed travel brochures and booklets for ideas;
- created a list of subjects to be included in the booklet;
- decided each one will do one page;
- researched list of subjects to find appropriate information for kids;
- contacted community members who they believe will be of help;
- contacted a printer to get estimate of expenses;
- made a list of the materials they would need;
- scheduled extra library time with the librarian;
- began researching history for background information; and
- reflected in their journals.

During the implementation stage, students worked on their page for the booklet. The editor of one of the local newspapers came to the classroom to assist them with the layout and typesetting. He gave them advice about keeping the printing of the project cost-effective. The students:

- put together a time frame;
- began working on their section;
- contacted community members to assist them with their page;
- put together a mock booklet;
- shared their work with each other;
- decided on the order of contents;
- proofed each other's work;
- asked a local newspaper editor to assist them with layout;
- worked with water color to create cover;
- voted on pictures for cover;

- finalized each page for printing; and
- sent booklet to printer.

The evaluation stage of the project was done through the student's connection to the project and the way they completed their page. It ended up all students felt they were successful in completing the project. They were proud of what they had designed and the booklet received many compliments on its quality from members of the community. The students:

- kept a journal of this project;
- had their journals reviewed by the teacher;
- had the booklet evaluated by the newspaper editor; and
- were asked to fill out a survey about the project.

The celebration stage was fragmented because time ran out, and the school year was ending. The final draft of the booklet had to get done, and the students worked right up until the end of school. The students were recognized at a school board meeting. The students:

- celebrated with a party when the mock booklet was done'
- spoke with the State Director of Learn & Serve America when she came to the school to see the students work'
- displayed the booklet at graduation' and
- took the booklet to the printer.

The students understood The Cabin Project was a special project just for the eighth-graders. This group of eighth-graders was the first class to use the theme of The Cabin Project as a vehicle to disseminate information about the local environment rather than actually work on restoring the cabin. They feared their project would not be looked upon favorably since they were not working on restoring the actual cabin.

Answers to the research questions were gathered from student and teacher journals, interviews, observations through field notes, a student survey, a teacher survey, and videotaping. The extensive volume of data were analyzed and coded based on the four commonplaces: curriculum, learning, teaching, and governance.

Curriculum

What Academic Subjects Were Integrated Into This Project?

Social studies, science, communication arts, visual arts, library media, and technology were the main subjects integrated. The skills, shown next to each discipline in Table 4, were the learner goals for middle school students as outlined in The Accreditation Standards for the State, which state:

all disciplines . . . are interdependent and empowered by the application of creative and critical thinking skills. Subjects cannot be taught in isolation . . . The school district shall consider ways to develop curricula that integrate skills across curricular content . . . In the curricula shall allow students to: identify and define a problem, learn methods of gathering, analyzing, and presenting information, practice logical, creative, and innovative thinking and problem-solving, and apply skills of decision-making and reasoning. (Board of Public Education, 1999, p.8-9)

The basic elements of service learning support these recommended standards for the intermediate learner, and this year's project followed these goals. The curriculum chart in Table 4 shows the areas of the academic disciplines that were integrated into this service-learning activity and illustrates the instructional concepts gained through this project.

Table 4. Curriculum for service-learning project: Developing a sense-of-place.

Social Studies/ Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Understand the importance of being a responsible citizen ◦ Understand concept of the stewardship ◦ Understand interrelationships between the environment, culture, and weather ◦ Explain the impact of geography on human settlement patterns ◦ Identify characteristics of a community ◦ Identify characteristics of a state
Library/Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Gather, analyze, select, and use resource materials
Technology/ Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Create an awareness of the impact of technology ◦ Use technology for creative expression ◦ Use information legally and ethically ◦ Reinforce basic word processing skills
Life Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Appreciate all living things and their relationship to one another ◦ Develop research skills ◦ Demonstrate knowledge of the effects of time and space on the environment
Communication Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Read for information ◦ Gain insight from literature ◦ Understand and practice the process of listening ◦ Speak effectively: formally and informally ◦ Think creatively ◦ Think logically ◦ Understand writing for a purpose clearly and effectively
Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Develop techniques in watercolor media ◦ Understanding design ◦ Experience a sense of accomplishment

The learner goals for social studies provided students with the opportunity to:

- Develop citizenship skills through sharing, cooperative learning compromising, conflict resolution, and decision-making.

- Participate in first-hand and hands-on learning that draws on experiences in the home, school, and neighborhood.
- Enhance his/her communication skills in through drawing . . . reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- Participate in committee work and classroom discussions.
- Develop research skills including the gathering and recording of information from a variety of sources.

The beginning of the project was devoted to giving the students an understanding of service learning and giving them a more in-depth understanding of The Cabin Project. As the project progressed, the students discussed how they were going to share the information with the larger community. Observational data indicated project meetings were getting out of hand. Everyone was shouting out ideas and talking at once, no one was listening to each other and the students were getting frustrated because they were not making any decisions. At that point, Student 07 said, "This is going no where, we aren't accomplishing anything." Student 03 said, "Why don't we run this meeting like we do in Student Council?" With that she stood up, went to the board and said, "I bring this meeting to order." From then on, project sessions ran more smoothly. The students adapted a simplified version of parliamentary procedure. One person spoke at a time, they listened to each other's ideas, and then voted against the ideas until there was only one remaining. They agreed majority ruled in the end, but they all had a voice in the decision. They voted on creating a booklet to share their knowledge about the canyon. In this example, they identified a problem, found a solution, used logical, creative, and innovative thinking, and developed problem-solving skills. They also improved their listening and speaking skills.

An important project outcome was that the students took the situation into their own hands. They took ownership of the situation and faced the fact they were not making any progress. They found a solution by holding a meeting as if they were in Student Council. Once they agreed to create a booklet for children, the class began working together. Student journal entries reflected their thoughts regarding this project.

- Student 06 stated in a journal entry, "I thought we were never going to agree on something. I'm glad we decided on the booklet. It will be a fun project."
- Student 05's journal entry stated, "I like the idea of doing a booklet and having tourists see there is more to this area than skiing."
- Student 04 wrote, "The booklet will be around long after we are gone from here (meaning the school)."
- Student 03 wrote, "How are we going to get the tourists to pick up the booklets? Shouldn't they have to pay for it?"

The state mandated learner goals for life science were critical to the success of The Cabin Project. The goals were met through the various project activities, which included:

- basic investigation skills and foster their understanding of and interest in the world.
- opportunities to acquire and apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills . . .
- opportunities to gain and convey information through oral, written, and graphic communication.

During the initial discussions about their community, the students shared an awareness of how tourism was changing their community. They were sensitive to the fact that much of what they had enjoyed about the area may soon be gone. Student 10 shared

that he was upset because the place where he and his dad had a hunting camp was soon going to be developed into residential housing. Student 03 stated, "There is more wildlife in the area than when I was little." She shared the story of the buffalo and how residents living along the river tried to protect the animal. The buffalo wandered along the riverbank across from the school for most of the winter, and to the best of everyone's knowledge, returned to the national park unharmed. As the students talked, they became excited and determined to share what they knew with others. Their voices began to have conviction about what they wanted to tell others.

- Student 05 said, "I'm doing 'Leave No Trace' so people will not leave their garbage on the trails and make them ugly". As the project gained momentum, the students continued to share their concerns."
- Student 09 decided to create a page on scat identification because many tourists do not realize wildlife is dangerous and think they can pet them.
- Student 02 and 04 wanted to include a story about moving the cabin to the school grounds.

The state mandated learner goals for communication arts were also met in The Cabin Project. Among them, students:

- read in search for information, meaning and pleasure . . .
- wrote emphasizing process and communication of ideas.
- pursued their . . . personal interests.
- used their communication art skills in the community
- accomplished activities such as cooperative learning, small group discussion and cross-content projects.

Creating the booklet for the community provided many opportunities in which the students could use and enhance the communication art learner goals. The students reinforced their understanding of the writing process and the importance of proofreading. Each student had to have two other students read and initial his/her page before it was ready for printing. Most students did at least three drafts of their page and those who were responsible for detailed text were very conscious about making it interesting to read. They decided to use younger children as their main audience, but also made an effort to provide information for parents. Working with the editor of the local newspaper gave them first-hand experience to learn about a real career. During the project, their journal entries went from a few lines to more detailed writing. Toward the end of the project they were writing about their thoughts and feelings rather than an account of the progress they made. Student 05's entries give an example.

"Yesterday we talked about service-learning, we wrote some things down on a big piece of paper and discussed what The Cabin Project was. Today we got our journals and wrote what we did yesterday."

"We have come along way with the project. The booklet is going to look really neat. I am doing the map section and Student 10 is helping me. I completed the local hiking trails around the area. I have to write directions on how to get to the trails from the main roads. Maybe I will have time to do a Montana map too.

"I don't know if I really have a better understanding of a sense of place because I already have taken in where I live. I mean all of the historical facts such as Yellowstone and the Indians who once inhabited this area. I took in the scenery.

I love this place and I am glad I live here. I want to keep the area the way it was when I grew up. The Cabin Project showed me more about the history of this great place. I hope I can live here forever. This is my home!"

At the beginning of each session, in order to gain students' attention and have them focus on the project, the teacher would lead a discussion for a few minutes about the five-day canoe trip they took on the Mohonk River. During the discussions, the students shared their observations about the environmental differences between the landscape along the river in this community and along the Mohonk River. The Mohonk River edge was rocky with high cliffs and the river in their community was covered with low-growing vegetation. They also compared the differences in the currents. As they made these comparisons, they became more aware of where they lived.

The state mandated learner goals for Library/Media were met when students:

- Gathered, analyzed, selected, and used information
- Located materials which fulfill assignments
- Identified sources of information in the community

Throughout the project, students became increasingly more resourceful about gathering the information they needed to complete their page for the brochure. The school's library had limited resources, so the students had to find other ways to gather the information. They brought books from home, used the Internet, called community members for information, and contacted some of the outfitters in the area to obtain maps and pictures. The students seemed to like the research part of the project. However, frustration set in quickly if they were not successful. Students knew they were under a time constraint and wanted to keep to the schedule. Not finding the material meant they were wasting time. The teacher and student teacher made every effort to think about what

the students might need for the next session. However, they did not just hand over the materials or resources.

The state-mandated learner goals for Visual Arts were met when student demonstrated:

- appreciation of art in a variety of settings
- knowledge of vocabulary required to describe technical and expressive qualities
- the ability to solve visual and technical problems in art
- experienced a sense of accomplishment . . .

The students created the cover of the booklet. The editor of the local newspaper explained they could use just about any thing because of the technology available to scan the designs into the publishing program was available for them to use. The students voted on using watercolors. They were to select a scene from the area and create a front, back, or inside cover. Then, the students voted on the final cover based on the paintings available. One picture, not used for the booklet, was selected for the school's permanent art collection.

When interviewing the teacher about the service-learning project and discussing the integration of the disciplines, her initial comment was, "History, communication arts, ecology, citizenship, stewardship, art, and music were all integrated into this project in the past. Since this is the fourth year of the project, I did not spend much time with curricular concerns." She was confident this project would provide ample opportunities to develop new skills and reinforce those already learned, which supported the skills and concepts of the school's curriculum. "I have learned from previous experience, the

students learn more than I could ever teach them in a traditional setting. Their learning evolves. This method allows the academic skills to flow in a natural way. They become connected to the project. The students do not even realize how much they are learning. They are too involved with doing and having fun. When I see them years later, the first question they ask me is about The Cabin Project.”

What Was Needed To Study a Sense-of-Place?

To learn about a sense-of-place, teachers and students need to develop an understanding of the natural processes, the human history, and the interaction that exists among nature in their particular surroundings. As students and the teachers learn more about where they live, their senses are heightened and their awareness increases. The feeling of belonging emerges as one becomes knowledgeable about the community and building relationships with where one lives. This approach to education helps students to learn in a more meaningful manner (Archibald, 1996).

During the annual fall visit to the school, one of the science school instructors reemphasized the importance of carefully observing the surroundings as one travels slowly along a path. “The journey is as important as reaching the destination.” To help the students with developing their sense-of-place, each student was to keep a nature journal, which was used to reflect on an experience, sketch an object from nature, or describe an observation. The teacher encouraged the students to look back in the nature journals to help them with developing a deeper understanding. When looking through these journals later, it was noted that the quality of their journals improved and grew

more interesting and thoughtful. For the most part, they wrote more and the drawings became much more detailed as time passed.

When the students started discussing ideas for the service-learning project, the teacher used the term "sense-of-place" several times, as if the students understood its meaning. Most of the class sat with blank expressions on their faces when the teacher asked them what they thought the phrase meant. A few of the students had some understanding of what the term meant and gave their thoughts:

- Student 04 said, "It's a term we're supposed to know, but I really don't have a clue what you mean."
- Student 07 shared, "It's knowing about where you live, but I'm not sure what that means."
- Student 10 stated, "It's feeling comfortable with where you live."

From these responses it was apparent a few students were beginning to make connections with their community and its environment. Through the discussion, others were getting the idea.

In a journal entry the student teacher wrote, "Creating a sense-of-place is not difficult; it is just giving the students an opportunity to explore, discover, and observe the world in their own community." She had not been involved in service learning prior to this experience, but she was enthusiastic as she watched the students become engaged in the project.

- Student 10 wrote in one of his reflections, "Gaining a sense-of-place is like gaining a sixth sense. Having a sense-of-place is knowing there is always a place to come home to. A place where everyone knows your name, and you feel comfortable and relaxed."

- Student 05 reflected in her journal, "I never heard of the phrase a sense-of-place until I came to this school. Now . . . a sense-of-place is the understanding of the community in which you live. It is knowing the history, memorizing the smells, the sights, and the sounds. A sense-of-place is knowing where you are and respecting the area for all that it is, and most of all, feeling comfortable with where you are and what you know about it."
- Student 09 wrote in his journal, "I am learning more about my town's history, and I feel like an official member of the community."

As the students began their research on their page for the booklet, they initially thought they did not know much about the area. They were quite surprised at how much they really knew and that their research was broadening their knowledge, not introducing them to new information. The students decided the contents of the booklet would include:

- 2 pages of activities and games
- 1 page of information about the state
- 1 page of ethics of camping and hiking
- 1 page of The Cabin Project history
- 1 page of how to pack a back pack
- 1 pages of trail map pages
- 1 page for the story about the Miners family

According to the teachers who taught a sense-of-place curriculum, it is not difficult to teach this concept because it is based on one's local surroundings.

One teacher stated: The curriculum depends on what resources are available beyond the classroom walls. For instance, if there is a river close to the school, students could study water quality. They could study the vegetation in the area. They could learn about the animal habitats in the area.

Another commented: Most middle school curricula can be adjusted to include a sense-of-place as part of the students' instruction.

Moving the wall of the classroom to include the outdoors so they can experience their surroundings is all that is really needed."

During a conversation with a teacher of younger children she pointed out, "Teaching students to keep a sketching journal and a writing journal helps them to enhance the experience. Younger students like to draw better than they like to write. I try and have them do both."

Learning

What Skills and Concepts Align with Content Standards?

Content Standards for each discipline are not the same as the Accreditation Standards for the State. The Content Standards define, quality, excellence and proficiency in our State's educational system. According to the State Superintendent Keenan, (2000), "the standards are designed to make sure students have the skills and knowledge needed for the next step in their lives, whether it's a job or further education." The standards were created by educators, parents and community members and were adopted by The State Board of Public Education (BPE). These standards reflect the National Standards for each academic discipline (2000).

After reviewing the academic disciplines, which were integrated into the project, the researcher aligned the discipline's content standards with some of the activities in which the students were engaged.

Content Standards for Writing

- Students write clearly and effectively;
- Students apply a range of skills and strategies in the writing process;

- Students evaluate and reflect on their growth as writers;
- Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

All students participated in writing activities. They practiced the writing process as they created their individual page for the booklet, and they wrote in their journals before or after each session. They developed their proofreading skills by proofreading two different classmates' pages before it was turned in as the final draft. The students were required to do several drafts of their work and follow the format they used in their English class. Students had to make each draft noticeably better. Their work was reviewed and assessed by several classmates. Once the students began working on their page, they were expected to give an oral update to the class on how much progress they were making.

- An entry from Student 02 journal reads, "I have made progress, I am trying to fit the words correctly so it sounds interesting." The students learned to accept constructive criticism in a positive manner and they learned how to give it as to not hurt the feelings of others.
- An entry in the journal of Student 03 stated, "We need to encourage each other, but be open to constructive criticism to succeed."

In addition, each student was responsible for doing research on the topic on which he/she was working.

- Student 06 wrote: "Today I researched for information about the Miner family. I looked through the family scrapbook. I took notes, began my article and designed my layout." The entry from the next session states, "I have been working on my article for a week, but I can't seem to make it sound right. Most of the time it sounds more like an essay than anything else."
- Student 05 wrote: "Today we started our research on the different topics each of us chose. I found a book that I have to read and then write about before I can plan my page."

- Student 08 wrote: "I looked through game books to get ideas for games and activities for my page. I think I have found some good ideas."
- Student 03 wrote: "Today was a good session, but I am having a hard time with the opening sentence. I am working on explaining what The Cabin Project is so that the readers can understand."

When the students were discussing their ideas for the booklet, they spent a good portion of their session deciding who would be their audience. The students realized that a family included a wide range of ages, and it would be hard to address everyone. Finally, Student 09 said, "Let's write for children from age 6-10, that way we can reach most of the ages and if there are younger children, the 10-year-old can read it to them." They agreed unanimously. The fact the book title read Family's Guide did not seem to bother them. Student 07 said, "The parents would read the book anyway."

Content Standards for Science

- Students demonstrate knowledge of the characteristics, structures and functions of living things, the process and diversity of life and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.
- Students understand how scientific knowledge and technological development impact society.

As the students discussed what their project would be, they began sharing how important it was for them to protect the environment. There was an "aha" moment when they realized the impact tourists had on certain areas of the community. It made them quite angry.

- Student 08 noted, "A few years ago there was only one trail to the falls now there are several."

- Student 04 announced, “ There needs to be a page on ‘Leave No Trace’ because I am tired of picking up trash on the trail by my house.”

Interestingly, Student 10 changed his mind about the trail he was going to put into the book because he did not want it to be used by so many people. As the students and teacher discussed the changes taking in place in the area, they pointed out to each other how the growth and development of the community was affecting the wildlife habitat, the rivers, and the vegetation.

During the discussions, which occurred at the beginning or end of each session, the students spoke of whirling disease, noxious weeds, wildlife moving into residential areas, and the importance of sharing their knowledge of this environment with tourists so everyone will protect the environment. They realized these concerns were new to the area and were not there when they were younger. At the same time, the students acknowledged most of their parents depended on tourism as their main occupation. They began to see two sides of the story.

Content Standards for The Arts

- Students develop and refine art skills and techniques to express ideas, pose and solve problems, and discover meaning.
- Students make connections among the arts, other subject areas, life, and work.

During the seventh session, the students were to design the cover for the booklet. The students had been working with watercolors in their art class, and they decided they would try using that media to create scenes from the area. During this class, the researcher was the only adult participant. The class knew the techniques of watercolor,

and the materials were ready. Each student painted a scene. There were several pictures of the mountain range, a picture of the river with a cabin near it, an elk in a field, a black bear, and a ski run. The paintings were well done, and it was difficult for the adults to choose which one. The students decided to have two different pictures for the outside cover and one picture for the inside covers. With that decision, three of the students could have their artwork displayed. The students voted on three pictures from those students who wanted their artwork on one of the covers. The front cover was picked because of the bright colors. Student 09 told the researcher after class that he thought the wild colors would make people notice the booklet. "It's flashy." Student 06 wrote in her journal, "I like the soft colors of the inside cover. It will be easy to see the lettering."

Content Standards for Library/Media

- Students understand an inquiry process including how to access, evaluate, and use information.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of ethical, legal, and social responsibility in accessing, evaluating, and using information materials and technology.
- Students seek a variety of materials for independent learning and personal enjoyment, including the appreciation of literature and other creative expressions.

Each student was responsible in finding the appropriate information to create his or her specific page. Students used the Internet, the library, books from the classroom, and materials brought from home. They enjoyed doing the research and finding material, which would make for an interesting booklet. Thoughts from the journals supported their enthusiasm.

- Student 07: Today I did some research for information about the Miner's family. Besides one book there are old photos and an old scrapbook to look at and get ideas. This is going to be a helpful booklet for tourists.
- Student 02: I researched the state information: state bird, state flower, state song, and nicknames. I will look for more facts next session.
- Student 08: Today I drew a map of my favorite hiking trails.
- Student 04: I tried to find games in books that other kids would like to do, and I will then change them so it tells about our community . . . by working together we will be successful.

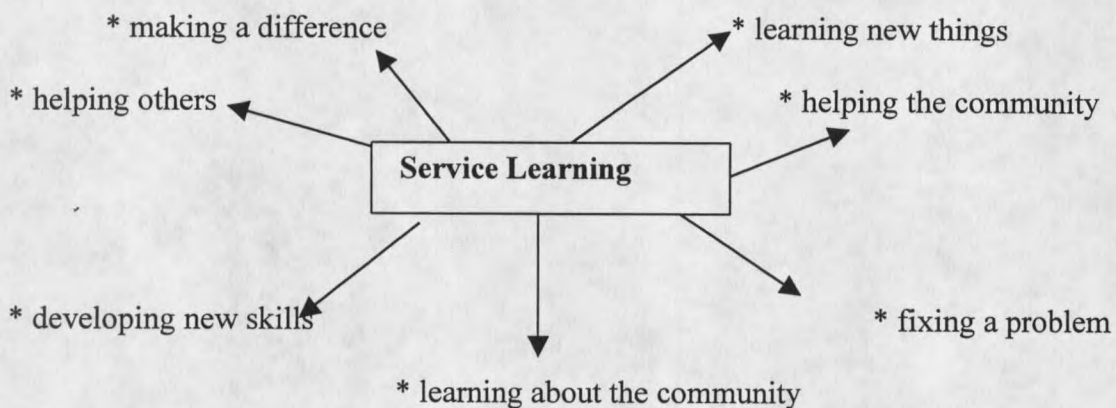
What Was The Understanding of Service Learning as The Students Began This Project?

The development stage of a service-learning project helped the students understand the concept of service learning as well as gave them guidance as they decided on their service activity. At first the students had no idea the difference between service learning and community service. All 10 students had participated in community service at least one other time, and three of them were involved in a number of community service events through either church or neighborhood activities. When the students were asked, "Why is serving the community important?" some of their answers were revealing and insightful.

- Student 08: It helps others.
- Student 10: It makes you feel good when you help.
- Student 06: Some people don't like teenagers. Maybe they will learn we are cool.
- Student 01: People like you better when you help others.
- Student 04: I think older people aren't afraid of you when they know you are useful.
- Student 01: You feel grown up and responsible.
- Student 03: I like to feel needed.

It was evident through this discussion that serving others was something the students believed was a positive thing to do. While the discussion continued, the teacher put a concept map about service learning on the board to highlight their thoughts. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. What is service learning?



When it was explained by the teacher that service learning was community service combined with academics, the students appeared interested. Observational data indicates, "The students had a better understanding of service learning than anticipated. They seemed to be enthusiastic about doing a project." There was some confusion about the two parts of The Cabin Project, but after a lengthy discussion they understood it. I had wondered if "they would perceive this project as just more work, but it seemed they were focusing on the service part and not the academics."

How Were The Students Actively Involved in This Project?

One of the key elements of service learning is to have the students actively involved in all phases of the project. These eighth-grade students were involved from the beginning when they were deciding on the project until the last document was ready for the final proofing. Throughout the project students went from being uncertain about what they were doing to possessing pride and confidence in their final product. The teacher played the role of a facilitator. The students were encouraged and were asked to make decisions and take risks they did not readily want to take. As the project became a reality, the students became more motivated and interested in maintaining a high standard of work. They were very conscious of the fact strangers were going to read this booklet, and they wanted them to have a good impression about the quality of their work. They decided since this was a group project they would not identify who did which page. The content, size, and audience for the booklet were all decisions made by the students, and the phrase "majority rules" was often heard. They made the phone calls to find out important information about publishing prices. When needed, they contacted members of the community for assistance. The journal entry of Student 03 stated it best: "It's almost like having a real job when we work on this each week."

Being cooperative, following directions, making decisions, and solving problems were all skills the students recognized as being important to this process during either their discussions or through reflections about getting the booklet completed. The students thought these skills were the most useful to them and when they applied these skills, it made the experience better. During one of the discussions, each time a student mentioned

a skill necessary for working together, the student teacher placed the word(s) on the board. Cooperation and finding a solution were mentioned most frequently; cooperation was mentioned 22 times and problem solving was mentioned 19. To support further their understanding for the need to show cooperation, Student 03 wrote in a journal entry: "Student 02 and I are best friends, but do not put us together to do a job; we talk too much." Student 03 stated a similar idea in her journal, "Just because people are friends doesn't mean they can work together." In general, the students learned a great deal about how they work through this project.

Once each student had an idea for a page, the atmosphere in the room began to change. The students walked in, got their material, and got busy on the project. There was little or no fooling around and most of the discussions were about their work. There was a notable difference in the behavior. They were more active in the way they were allowed to move around the room, but they were also more focused on the task at hand.

The students referred to the tasks for this project as "real work," and they appeared more engaged. According to their teacher, there was also less complaining if something had to be done over or reworked. They seemed to have more patience. Student 07 had to do a trail map over at least five times because he kept leaving out a portion of the trail, and he did it willingly.

In an interview with the newspaper reporter, the service-learning coordinator stated, "They don't even realize they are learning because they are so involved with what they are doing. The students helped design the project so they have ownership of it. With

this ownership comes learning, which is hard to describe. They feel they own the project, and they want to do the best job they can.”

Teaching

What Do Teachers Need, Beyond the Normal Curriculum, to Participate in Service Learning?

Resources about the local history and environment were needed for this project. Most of the materials were available in the school or students brought them from home. Beyond the normal curriculum, the teacher needed to understand one of the many models of service learning so a framework could be provided as a guide throughout the project. Following a specific model for the project was a constructive way for the students and the teachers to stay on task or redirect their work when necessary.

At one of the faculty meetings, time was put aside to discuss service learning and how teachers felt about it. While no other teachers were engaged currently in a project, all of them had participated in service learning at the school in previous years. During the discussion,

- Teacher 02 stated, “The most difficult part of a service-learning project for me was estimating how long the project would take.”
- Teacher 04 remarked, “The biggest challenge I faced was letting go and allowing the students to make the decisions.”
- Teacher 06, a less-experienced teacher, stated, “Having a place-based curriculum was helpful as a guide for ideas and background.”

In a response to the survey question, "What do you see as some of the barriers for service-learning activities?"

- Teacher 07 wrote, "...finding an age-appropriate project is difficult for me, but I enjoy the project once I get going."
- Teacher 01 wrote, "It's having faith in the students. You have to believe they can do it."

The notes during the discussion indicated there was a general feeling that the teachers liked the idea of developing a sense-of-place and more importantly, moving the walls beyond the classroom. They understood the importance of having students make some of the decisions, but there was also a frustration because it took a lot longer. They were not sure the additional time spent on the students making the decisions was worth it. The teachers wanted the students participating in the project rather than in the decision-making. Through their discussions, when the teachers spoke about service learning, they made the connection to The Cabin Project only. They did not consider other projects as possible opportunities for service learning such as peer tutoring, newsletters, recycling etc.

During an interview with Teacher 02, who had participated in the previous year's service-learning project, he shared,

- "A teacher needs a certain mindset for service learning: A positive attitude, a belief in students and their ability to contribute and a willingness to follow them, learn along with the students, and allow things to happen were more important than the availability of materials and resources."
- Teacher 01 said, "You have to make a leap of faith. It's risky business, but worth it. Everyone seems to win."

Results from an open-ended survey given to the teachers about service learning at the end of the school year, indicate barriers for creating service-learning projects for their students. The question asked, "What are the barriers that teachers face with service learning?"

- Too time consuming
- Lack of community volunteers
- Lack of existing curriculum and ideas
- Lack of funding
- Difficulty picking an age appropriate project

Identifying these barriers can help guide faculty as they experiment with service learning. Since there is a local demand for more service-learning opportunities, teachers need to make an effort to incorporate this method of teaching into their curriculum.

Did Teachers Need Additional Training?

When asked this question, seven of the 10 teachers, felt if a teacher understood how children learned and believed children gained knowledge from this experience, they would easily be able to provide a service-learning project for their students. However, two of the seven teachers gave an extensive list of barriers to service learning:

- Teacher 04 commented, "... having opportunities to share ideas with colleagues was important to the process."
- Teacher 05, who taught in the elementary grades, stated, "I was uneasy with the lack of direction the process initially provided. Letting go is not easy for some teachers, particularly when little children are involved."

- Teacher 04 wrote, "I enjoyed working with other teachers on the service-learning project. It helped take away some of the concerns which I had in the initial stages. I was more confident having another adult to work with."

Three of the teachers commented in their journals from the previous year that the service-learning experience should be used as a springboard for teaching other disciplines in a similar manner and using the community as more of a resource than was considered previously.

- Teacher 06 stated: As a new teacher, I find it difficult to integrate the disciplines. I am so afraid I will not be teaching the right stuff, but when we did the unit on snow with our "families" I found the children gained more from the lessons. They also enjoyed making the pamphlet about avalanches because they wanted to save people from harm.
- Teacher 04 wrote: over the summer I will be thinking about how I can bring service learning into my everyday curriculum.
- Teacher 01 wrote: I'd like to teach this way more, but I don't have enough time for planning. I need to find a way to do smaller projects.

Four community members, during their interviews, remarked they realized this way of teaching was more time-consuming than working from a book, and they appreciated the fact the teachers were willing to put their own time into the project.

- Community member 02 stated, "There is a lot of preparation that goes with this project. I was a teacher once, and I know that this is time consuming work. It just looks like the students do it all."
- Community member 05 commented, "When you do this kind of project, the teacher has to create all the material. There are no books with the answers in them."
- Community member 06 stated, "I know not every teacher is willing to put in the time to do this, but the fact the students are experiencing this at all is wonderful."
- My children would have loved learning this way, they hated school."

- Community member 09 stated, "When I first said I would help out, I had no idea how hard it was going to be to keep up with these students. I don't know how teachers do it."

Two individuals added they wished their own children had such an experience.

The clerk of the school noticed the students were less of a behavioral problem when they were working on service projects. Getting other teachers involved was a recommendation she made to improve the program. Another teacher remarked, "With service-learning projects, there are no teacher's guides, and teachers need to be resourceful in order for the project to come together. There are hours of planning prior to the actual project, which involve the logistics of activities and how the volunteers will work with the children."

Governance

How Did The School Community Provide Support For This Service-Learning Project And How Did They View It As A Teaching Method?

In the local district where this study took place, each year, the service-learning coordinator requests the School Board's support when writing the Learn and Serve America mini-grant for the upcoming year. Before the grant is submitted, the five-member School Board is given a brief description of the upcoming project and the basic budget. The Board and the superintendent must give their approval for the project to continue. The coordinator of The Cabin Project makes it a point to keep the Board, the superintendent, and the community informed of the project's progress throughout the year by writing short informative articles about the project in the school's weekly bulletin and also the two local newspapers. Once the year's project has been completed, the

teacher and the students give a presentation and a written summary to the Board and superintendent. The summary is submitted to the local papers.

Since The Cabin Project included moving a cabin and finding a permanent site for the building, the Board and superintendent had to be actively involved initially with this service-learning project because of the legal issues it presented. The School Board allocated additional funds for this project and supported the additional fundraising efforts of the students. At one of the Board meetings, a Board member stated, "With this type of learning experience going on at the school, I believe we are better preparing our students for the future. I hope to see more of this in the future. I hope this kind of learning is being encouraged."

Overall, the Board recognized the importance of active learning and encouraged the teachers to engage in this type of teaching with their students. Service learning has become a natural next step, and it has brought the community into the school. The school has reaped the benefits through monetary and material donations.

The school has a very active parent organization. The parents have donated money, time, and resources to The Cabin Project. They have seen the students' enthusiasm for this growing project, and they encourage teachers by funding programs that support the elements of service learning. Through the service-learning project, parents participated in their child's learning as a partner. They experienced what can be achieved beyond the classroom walls, and they value the experience. A parent who has two children at the school currently, and another one who graduated two years ago stated, "I see the depth of my child's understanding of this history. He loves to talk about the

area when we have people visiting from out of town.” Another parent arranged for the students and the teacher to visit a local antique dealer to purchase artifacts, which were found in the canyon area. The school community continues its support of The Cabin Project.

How Did The Community Support This Service-Learning Project, And How Did They View It As A Method For Teaching?

Community members support the school's efforts to restore the cabin and, thus, show support for service learning. Over the past five years, the community has contributed nearly \$20,000 for this project. Unless members of the community were involved directly in the projects, there was no evidence that they understood service learning. Some residents did comment that they enjoyed hearing about what the students were doing and liked coming to the programs. Since the initial project, the community has taken a greater interest in the school in general. Community members who do not have children offer to help the students and teachers with projects. In-kind and monetary donations have increased over the past few years. The Cabin Project opened the doors of the school and gave people a reason to support it. Each year, the school invites the community to participate in a program that highlights the year's service-learning project. Initially, only the parents of the students came along with a half dozen community members who were friends of these families. Over the four years, the attendance for these programs has grown and now includes community members who do not necessarily know the children. In fact, there has been an increase in attendance at other school functions as well.

There are two local newspapers, which were eager to write or publish articles about what the school was doing with The Cabin Project. Editorials have been written about the importance of developing a sense-of-place in the community and giving the students credit for opening the eyes of the adults to its importance. In the fall of 2000, another extensive article about the value of service learning for our middle school students and The Cabin Project was written in the local paper. This article raised the awareness of the residents as to what the project means to the school and the greater community.

During the 1999-2000 service-learning project, there was initial enthusiasm for the project, but as time went on there was only one volunteer who gave of his time. He was the newspaper editor. This was disappointing for the students since they looked forward to having community members participate. The students were given encouragement and information through phone calls, but there were no other community participants working with the students. At the end of the project, The Chamber of Commerce liked the students' booklet so much they offered to mass-produce it. This meant more than just a few hundred copies would be available for tourists. The booklet would be shared on a much larger scale than the students had originally planned.

Service learning depends on community volunteers in order for the project to be successful. This year's project ran into difficulty with volunteers being dependable. There were two instances during this project that the students were told by volunteers they would be there to help, and in both cases they did not show up to the session. This was very hard for the students to understand.

At the school's goal-setting meeting held in the winter of 2001, which was five years after the first goal-setting meeting, community members, parents, and faculty who participated were asked to list five positive aspects about the school. Each person was to list the positive aspects on an index card before any discussion began. When the school board and the administrator tallied the results, they found The Cabin Project to be one of the top five positive aspects of the school. This was encouraging to see, and it gave the added support to continue this project. Because those in attendance were a good cross section of the community, the response gave validity to service learning. At this meeting no one raised the question, "How should we get our students interested and motivated in school?" There had been a change in how the community perceived the students in five years.

The data collected for this case study explains how the eighth grade students worked together to design a booklet about their community for tourists to enjoy. This data also gives insight to how the teachers in the school viewed service learning as a method of teaching and some of the barriers they face as they implement these activities.

This service-learning project helped students develop concepts and attitudes about where they lived. As they learned about the local environment and shared it with others, they developed a sense of place. This project gave the students an opportunity to develop a project and see it through to completion using their own ideas.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE STUDY, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This case study describes a service-learning project for middle school students in a rural northern Rocky Mountain resort community. Over the past five years this project, known as The Cabin Project, has evolved into a service-learning program for the school's eighth-grade class. The Cabin Project has two main goals: (1) to restore a 100-year-old cabin and (2) to learn about the history and environmental features of the area and share this information with the community. Each year, the eighth-grade students develop an activity that supports these two goals. In addition, the project fulfills a community need and involves community members in finding solutions to local issues. Since this area is a rapidly growing resort community, the needs include a lack of information about the history of the area and a lack of understanding about the unique environmental features surrounding the residents.

During the 1999-2000 service-learning project, the eighth-grade students shared the knowledge they gained about the local history and environmental features through a booklet. The students designed this booklet to help families vacationing in the area learn about where they were staying, and thus generate a greater appreciation for the local environment. Through this experience, the students deepened their understanding about their surroundings, made a stronger connection with their community and strengthened their sense-of-place. From the perspective of David Orr (1996), the students began their

journey as residents and were becoming inhabitants of the community as the project ended. As students became more knowledgeable about where they lived through this project, they became more committed to protecting the environment. They began to see how the community could become the target for over-development. They liked the way life was now and they wanted to keep it from being destroyed in the future. They had a better understanding of how they were part of their community, not a part from their community. At the end of the project, they were proud of the booklet they created, and they were proud of where they lived. In their hearts, they believed they were making a difference.

This case study examined how a sense-of-place in middle school students was developed through service learning. During the spring semester of 2000, the 10 eighth-grade students worked together to complete the project. It was the culminating service-learning activity for the year. Other participants included the classroom teacher, a student teacher, two community members, and the researcher/participant. This service-learning project, as a method of teaching, enhanced the intellectual, social, and emotional development of these adolescents and gave them a positive, meaningful experience in which to develop and improve their skills. The students worked cooperatively, took ownership in the process of this project and were committed to its success.

The data was collected from field observations, journal entries of the students and teacher, interviews with the teachers, students and community members, videotape, and a teacher survey. A summary of the findings follows as seen through each of the four common places (Gowin, 1981).

Curriculum

An essential element of a good service-learning program is integrating the school's curriculum with service activities. The Cabin Project integrated social studies, communication arts, science, library media, visual arts, and technology. Because the students were engaged actively in the process of developing the project and were able to experience the positive outcomes of their work, they reported a positive learning experience. They developed new skills such as publishing a booklet, learning about the layout, the design of each page, and keeping within a budget. They learned about working together, to compromise and to listen. They strengthened their academic skills in areas such as writing, proofreading, research, and communication.

The Cabin Project helped students make connections between their past and new experiences. They realized in the process how much they knew about the environmental features of where they lived. By sharing this information with others, they deepened their own understanding. The students became aware that they knew more about hiking, camping, and wildlife than they thought. They realized that what they had learned in their classes could be applied in their work on the booklet. They made connections and understood the value of integrating the different disciplines. When asked, they were able to identify the different academic subjects, which they were utilizing in the project: communication arts, visual arts, science, social studies, and technology. One student remarked, "I just know I'm learning a lot. I never thought about what subjects."

After these students had experienced their first semester in high school, several of them described to the researcher their current academic program experience. During the conversation, they mentioned how they wished their subjects were integrated like The

Cabin Project "because it made more sense. The subjects in the high school have no connection."

The State's Accreditation Standards and the State's Content Standards support service learning as a method of teaching. This support at the state level gives the local community the justification for teachers and students to participate in service learning. The alignment of service learning with the State's Standards provides evidence for community members who may question the value of service learning as a teaching method.

Learning

This project empowered students to take responsibility for themselves as they worked on separate and independent sections of the booklet. In addition, students worked together to maintain the quality of this project. Teamwork, cooperation, decision-making, critical thinking, and problem solving were integrated into this process. As The Cabin Project of 2000 developed, the students' awareness of the value of interpersonal skills grew.

During the study, it became apparent to the researcher and teachers that the students who were the most involved in their work had a deeper commitment to having the project be successful. Some students took on greater challenges than others, and they seemed to gain more meaning from the experience. Two students never really connected with the project, and although they did complete assignments, they did the least amount of work. This was an issue with the students in the initial stages of the project, but as the booklet progressed the students seemed to accept the fact that not everyone had the same

commitment to the project. They reconciled their differences, and in the end, the students all felt the project was a success.

Throughout the experience, as the students gained insight into the community, it was obvious that they developed a deeper appreciation of where they lived. As they spoke of the special features of the area—its natural beauty, the numerous wildlife, the river and the mountains—they developed greater pride in the surrounding environments. They shared their memories of past experiences, and instead of wishing to move on to larger communities, the students discussed the idea of staying in the area to raise their children. They were not looking to change the way things were, they were hoping to keep things the same for their children. They were becoming inhabitants of their community.

In general, keeping the students on task during The Cabin Project was not difficult. Once they decided on the specific project and their individual assignments, the students had direction, were self-motivated, and wanted to create a quality product. Letting the students decide what the project would be, though time-consuming, was beneficial. Students took on the responsibility for their own learning and gained a valuable learning experience in which they created the course, and the teacher navigated the way. The motivation and enthusiasm the students and teacher showed helped them overcome the challenges they encountered. While students learned about their community, they also learned about themselves. This awareness of themselves was observed in other areas of the school day. According to their teacher, students became more responsible for their actions. Homework was completed in a timely manner. They spent their recess working on the project; and in general, they were more productive. The negative attitudes, which were typical during the spring of most school years, were

nonexistent. During The Cabin Project activities, it appeared that students genuinely wanted to be in school.

The students in this study gained confidence in their abilities and greater respect for each other. As the students gained confidence, the teacher began giving them more responsibility in other areas of their school day. They could spend time in the library to get a reading book without adult supervision for short periods of time. They were asked to help in the office by answering the phone. They could eat at their own lunch table. The number of eighth-grade privileges increased as they became more responsible.

The collaborative and cooperative nature of the project nurtured this sense of accomplishment and responsibility. The students gained a deeper appreciation for themselves, their community, and the need to serve. They were kinder to each other, more caring to the younger students and would help when asked without negative comments. In addition, a deeper respect for their teacher emerged. The project brought out a mutual respect between the teacher and the students; the students viewed the adult participants as part of their team. A community member, who had worked with the eighth-grade students during several service-learning projects remarked that she saw "connections heighten at all levels: from student to student, student to teacher, teacher to project, and student to project."

Through this experience, students were connecting new knowledge with old knowledge. These connections were complex and intense. They were becoming aware of their community on different levels. As the students discussed the expansion of the resort, the increase in construction and the economic growth of the community, their awareness of the impact that tourists had on the environment increased. They also began to realize

their families' livelihood depended on this growth. Many informal conversations developed naturally among the students while they were working. The students openly shared their personal understandings and beliefs related to The Cabin Project with one another.

As the students' interpersonal skills improved, they entered the classroom more focused and directed. By working collaboratively, they helped each other and shared information. They did not wait for instructions from the teacher. One student remarked that it was like coming into an office rather than their classroom.

The informal nature of the project gave the students and teacher a common ground for discussion." The teacher's observations were insightful. During a discussion early in the project, there was a look of surprise on a student's face when the teacher said to him, "I don't know. How about finding out for both of us?" Throughout the project, the students turned more to each other for help and support rather than depending on the teacher for the answers.

When the project was at its best, the students and teachers became co-workers. It became teamwork. No one talked about grades or "Do I have to do the work?" During the project the teacher noted in her journal the students' performance, involvement, and level of cooperation. At the end of their project the teacher gave the students a survey to complete. Their responses served as one of the measures for their final grade. The expectation from all participants was the work would be completed and all involved would benefit. The service-learning project provided a natural setting in which students worked together. This gave the students an opportunity to experience what work in the real world might be like. Students would comment that the time spent on the brochure

was more like going to work than going to school. Student 08 stated, "I am more focused on this project than on schoolwork. I know this brochure will be seen by other kids, and I have a reason to do my best. I really enjoy doing this." The student outcomes through this service-learning project may be categorized as meaningful learning based on the interaction of thinking, feeling and activity (Novak, 1998).

Teaching

The teacher overseeing the service-learning project was a veteran teacher, who understood the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of middle school students. She knew how to challenge and encouraged them to believe in themselves by creating situations that allowed students to come up with their ideas. She believed in the process of service learning and the abilities of the students. The teacher designed the curriculum to include a service-learning component. Her passion and concern for the environment were contagious. Her genuine interest in The Cabin Project was a driving, subtle force behind the success of the program.

Interviews with other teachers in the earlier grades, revealed an uneasiness about service learning and the feeling they would be required to participate in The Cabin Project. At the same time, the teachers reported they supported the program with the older children. One of their main concerns was time. Preparing, creating and completing a service-learning project is time consuming for students and teachers. This concern was greatest for younger children who they felt may not be ready to be independent learners/workers. Although there continues to be support among teachers for the time and effort involved, it is difficult to decide what should be eliminated from the other demands

of a typical school day. Making this decision seemed to be difficult particularly for more inexperienced teachers. It seemed they wanted more detailed instructions on what to do, rather than depend on their own ideas. "What if it didn't work? We would have wasted valuable time," was a comment made by one teacher. Being willing to take the risk seemed to be the biggest issue.

Initially, the project coordinator was concerned about what the students were not getting academic content while participating in service-learning activities. As the year passed, she saw how the students responded to the service-learning project and focused on what students gained through this experience versus what they were missing. She began to realize that students were gaining more from the project than they would be from sitting through traditional instruction. She saw them develop self-confidence, become more resourceful, and willing to try new activities. In general, they had a more positive attitude. She stated that the students were making meaningful connections between what they were learning in the classroom and the real world. The teacher also noted that she observed students looking words up in the dictionary or asking a friend to proofread their work without being told. She commented, "Working with the editor of the newspaper gave them insight into career opportunities which they may not have experienced in a traditional eighth-grade classroom" Her advice to the teachers who were interested in the project but concerned about time and content issues, "Just try it!"

Governance

It is fortunate that service learning receives the support at the state and local levels because it is an effective way to teach middle school students, particularly those in rural

schools. Last spring, the local school board recommended to the school's administrator that the students be given at least one service-learning opportunity before they graduated from the school. This decision assisted the administration and teachers in pursuing other service-learning opportunities. The School Board's stamp of approval signaled to the school community and the community-at-large that they valued this method of teaching. Before the school year ended, the Board committed to moving the cabin to its permanent home in the front of the schoolyard for all who passes by to admire. Hopefully, in the years to come, people will be interested enough to stop and visit the cabin. As an outdoor education facility, the cabin will provide a unique classroom for learning.

Since The Cabin Project started, there has been a steady increase in the community's business and housing development. The population continues to grow and diversify, attracting people from all walks of life. Some are looking for a quiet place to retire and others are ready to settle down, find a good job and raise a family. Regardless of their reason for coming to this area, newcomers are looking for ways in which to connect to the community. The eighth-grade service-learning project has helped to bring this rural mountain community together and has inspired other organizations in the area to take on similar projects and to include the school in their projects. Over the past five years, there seems to be a growing interest in the education of the children, and community members are willing to step forward and assist in the process. One resident volunteered to start an art program for sixth graders, which is connected with the National Art Gallery in Washington, DC. Volunteering in the school has increased and there are larger audiences at our school programs. As the students reach out into the

community for support and guidance with their service-learning project, the community feels more welcome in the school.

The challenges, which face these young people living in this rural mountain resort community are similar to what the youth face in large communities: a lack of adult supervision because of single parent households or both parents are working, an increase in the availability of drugs and alcohol, and a minimum of activities to keep them involved and interested. The difference is the lack of resources, both educational and professional, in this rural community. It is important for rural young people to make connections with caring adults and develop a sense of pride in where they live rather than wanting to move to larger towns. The Cabin Project gave the community the opportunity to connect with young people.

The eighth-grade students in this study had an added challenge because they lived in a northern Rocky Mountain resort where the emphasis is on the tourism. In the past, there was lack of community interest in providing what was necessary to develop strong, caring young people. Based on this study, it is obvious that the community is more serious and committed to what is happening at school with their children. The Cabin Project started to bring the community together in regards to young children and their interests. By teaching the community about the history and the environmental features, the students felt they were doing something that was valued. In turn, the community members started responding to the students in more positive ways. Now, the community and students are connected to the area in which they live and to each other.

Recommendations

After completing the research and analyzing the data, there are several recommendations, which may make this service-learning program stronger. These recommendations may assist other teachers and community members as they engage in service-learning projects.

Curriculum

- The school should look for effective strategies to incorporate service learning into the earlier grades.
- The school should encourage using the environment as a vehicle to engage students in learning a variety of academic disciplines. Using the environment as the focus for learning can provide a wealth of educational resources.

Learning

- The school should encourage teachers and students to learn together and provide opportunities for them to experience other service-learning programs. This will help create opportunities for teachers and students to learn together and develop a deeper respect and appreciation for one another.
- Teachers should give students opportunities to use reflection in their writing in other subject areas. It is through reflection that connections are made and a deeper understanding of the experience is developed.
- Teachers should find alternative ways to assess students in the service-learning program. The teachers should create more detailed rubrics and performance criteria that document how students grow through the experience.

Teaching

- The coordinator should find alternative models for designing service-learning projects. The model used for this service-learning project was too time consuming.

- Teachers should participate in professional development opportunities that integrate service learning into the curriculum
- Teachers should be encouraged to work with their colleagues to overcome concerns and encourage each other to use service learning with their classes.
- Teachers should be encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities that develop a sense-of-place. A sense-of-place helps students become a member of a community and gives them a sense of belonging. In a community where most families do not have relatives close by, this is very important for social and emotional development.
- Teachers should learn about the unique environment in which they live and work.
- The service-learning coordinator should create a training program for volunteers. There is an assumption that volunteers know how to work with children. This is not the case, and in service-learning volunteers are expected to be the teachers. Volunteers need to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to the program and the students.
- The service-learning coordinator should help the teachers and students find simple projects to get them started in the service-learning process. Many teachers have less experience and need guidance and encouragement in creating a service-learning project.

Governance

- The School Board should recognize the achievements of the students in a more formal manner after the service-learning project has been completed. This recognition would place a greater value on the service-learning experience.
- The coordinator should continue to write articles and submit photos about the service-learning projects in the local papers in order to keep the community informed and interested in The Cabin Project.
- The school should continue to look for community partners who will enhance The Cabin Project and broaden the students' horizons in the future.
- The school board should continue to encourage service-learning projects and provide financial support for those teachers who wish to further develop this approach to learning.

Future Study

This case study described a single service-learning project for middle school students in a rural community. In the process of doing this research, other questions about service learning as a teaching method for middle school students arose. In the future, research may focus on the value of The Cabin Project and its effect on students, teacher, and community members. There are many more questions, which need to be asked concerning service learning.

Curriculum

Since service learning is a new teaching technique for many school districts, a study on academic achievement before and after participating in a service-learning project would be worth examining. Since state and federal mandates on the academic requirements increase yearly, measurable means of evaluating a service-learning project need to be developed and then used for assessment purposes.

- What are the expected and unexpected student outcomes?
- How should service-learning projects be assessed in light of increasing academic standards and decreasing resources?

Learning

A study on the long-term impact of service learning on students who participated in a project during their middle school years should be examined.

- Did the students continue to be involved with service activities in the high school?

- Did their attitudes about learning change after participating in the service-learning project?
- What did the students gain from the experience?

Teaching

Through this case study, it became evident that the inexperienced teachers in the school were reluctant to try service learning. Finding ways to support them in this method is important. The concern for the availability of teacher training both prior to and after classroom experience is worth investigation.

- What resources do less experienced teachers need before engaging in service learning?
- What in-service opportunities would be valuable?

There is a growing interest for service learning as a teaching method of middle school students, and yet, it may become increasingly difficult to support the value of service learning without concrete evidence to show its effectiveness.

- How does creating a service-learning project align with local, state and national content standards?
- How does service learning meet the academic and social needs of middle school students?
- What alternative assessments are appropriate for evaluating student outcomes in service learning?

Governance

Schools continually seek support from their communities. A study examining how service-learning projects brought more attention to the school and how this support improved the school's program would be valuable information.

- How did the community's perception of the school's image change?
- What did community members learn from this project?

A study examining the feedback from volunteers would also be valuable in assessing the program and gaining support from the community.

- According to school volunteers, what were the strengths of the program?
- According to school volunteers, what needed revisions?

As more investigations are being conducted on service learning, there will be more information to give teachers who are interested in implementing this form of teaching in their classrooms. Service learning is considered as a method of school reform, but without concrete evidence of its positive impact on students and community, it will not get the support it needs to make a difference.

Multiple Roles In Participant Research

While not directly addressed in this case study, it is worth noting the researcher/participant roles and the interactions, which existed while doing this research. Having prior knowledge of The Cabin Project was helpful in understanding this year's project and the desire of the teacher to be consistent with its original main goals. There was a growing desire from the coordinators and other community members to share the history and the environmental features with the community in written form. During the early stages of this service-learning project, the teacher guided the students in deciding to create a booklet. Had the researcher not had this background information the discussions between the students and teacher would have been confusing.

Having prior knowledge of service learning gave additional insight into what the teacher and the students were trying to accomplish in the earlier sessions. Service learning places the responsibility of creating the project on the students. This process was time-consuming and often can be shortchanged because of an adult taking over intentionally or unintentionally. Knowing the purpose for all the discussions was helpful.

As a researcher/participant I found it challenging to do both tasks simultaneously. The students wanted the researcher to participate and assist them during the sessions. When acting as the researcher, the students did not see the distinction between the two roles. A researcher coming into the classroom and only observing might have received a different response from the students. At the same time, this researcher was able to see the pros and cons of this project more readily. The students were very comfortable with the researcher and looked upon her as just another pair of helping hands. The classroom teacher was very open with the researcher.

Conclusion

The 2000 service-learning project, The Cabin Project, provided 10 eighth-grade students with a deeper understanding of their environment and community. Through this experience they gained a personal sense-of-place. The project aligned with the state content standards and learner goals. The researcher was able to substantiate with specific examples and documentation answers to the nine research questions. Program outcomes such as the booklet documented student understanding of both the history of their community and some of the unique environmental features. The students engaged in

learning experiences, which they believed, were meaningful and which made them feel they were contributing to the community in an important way.

Through The Cabin Project, the school found ways to motivate the students, engage them in meaningful learning, and connect them with adult community members. Since the beginning of The Cabin Project, there has been a genuine effort made by the school to create a partnership with the community so that all can benefit. The Cabin Project brought together the community and the school. It has increased the awareness of the students and the community for where they live by sharing the history and unique environmental features as it was in the past, and as it is today. The Cabin Project helped the students become connected to their home and developed in them a feeling of pride about their community. This service-learning project developed a sense-of-place in these students. This is seen in the concluding journal entry from Student 04:

“ . . . I’ve only been in this area a short time. I never thought I would have such a strong feeling about these majestic mountains. I couldn’t see myself living here full time. Now, as I go to school, I feel like they protect me, and I feel safe and at home. I think I’m beginning to understand the meaning of a sense-of-place . . . ”

REFERENCES

- Abbott, J. (1995, May). Children need communities—communities need children. Educational Leadership, 52(8) [On-line] Available: www.ascd.org/readingroom/edled/9505/abbott.html.
- Alliance for the Service Learning in Education Reform [ASLER]. (1993). Standards of quality for school-based service learning. Chester, VT: Ser Vermont.
- Andrus, E. (1996, November). Service learning: Taking students beyond community service. Middle School Journal, 10-18.
- Apple, M. W., & Beane, J. A. (Eds.). (1995). Democratic schools. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum.
- Archibald, S. (1996). Journeys: A sense-of-place curriculum. Kelly, WY: Teton Science School.
- Archibald, S. (2000). Journeys: A sense-of-place curriculum (Rev. ed.). Kelly, WY: Teton Science School.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklin, S. K. (1992) Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Boston, B. O. (1997). Service learning: What it offers to students, schools and communities. Washington, DC: National Service-Learning Cooperative.
- Brown, B. L. (1998). Service learning: More than community service. Columbus, Ohio. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.198)
- Caine, R. N., & Caine, G. (1997). Education on the edge of possibility. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum.
- Carnegie Council on Education of Young Adolescents. (1989). Turning points: Preparing America's youth for the 21st century. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Chenail, R. J. (1997). Keeping things plumb in qualitative research. The Qualitative Report [On-line], 3(3). Available: www.nova.edu.ssss/QR/QR3-3/plumb.html
- Conrad, D., & Hellin, D. (1989). School-based community service: What we know from research and theory. Phi Delta KAPPAN, 72, 743-749.

- Dewey, J. (1916). Democracy and education. New York: MacMillan.
- Dorman, G. (1987). Improving middle grade schools: A framework for action. Chapel Hill, NC: Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.
- Eisner E. W., & Peshkin, A. (Eds.). (1990). Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate. New York: Columbia University Teachers College.
- Fertman, C. L., White, G. P., & White, L. J. (1996). Service learning in the middle school: Building a culture of service. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.
- Finks, H. (1990). The middle school handbook. Boston: National Association of Independent Schools.
- Gay, L. R. (1996). Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application. (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Gendlin, E. T. (1981). Focusing (2nd ed.). New York: Bantam Books.
- George, P. S., & Oldaker, L. (1985). Evidence for the middle school. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.
- George, P. S., Stevenson, C., Thomason, J., & Beane, J. (1992). Middle school and beyond. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum.
- Glenn, H. S., & Nelsen, J. (1987). Raising children for success. Fair Oaks, CA: Sunrise Press.
- Gowin D. R. (1981). Educating. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Haggerty, P. M. (1995). Add caring to your curriculum: Middle years. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Hoepfl, M. C. (1999). Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education. [On-line] Available: www.curriculum.edu.au/tech/articles/xchoose.html.
- Hubbard, R. S., & Power, B. M. (1993). The art of classroom inquiry: A handbook for teacher researchers. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kahne, J., & Wesheimer, J. (1996, May) In the service of what? The politics of service learning. Phi Delta KAPPAN, 86, 593.

Kessler, R. (2000). The soul of education. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

_____. (nd). Key Elements of Service Learning.[brochure]

Kinsley, C. W. (2000). Community service learning as a pedagogy [On-line]. Available: <http://www.quest.edu/slarticle10.htm>.

Krystal, S. (1999, January). The nurturing potential of service learning. Educational Leadership, 56(4), 58-61.

LaCompte, M.D., & Preissle, J. with Tesch, R.(1993) Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research (2nd ed.). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Egon, G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publishing.

Lions-Quest.(1992). Skills for adolescence (3rd ed.). Granville, OH: Quest International.

McPherson, K. (1989). Learning through service. Vancouver, WA: Project Service Leadership.

Meier, D. (1995). The power of their ideas. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative research and case study applications in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mertens, D. M. (1998). Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Montana Board of Public Education. (1999). Montana school accreditation: Standards and procedures manual. Helena, MT: Montana Board of Public Education.

Nathan, J., & Kielsmeier, J. (Eds.). (1991). The sleeping giant of school reform. Phi Delta KAPPAN, 72, 739-742.

National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). Service learning and community service in K-12 public school. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Novak, J. (1998). Learning, creating, and using knowledge. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Press.

- Orr, D. W. (1994). Ecological literacy. In M. A. Cahn, & R. O'Brien (Eds.), Thinking about the environment: Readings on politics, property, and the physical world (pp. 227-234). Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Schukar, R., Johnson, J., & Singleton, L. R. (1996). Service learning in the middle school curriculum: A resource book. Boulder, CO: Social Science Education Consortium.
- Schultz, J. (1999). Positive paths for young adolescents. National Middle School Association. [On-line] Available: www.nmsa.org/moyaarticles2.html.
- Sher, J. P. (Ed.). (1977). Education in rural America: A reassessment of conventional wisdom. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Silcox, H. C. (1993). School-based community service programs: An imperative for effective schools. [On-line]. Available: <http://www.quest.edu/slarticle5.htm>.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). The art of case study research. Thousand Oaks, NY: Sage Publications.
- Steinberg, A. (1993). Adolescents and schools: Improving the fit. Cambridge, MA: The Harvard Education Letter.
- Stern, J. (Ed.). (1994). The condition of education in rural schools. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Theobald, P., & Nachtigal, P. (1995). Culture, community, and the promise of rural education. Phi Delta KAPPAN, 78, 132-134.
- Tyler, R. (1949). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wadsworth, B. J. (1996). Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development: Foundations of constructivism (5th ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers USA.
- Waterman, A. S. (Ed.). (1997). Service learning: Applications from the research. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Wilson, E. (2000). Keeping a nature journal. Pownal, VT: Storey Books.

Worrel, J., & Danner, F. (1989). The adolescent as decision-maker. Educational Psychology Series. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, Inc.

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY - BOZEMAN



3 1762 10354230 2