

Discovering P.L.A.C.E

Highlights of place-based education projects in our community

Teaching without walls: Beecher High School teacher links youth with their community

Dr. Don Hammond found a creative way to get around the budget cuts hitting schools statewide: The Beecher High School teacher started writing grants.

Hammond was awarded more than \$2,000 by the Discovering PLACE hub of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, which was used to

purchase bird and insect field guides, butterfly houses, birdseed, feeders, waders and science instruments to use along a nature trail created by Hammond and his students. Funds from the grant were also used to visit Flint's Stockton Center -- where students helped relocate seven different types of flowers -- as well as for soil and brick pavers used along a portion of the trail.

Even with snow on the ground, students headed outdoors to set out birdseed along the trail.

"I think it makes us more environmentally conscious," said Tyiesha, a junior at Beecher High School involved with the project. "We'll be attracting more wildlife and see more variety of species. Some people don't get to see a lot of [wildlife]."

"Place-based education creates rigor by making schoolwork relevant."

- Dr. Don Hammond, BHS teacher



Dr. Don Hammond and students with outdoor classroom materials, funded by a grant from Discovering PLACE



Students feed birds near the school's trailhead

Approximately 40 students in Hammond's environmental science and oceanography classes, along with the Environmental Club Hammond started, helped plan the project. They started by choosing plant species to attract butterflies along the trail. Tyiesha, who plans to study culinary arts and marine biology, found herself discussing species with her grandfather outside of school. *(continued on back)*

"We do a lot for our community and the community loves us back."

- Kevionte, BHS senior

Discovering PLACE is a resource to help Flint-area urban schools create hands-on curriculum projects to connect youth with their communities. Discovering PLACE offers mini-grants, teacher resources and a network of support for educators to establish these projects. One of eight hubs in the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, Discovering PLACE operates through the University Outreach department at the University of Michigan-Flint.





Dr. Don Hammond's class works to remove invasive plant species, Phragmites, from the banks of a nearby pond

Once plants were chosen, students mapped out their locations, then pulled on gloves to start clearing out an invasive plant species and work along the trail. The effort seemed to inspire the community, said Kevionte, a Beecher High School senior. "The Dailey Elementary kids come over and see how hard we work, and they want to help too," he said. "We do a lot for our community and the community loves us back."

Because of Hammond's time invested in writing grants and his involvement in the project, students see him as an example of a teacher who cares. Tyiesha said she thinks of him as a second father.

Students believe working and learning together outside the classroom has helped them feel connected not only to their community, but to each other, and motivates students to pay attention.

"...other schools look at Beecher as a violent community, but if they see what we do, it might influence more students to come to Beecher."

- Dantairous, BHS sophomore

Hammond said place-based education creates rigor by making schoolwork relevant. The project

is connecting students with positive elements of their community, hands-on lessons in scientific principles as well as analysis of how science and society have interacted, from historical, political, economic and social perspectives.

For example, students are creating a hospitable environment for butterflies, whose habitats have been affected by deforestation.

The trail, the butterflies it protects and the chance for the community to glimpse the winged creatures has become sort of a symbol for all that's positive in Beecher.

"I believe other schools look at Beecher as a violent community," said Dantairous, a sophomore at the school. "But if they see what we do, it might influence more students to come to Beecher."



Removing invasive plant species requires a lot of persistence and dedication

Discovering PLACE grant

Discovering PLACE awarded Dr. Don Hammond more than \$2,000 which was used to purchase bird and insect field guides, butterfly houses, birdseed, feeders, waders and science instruments to use along the Beecher High School nature trail created by Hammond and his students. Funds from the grant were also used to visit Flint's Stockton Center -- where students helped relocate seven different types of flowers -- as well as for soil and brick pavers used along a portion of the Beecher High School trail.

Discovering PLACE

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- Building Bridges to the 21st Century
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- Beecher faculty and staff:
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