Learning through Field Experiences

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Introduction
In this day and age less and less learning is being done outside. The pressures of test scores, and lack of funds are just two reasons that teachers do not take their students on field trips. Elementary school students learn well when they are immersed in the subject and they see real world application to their learning. Twenty-four fourth grade students from a low income Title I school participated in a series of science based field experiences to increase their content knowledge in those areas.

Data Collection

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- Focus Question: What are the effects of field trips and outdoor learning experiences on students content knowledge?
- Sub Question: How will student’s attitude toward learning be impacted by going on field experiences?
- Sub Question: How does taking students on field experiences impact my teaching practice?

Results
After each field trip noteworthy gains were made in between the pre and post tests. Each time over half of the students retained what they learned. Students also responded positively about science, field trips, and school in general after the treatment cycles.

Fig. 1: (Top) Students using binoculars to identify animal species. (Bottom) Students using notes about soil to answer a question.

Student Quotation
“It’s not every day you see animals and cool machines but when we go on a field trip it real fun! Sitting and listening to the teacher, it does not really help. So when we go out and like go to a factory or a beach and that’s why I like it”

Fig. 3 Pie chart of student responses to one question from attitude survey (N=24).

Treatment
Students were taken on three science based field trips based on fourth grade Next Generation Science Standards.

- **Salmon Center**
  Sustainability, natural resources, environments, and life cycles.

- **Naval Undersea Museum**
  Engineering, ocean science, marine mammals, coding, and naval science.

- **Point No Point Beach**
  Ecosystems, water cycle, bodies of water, animal survival, and ocean science.