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Discovering Community
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Post-Institute Reflection

As an educator for over 19 years, I am always searching out opportunities to enrich my life and subsequently the lives of my students. "Discovering Community" was inspiring and thought provoking as I began to learn how to incorporate multi-media techniques into my curriculum and bridge the gap between the community and the classroom. I had no previous knowledge of any of the multi-media techniques that were introduced during the week, and the time I spent experimenting with digital video recording was very exciting.

The philosophy behind education for sustainability, service learning, place-based education and stewardship were not new concepts for me. I have integrated many parts of these philosophies over the years, but not necessarily defined by the terminology. However, the depth and knowledge on each of the topics that all presenters shared during the week inspired me to really delve more deeply into community and school partnerships. It was refreshing for me particularly at the end of a school year, to envision bringing my classroom into the community and community into the classroom. My creative side kept adding to a spontaneous list of ideas for both the present and future. A challenge can be sizing down a project to a manageable size when energy and inspiration abound.

What impressed me about the entire week was the cohesiveness of our group of educators which is really a reflection of the cohesiveness of the course. It was evident the thoughtfulness and thoroughness that Gregory Sharrow provided through his groundwork for this class. As an educator I can deeply appreciate when opportunities for meaningful experiences are provided for me. The sharing of the culmination of our projects at the end of the week was one of the highlights for me. I also appreciated the experiences of going into the community to interview local businesses; when the groups reported back I had a deeper appreciation for how much businesses support our community.

The information from this course has inspired me to shift the focus on the course I teach for students with learning disabilities. In my unit plan, I focused on "Breaking Ground: Food On Our Table" which will become the focal point of the course. I will then integrate this theme when I teach the students Anatomy and Physiology. I also envision cooking with local ingredients and the influence of food in relationship to the home, community and environment. It is often difficult to balance the energy needed to implement new ideas into the curriculum and my hope is that the resources will support my vision.