Students Connecting Science to Their Lives: Using Current Events in the Classroom

Background

I conducted a classroom research project with my Advanced Placement Environmental Science class. I chose the topic because students in various classes are always asking, “Why do I have to learn this?” and “When will I ever have to use this in my life?” I wanted my students to be able to make a connection between the science they were learning and their everyday lives.

Primary Question

- Does using current events enable students to see the relevance of science in their everyday lives?

Secondary Questions

1. Does using a post unit reading prompt affect ‘aha’ moments?
2. Does using current events articles affect student learning?

Treatment

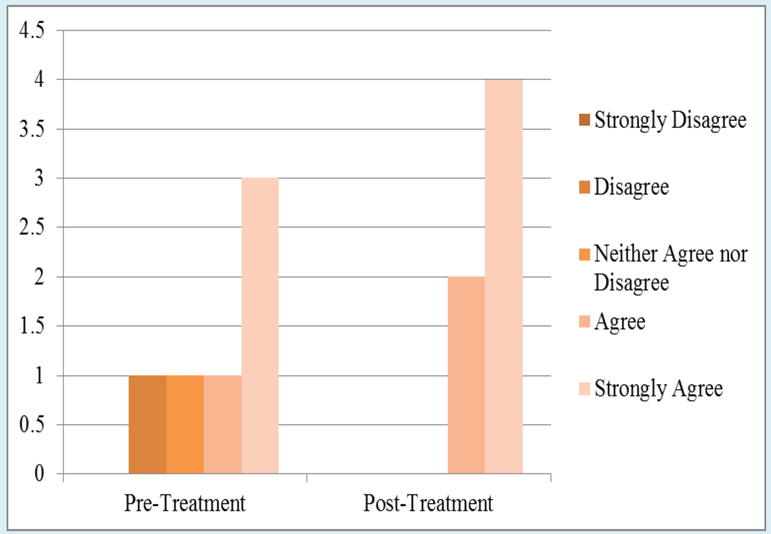
- Carried out over a period of six weeks and three units of study.
- Students read a post-unit current events article about a topic in each unit of study. Prompt questions about the articles were answered.
- Articles were chosen to correspond to the free response questions tested on the summative assessments. Free response questions were used to evaluate student learning.
- Class discussion, teacher journaling, student surveys and student interviews were used to collect data.

Data Collection and Analysis

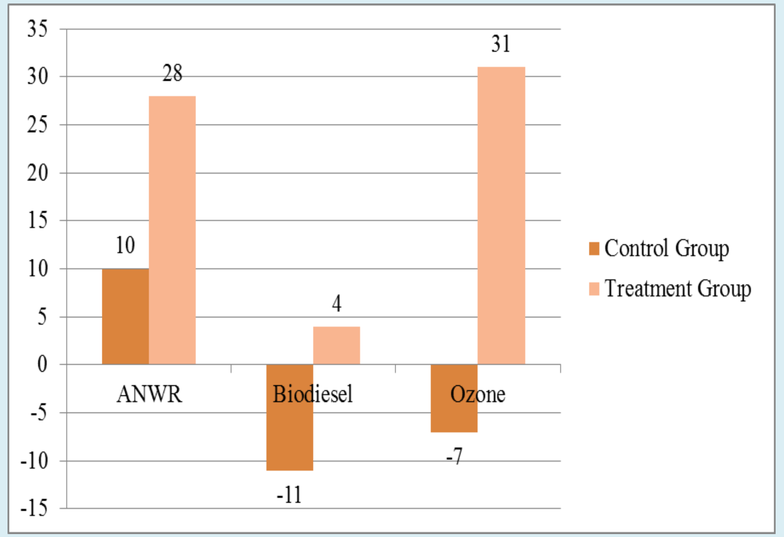
Focus Questions:	Data Source 1	Data Source 2	Data Source 3
Primary Question:	Post-unit reading assessment	Student surveys	Student interviews
Secondary Question 1:	Post-unit reading prompt	Class discussion	Teacher journaling
Secondary Question 2:	Post-unit reading prompt	Summative unit assessment free response questions	Student interviews

Results

- Provided evidence that students were able to see relevance of current events in their lives
- Provided evidence that current events had a positive impact on student learning



Results for survey statement, ‘Science helps me to understand the world around me,’ (N=6)



Percent Improvement from the Pretreatment, ($N_{Non\text{-}Treatment}$=14, $N_{Treatment}$=6)



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