



A Compilation of  
2014/15  
Innovation Grant  
Evaluations

# Foundation for Educational Excellence District 300

## Innovation Grant Project Evaluation

**Title of Innovation:** An African Adventure

**Submitted by:** Pamela Carlos and Trish Whitecotton

**School:** Golfview Elementary

**Grade level(s) served by this innovation:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>

### **Brief Description of the project:**

This project is intended to increase multiculturalism by having a multicultural summer camp that will tie into our school's study for the Multicultural Festival. The majority of our students are from Latino countries. We would like to expand their horizon by studying areas outside of Latin America. With this project our students will be studying Africa. This was chosen because we have a few students whose families are from Africa. The "camp" will include literacy, art, a cultural field trip, dance, music and technology. The grant will cover the cost of a book for each child, additional non-fiction books to have available in the school library and materials for the art projects. Other funding is being used for the field trip and to pay staff. This is an opportunity to extend learning beyond the classroom for selected students. These students will have cultural experiences on the field trip which will include art, music and dance. Students will then make their own cultural art projects back at the school. In addition, they will read about an adventure in Africa. They will also learn an African dance and possibly some music. Students will use technology to create a project representing what they have learned throughout the camp.

### **How was the effectiveness of the innovation measured?**

Attendance was maintained to measure students' excitement about what was being done in the summer program. Attendance can be a concern from many of our students during summer school.

### **What were the results of that measurement?**

Forty students were invited to participate in the program. Thirty-six students were able to commit and attend. We only had 3 absences lasting 1 day each due to illness. All students were able to participate in the school performance on the last day of camp that coincided with the music camp. All students had at least one family member attend the standing room only performance. Several parents stopped teachers and staff afterwards to tell how much they enjoyed the program and how much fun their child had. We also had 20 students attend the Multicultural Festival at Spring Hill Mall in October 2014. The pride in the students' eyes to be able to perform in front of such a large crowd was amazing to see!

### **Please identify any part of the innovation that you would modify in the future?**

Overall, the program was a success. Our students were able to gain a better understanding of a culture other than their own. This innovation also immersed the students in multiples readings and experiences that enhanced their desire to learn. The only part we would modify is to try and expand it in an after school program in order to reach more students.

### **Does this innovation hold possibilities for other subject areas and/or grade levels?**

The idea of focusing on different cultures through literacy and art activities is a great way to engage students into inquiry learning and help to promote life-long learners. This innovation could transfer to possibilities for additional summer programs and after school programs. Since the innovation, we have done an after school multicultural program and boys reading/mentoring programs that have connections to literacy and art activities.

## **Foundation for Educational Excellence District 300 Innovation Grant Project Evaluation**

Title of Innovation: Realia, Experience It

Submitted by: Deborah Kaczar

School: Gary D. Wright Elementary

Grade level(s) served by this innovation: PreK-5

### **Brief Description of the project:**

To create student learning centers that are engaging, standards-based, appeal to all learning styles, are cross-curricular and cross-cultural.

Realia will be used to grab student's attention, to inspire curiosity, further reading and/ or research in the library media center and beyond.

What is Realia: Artifacts or objects such as fossils, rock specimens, and insects that are commonly found in the environment or world. They are three-dimensional items to stimulate discovery and curiosity. It is a term used primarily in the field of library science to refer to naturally occurring objects such as artifacts, objects, and specimens related to the real world.

<http://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/realia/24673>

### **How was the effectiveness of the innovation measured?**

The evaluation process included observation of students experiencing the realia, the determination of their interest and engagement with the items, and the specific analysis of student requests to check out books on the related subjects of the realia. Statistics were reviewed on the circulation of books related to the realia.

### **What were the results of that measurement?**

In summation, the items that were more hands on, visually and physically engaging were more successful in engaging students, and sparking the interest of students. The foreign money, dolls, figures/statues were not items that increased student interest in checking out related books. The digital microscope and slides were the biggest hit with students, and was very engaging. Additionally, the fossils and rocks, were items which were successful in engaging students and supported curricular units. The animal and human x-rays also were a success, Teacher interest in utilizing these resources were higher as well.

There was much more success in the program when I was able to bring students into the library during media time, introduce the items, and let them get actively engage with the realia and look in the books. When the items were just on the shelves, and students only get fifteen minutes a week to come in and check out books, there was little time to engage with the items.

The use of real objects brings meaning in which no photograph or illustration, or words can. Being able to see the actual size, and structure of items improved understanding and connection to the item.

Circulation statistics of related print resources follow the above comments as well.

### **Please identify any part of the innovation that you would modify in the future?**

To speed up the delivery, in the future, I would try to buy all items from one vendor. I did price shopping, and ordered from multiple vendors which slowed up the process of receiving the items. Additionally, I have learned that I need to follow up multiple times with the principal,

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secretaries, and purchasing department to move the process along. It took a whole semester to get the items ordered and received.

Not only would I present the items during media class and have students at centers, but I would invite teachers to participate in hands on activities as well. That way they too are engaged, and will better utilize the resources available to them to support their teaching and student learning.

I would highly recommend the addition of a digital microscope and slides for every elementary school. Teachers would be able to project on Smartboards, as well as student use for discovery and research. This would support Next Generation Science Standards as well.

### **Does this innovation hold possibilities for other subject areas and/or grade levels?**

Realia holds possibilities for all subjects and grade levels. The possibilities are endless. The library media center is a hub of the school and of student learning and engagement. As we do a digital shift, and as library and media centers evolve, the shift is for more hands on, visual appealing, maker spaces, research, etc., and realia supports this for all learners. As students have more screen time, the opportunities are there for library media centers to have these engaging centers with realia available in the library, and for classroom checkout to support curriculum. A media specialist, in collaboration with teachers, if funds were available, would be able to acquire the realia to support teaching and learning. A microscope slide of an insect wing, does so much more for student engagement and learning and understanding then text on a page or screen.

### **Additional comments?**

I would like to thank the D300 Foundation for the wonderful opportunities for our students which are supported by these grants. Please know that the opportunities that you offer, through these grants, are wonderful and engaging learning experiences for all. I would like to see this opportunity available for not only this grant winning school, but for all schools across our district, and for all learners in the district. Thank you.

## **Foundation for Educational Excellence District 300 Innovation Grant Project Evaluation**

Title of Innovation: Lego Learning

Submitted by: Michelle Grossmayer, Jamie Soprych and Jessica Weir

School: Lincoln Prairie Elementary School

Grade level(s) served by this innovation: 5<sup>th</sup> grade

### **Brief Description of the project:**

Lego building blocks were used as a hands on tool for math, social studies, and reading. It was to support kinesthetic learning in the classroom.

### **How was the effectiveness of the innovation measured?**

Measurements were taken using student surveys, student reflections, and pre and post tests.

### **What were the results of that measurement?**

For Social Studies: Students were asked to write a narrative as if they were an immigrant traveling through Ellis Island. Initial essays were vague with little to no detail and only using an online simulation and read alouds as their resources. Students then took the legos to build the different buildings and stops during the immigration process. They then walked through the Lego built Ellis Island and were asked to record what happened during that time. The essay scores improved by 67%. Students also expressed that walking through Lego Ellis Island gave them many more ideas for their essays. The biggest area of improvement was in expanding ideas.

We have also used the Legos to teach the 3 branches of government. The students were struggling to understand the different forms of government in our world. To help them gain a clearer picture of the forms of government, we had the students break into small groups, then each group was given a single form of government to evaluate. Once they felt that they had a stronger level of understanding the small groups would then use the legos to build a representation of their government. Students finally used these visual representations to present their government to the class. After the assessment on types of government, students reflected that using the legos as a visual representation helped them to understand how different governments worked, as well as to see the similarities. Every student achieved a 3 or 4 on their assessment.

For Math: Legos were used to teach fraction concepts, more specifically equivalent fractions and changing improper to mixed fractions as well as some basic addition of fractions concepts. Pre test results on these topics showed the class at approximately 18% meeting the expectation. After the first quiz that number rose to 70% and after the unit test, 76%. We have also used the Legos for decimal concepts and algebra.

**Please identify any part of the innovation that you would modify in the future?** At this time, the only modification I would make is that we continue to find new ideas in using the Legos in our teaching. Of course having different types of sets, including wheels or the robotic sets would also be great to have!

**Does this innovation hold possibilities for other subject areas and/or grade levels?** This innovation absolutely can be used across many grade levels and subject areas. In fact, we are doing a science lab to explain deposition using them this week.

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Title of Innovation: Using Technology to Model Scientific Phenomena

Submitted by: Robb Carlson

School: Dundee-Crown High School

Grade level(s) served by this innovation:

**Brief Description of the project:** Cart fan was purchased to calculate angular Force on a frictionless track

**How was the effectiveness of the innovation measured?** It allowed for hands on lab individualized for lab groups (changing angle and changing fan strength) as opposed to previous years where we used computer simulations or worksheets. Students were able to “play” with the cart fan and see immediately what the results were.

**What were the results of that measurement?** Every student got to do a customized lab and all obtained correct results. Lab results were 95% successful, 4% unsuccessful, 1% uncompleted.

**Please identify any part of the innovation that you would modify in the future?** None

**Does this innovation hold possibilities for other subject areas and/or grade levels?**

Yes. We bought it for AP Physics but we are able use it for all physics classes later in this school year.

**Additional comments?** I very much appreciate your generosity. It really changed our Force Unit for the better.

## **Foundation for Educational Excellence District 300 Innovation Grant Project Evaluation**

Title of Innovation: Learning through Legos

Submitted by: Bolding/Douglas

School: WCS

Grade level(s) served by this innovation: 8<sup>th</sup>

**Brief Description of the project:** Use of the Lego product for industrialization unit and for atomic bonding.

*SS-* Use an assembly line process to simulate the working conditions and process of creating an end-product. This is during the Henry Ford time era.

*Science* – Create chemical formulas through various bonding scenarios.

### **How was the effectiveness of the innovation measured?**

*SS* – Measurement was taken through group work. There were two groups of assembly line “workers.” The workers were to replicate the model. The purchased Legos did not work. When the grant was initially accepted, Legos sold buckets of one color and one size; when the Legos were actually purchased, months later, the Lego sets were in multiple colors and eight sizes. It was too difficult for students to replicate the model because of the lack of continuity in size and color.

*Science* – Measurement occurred through group work (each student creating a bonded compound). The legos purchased were not the ones originally requested and the ones received did not work for this lesson. I had to use large wooded beads of various colors and drill holes into them instead. They shared with their group research completed on their i-Pad and showed them the atomic structure they made. They then showed the teacher the final products and turned in their research.

### **What were the results of that measurement?**

*SS* – Students had an easy time understanding the demands placed on assembly line workers. If students slowed down, the “boss” (me) would fire workers. We debriefed after 20 minutes of “work” and factory noise, and little light. Students stated the “boss” stressed them out yelling demands, the noise bothered them and caused them to lose concentration, slow workers caused the next person to assemble twice as fast and make up for productivity. They had a TEL-Con reflection due the next day.

*Science* – Students still had difficulty understanding how and why atoms bond in the way they do. Chemistry is still such an abstract concept that it is difficult to comprehend as a 13/14 year old.

### **Please identify any part of the innovation that you would modify in the future?**

*SS* – I am going to try to use the Legos next year by size rather than by size and color. Replicating the model by solely using sizes will make the activity run smoother.

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*Science* – I am going to try using the Legos next year with the Law of Conservation of Matter/Mass to see if that will work. I have seen it used before with a pan balance scale but we don't own any of those. I am hoping to fit it in this year with earthquake proof structures.

### **Does this innovation hold possibilities for other subject areas and/or grade levels?**

SS – The Legos could be used in 6<sup>th</sup> grade world history to build a castle, 7<sup>th</sup> grade US history to illustrate a printing press (with ink pad), high school to illustrate physics concepts, elementary school to teach fractions.

*Science* – I could see this being used in life science with punnett squares or modeling cells.

### **Additional comments?**

The social studies students loved the hands-on activity regardless of teacher frustration with the “winging” it with the incorrect blocks. Many have asked if we can re-do the activity to work the bugs out. After doing the activity this year with the blocks, next year, I can also have “injured” workers to illustrate the impact an injury has on production.

Thank you for the grant!

Lynda

## **Foundation for Educational Excellence District 300 Innovation Grant Project Evaluation**

Title of Innovation: Team Building Service Learning Picnic Tables  
School: Oak Ridge School  
Submitted by: Jessica Hood, MSW  
Grade level(s) served by this innovation: 9-12

### **Brief Description of the project:**

Students worked together to build picnic tables to donate to the community.

### **How was the effectiveness of the innovation measured?**

The effectiveness of this innovation was measured by student surveys, which were taken after the project was complete.

### **What were the results of that measurement?**

Students replied that they really enjoyed working together for the community. They really liked the idea of building something that was going to be placed in schools and parks and used by kids and families. They identified various struggles that they found when participating in a complicated project with their peers. They also stated that they found it gratifying to help others.

### **Please identify any part of the innovation that you would modify in the future?**

I would probably ask the adults in our building to participate more in helping to build the tables. The directions for the table kits were more complicated than anticipated, which led to one or two crooked tables that had to be redone.

### **Does this innovation hold possibilities for other subject areas and/or grade levels?**

This is probably a project that should only be done with middle school and high school students. It can be used in various subject areas, however.

### **Additional comments?**

Thank you for helping us with this project. It was a lot of fun and it was great to see our students working together for a good cause. :)