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Into the Wilderness with Lewis and Clark: An Appalachian Enrichment Summer Camp

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Abstract

This article describes a social studies summer enrichment camp for rising seventh graders focused on the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Corps of Discovery. The summer camp, which took place in southeastern Ohio, attempted to ameliorate the effects of rural poverty in Appalachian communities. Using a *funds of knowledge* approach (Cruz, Selby, & Durham, 2018) the authors examined the question: how did an Appalachian community create a four day summer enrichment experience for students entering seventh grade by identifying the best practice for enrichment camps in rural areas experiencing poverty? The authors employed open and axial coding to analyze the data using constant comparison and grounded theory (Warner, 2015; Martin, 2011) and triangulated the data using the reflections found in teacher and student journals to ascertain sub-assertions, assertions, and trends. Teachers' and students' responses about their history camp experience are reported in the Findings of this article and implications for future programming are provided.

Key Words: Appalachia, enrichment, rural poverty, summer camp

Teachers, community members, and a consultant gathered to create a one-week summer enrichment camp based on the Lewis and Clark trip with the Corps of Discovery for forty-seven sixth grade students. The teachers created a series of classes to fill four days on the theme, and they linked students to community volunteers with wilderness skills. The enrichment option enhanced the social studies knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions of middle school students at a summer camp in southeastern Ohio. To combat the limited perspectives and experiences of the region, teachers and community members endeavored to create enriching experiences that would help students to understand more about the events they read about in textbooks. Students living with poverty in rural areas interact with social studies topics in ways that are both relevant and significant to them locally and to educators nationally. These direct experiences seek to ameliorate some of the effect of rural poverty in helping students to learn about people and places in American history. In this article the authors examine the question: how did an Appalachian community create a weeklong summer enrichment experience for students entering seventh grade by identifying the best practice for enrichment camps in rural areas experiencing poverty?

Relevant to this study the rural community has been theorized with a funds of

knowledge approach. Funds of knowledge provides a theoretical framework for this study of community and place research (Cruz, Selby, & Durham, 2018; Johnson, Baker, & Bruer, 2007). Rural traditions provide an innovation practice from farm based creative problem solving to other situations in agriculturally based communities (Corbett, 2013). The funds of knowledge approach includes a deep knowledge of natural environment (Borgerding, 2017; White, 2015; Keis, 2006).

Context

Rural Poverty

One major factor that impacts the population is the shadow of rural poverty. Rural poverty is present in epidemic proportions in many Appalachian communities. Panos (2017) articulates that White-majority, rural, Midwestern elementary classrooms also contain many students with very limited means. These students live with poverty and hunger but are hidden in plain view since they are not clustered in large urban areas. The shadow of poverty comes at a cost to education and denies students the skills they need for the future. Tine (2014) compared four variables of high and low income and rural and urban locations. Both the low-income groups had lowed visual and spatial working memory abilities; however, while urban poverty produce symmetrical visual and spatial working memory deficits, rural poverty produced asymmetrical visual and spatial work memory deficits resulting in more extreme visuospatial working memory deficits than verbal working memory deficits. Different kinds of poverty produced different working memory skills. Poverty also masks the abilities of the population to perform at their greatest potential. Rural learners are under identified for opportunities in gifted and talented programs, and because of this they may find themselves in an asynchronous achievement commensurate with their abilities (Azano, Callahan, Brodersen, & Caughey, 2017). Low income students are invisible if not tabulated by free and reduced lunch metrics. Rural poverty also limits opportunities when communities with limited tax revenues do not have budgets that provide enrichment opportunities. Some rural communities are known as areas were a disproportional number of impoverished or near impoverished people cluster because of mobile poverty (Foulkes & Newbold, 2008). The poor migrate to these areas, therefore reinforcing concentrations of destitute people. The conditions for creating poverty destinations transform stable communities to transient zones. With greater numbers of students in want, social and educational services have a difficult time in meeting community needs.

Culture and Curriculum

Much has been written about the Appalachian region. The students who live in Appalachia find multiple advantages in accentuating their mountain homes. From the middle of the twentieth century forward youth have documented their community through a

variety of formats. Rural youth create media documentaries about their community (Pyles, 2016). Most of these projects are celebratory in nature reflecting local history, people, and culture. Appalachian adolescents in high school English positioned themselves and their communities for political and social purposes (Slocum, 2014). Moreover, a sustained local culture curriculum helps provide roots for the students. Students learn about topics that are meaningful and connect them to pedagogical strategies that prepare them for future life as a citizen. However, there are also obstacles that impede their future progress. For example, these students encounter difficulty with both assimilation and acceptance in higher education due to stigmatizing rural dialects that evoke prejudice and stereotypes (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2016). Just getting to higher education is not enough to get them to matriculate. However, overcoming the obstacles of Appalachia is more than just an accent.

Enrichment

Social studies enrichment occurs in a variety of formats to help students develop additional knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions. Social studies enrichment occurs when the traditional school day does not provide enough opportunity for civic learning. In a rural, high poverty, elementary location teachers worked to overcome discrimination based on gender, immigration, or race (San Antonio, 2018). Social studies enrichment may occur over the summer or through after school extra-curricular programs. These opportunities may provide experiences for students they could not receive in the regular classroom. These opportunities might also include travel as a broadening experience.

In addition, students benefited from travel to encounter places they had only imagined from print and video. Students may have out-of-school learning experiences that provide depth and enrichment through field trip, reenactment, field experiences, and sharing information (Morris, 2008). Students involved in a study abroad program learned at architectural sites, works of art, and historic sites. Broadening experiences come from a variety of places including travel that encourages students to broaden their perspectives. These experiences help students develop new interests, talents, and perspectives. As a result of the program the students learned more about global citizenship education (Newstreet & Rackard, 2018). Students gather perspectives developed by engaging with global issues and exploring ideas of citizenship with a world view. Students learned to value a global society that enriched their comprehension through multiple disciplines. Students learning a global perspective also helps them look at human rights.

As part of an enriching curriculum students explore cultural sensitivity. They learn to be more understanding and culturally aware. They also learn from an interdisciplinary social justice curriculum that values human rights and develops a culture of understanding (Stromsland, Lott- Jones, & Sok, 2016). Students have multiple experiences with people and places through art, community, culture, dance, economics, food and food preparation, geography, history, and literature. They become effective participants in solving ethical, personal, and social problems in a democratic society. Students learn to live in multi-

cultural environments where they become cooperative and independent problem solvers in a complex world (Helms & Ankenbauer, 2009). The multicultural environment provided another kind of enrichment for the students. From this, they learned about different places and the culture connected with the people who lived in that place. This helped them cultivate a research strategy by formulating questions about events, people, and processes to create authenticity and depths in their curriculum (Virtue, Buchanan, Vogler, 2012). Students examined people in context with place. They also learned about people in their culture. From creating their own questions and determining their own research strategy, students become autonomous learners.

It is necessary to learn to be autodidactic learners in creating their own inquiry questions and strategies. Student inquiry projects reflect their interests in topics to become more elaborate and attract publicity. Students engage in out-of-school social studies experiences to develop understanding while they interpret people from a variety of social classes engaged in seasonal activities (Morris, 2008). They encounter social studies enrichment by working with historical content at a living history museum. Working with a peer group and mentors placed the out-of-school-time learning of social studies within a community of learners. Through an extra-curricular activity, students collect, preserve, and disseminate personal stories from the community in their archive (Abbott & Grayson, 2011). Students polish their interview skills to construct personal narratives, but they also locate and interpret documents. The collaboration preserves the stories of local citizens through the construction of their archive. Students enrich their social studies experiences through out-of-school-time learning activities.

Enrichment in this case is relevant in that the students develop perspectives they would not have had without an extra-curricular day camp event. Problem solving day to day and civic issues in the context of the group and their community remained important. Student learning by themselves, with others, and with mentors occurred in the extra-curricular format.

Procedure

Lewis and Clark Camp is an enrichment and youth development opportunity funded through Twenty-first Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) funding. Five of the seven schools have Twenty-First Century Community Learning Center grants, and the two middle schools that did not have afterschool programs were funded at the camp by the Educational Service Center general funds to foster enrichment and youth development locally. The Lewis and Clark camp could be a springboard for future projects that could be researched, developed, and assembled during the Twenty-First Century Community Learning Center programs after school time. During afterschool time in the regular school year, students could explore Lewis and Clark through opportunities to write and direct drama regarding the journey of the Corps, cook meals similar to those the Corps members

ate, assemble historic clothing representative of the time periods, or skin an animal during hunting season.

The camp coordinators prepared for the event by asking for teacher volunteers and inviting community members with outdoor skills to work with them. The sixteen member staff (half male and half female) identified themselves as Caucasian with 18.4 years of teaching experience. Seven teachers had a bachelor's degree, eight teachers had a master degree or more, and one member of the staff was a college student. Six of the leaders were pre-1800 re-enactors. They combined their skills and knowledge to collaborate as an instructional staff for a week during their summer vacation. This commitment to ameliorating the effect of poverty in their community is a valiant experiment in educational capacity and development.

The camp coordinators had each school in the three counties they serve send eight students each. Forty-five of the students from schools in three counties identified themselves as Caucasian and two identified themselves as biracial. The students arrived at the site by bus, and each morning there was an introduction to the camp before starting for one half hour. There was lunch in the middle of the day and each afternoon prior to closing camp there was a debriefing and journaling for fifteen minutes prior to departing. This provided a constant framework that provided stability for the students in the camp, and once the stable armature was created then the individual classes provided excitement and variability each day.

The camp directors created a schedule showing the classes and how their staff would help with each class. Students formed groups of about a dozen people and went to a different station for thirty minutes each. On the first day they learned about skins and skulls, made journals, engaged in plant identification, drilled in archery, and practiced land navigation. On the second day students learned to start a fire, demonstrated trapping, discussed fur trade with sample skins, engaged in tomahawk throwing, and made a possible bag. On the third day the students identified trees, made pottery, recognized medicinal plants, finished their possible bag and worked on a drop spindle, and spent more time throwing tomahawks. On the last day students finished their pottery, learned to slack line, practiced archery, and worked with a drop spindle.

Findings

Students (s) and teachers (t) created daily journals that were anonymous and wrote public reflections at the end of the experience. Open and axial coding was used to analyze the data using constant comparison and grounded theory (Warner, 2015; Martin, 2011). The data were triangulated between the four sources (Maguth, 2012). The sub-assertions from the teachers resulted in personal development, working together, and friendships. The assertions from the students resulted in xenophobia, risk taking, and friendship (Malloy, Tracy, Scales, Menickelli, & Scales, 2020). This resulted in themes of social studies knowledge being discussed as content, skills, values, and dispositions (Aktan, 2016).

Discrepant cases confounded the trends and are reported as interesting point to possibly explore in the future with additional programming (Waite, 2011).

Students said that they learned content knowledge from the experience, and multiple students recounted facts and information they learned during the camp. This is not surprising because of the emphasis placed on content knowledge by secondary teachers (Maguth & Yang, 2019). One student observed that, “I learned about the types of things they trade” (s-45). The information about trade was an important economic concept and a primary purpose of Lewis and Clark being sent west to meet with the Indians. Teachers recognize that they impart a lot of content information to their students. A teacher confirmed the tide of content knowledge as he or she said, “All of the presenters [were] very very [sic] knowledgeable and provided the students with a lot of information” (t-5). The definition of a good instructor was to impart huge doses of information to students. Another way to measure the experience was through the amount of experiences that resulted in skills attainment (Brugar & Whitlock, 2018). One student commented about the skills they learned, “You can survive even if you have no shelter in the woods, and you can make medicine from things in the woods” (s-13). The student was impressed by the skills that could keep a person alive on the frontier. This was also important for teachers who recognized skills to be important but noticed that the emphasis on skills was equated to amusement not knowledge. A teacher confirmed this when he or she said, “Students seemed to enjoy each activity. Archery, tomahawk throwing, and plant identification were what I heard students discussing the most” (t-4). It is significant that students continued to talk about these activities throughout the week. Students mentioned a value that they took away from the Lewis and Clark camp that shaped their dispositions (Celikkaya & Filoglu, 2014; Misco & Shiveley, 2010). Furthermore, a student learned about the values that made the Corps of Discovery successful including, “That it took teamwork to do it” (s-41). The Corps of Discovery could not just say that they valued cooperation, they must live it for the duration of the trip. It tells citizens today what shrewd judges of character Lewis and Clark were to select men who would work well together for the entire trip. Teachers reported about students when they said, “Many realized that there was more to life than that provided by cell phones” (t-3). Teachers expressed their values and dispositions about the experience as a learning endeavor and how their students could also learn as a group. The students and teachers concurred when they observed that the camp helped them to learn content knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions.

Figure 1 shows the themes of content, skills, values, and dispositions gathered from both teacher sub assertions and student assertions. These sub assertions and assertions were triangulated to illustrate the themes. These themes emerged from student and teacher daily journals and student and teacher concluding reflections.

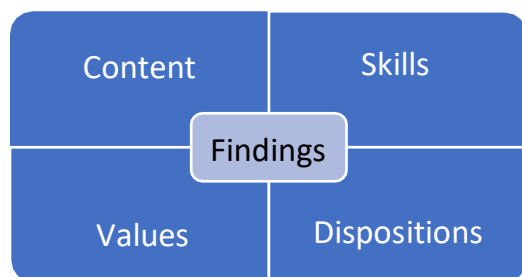
Teacher Thoughts

Smith (2016) described how learning history also helps elementary and middle school students as they develop both personally and socially. Teachers believed that this experience created personal development. They defined this through the idea of developing character.

Students involved in the camp were developing skills that had the additional benefit of honing their character. Perseverance, the reward of challenging oneself with something new, risking failure, enjoying success, meeting and interacting with diverse people, sharing a common goal; all of these are experiences that are essential in personal development. The camp helped students in their journey to become stronger people” (Emily).

Personal development occurred when students encountered new information situations.

Figure 1.
Theme



Berson and Berson (2019) describe cooperation as collaboration in working with the school and the community. The teachers recognized that one of the most challenging parts of the experience was working with other people. “This camp took a historical event and used the event to get kids outside learning and working together. Students learned to problem solve and work with people they didn’t know which is sometimes hard to achieve in a classroom setting” (Mike). Even though the students were from the same ethnic, social, and economic groups just being geographically apart made them outsiders.

Uztemur, Dinc, and Acun (2019) found that students developed friendships when they engaged in historical activities and that spilled into other positive academic relationships and behaviors. The teachers believed that the students changed from seeing their peers as others to seeing them as associates. “It was wonderful to see how well the students from all over southeastern Ohio cooperated and enjoyed being in groups together” (Tracey). Another teacher expressed the same sentiment in this phraseology, “They [students] also got to mingle and make new friends from other schools” (Mike). The teachers believed the students had transitioned from associates into developing friendships through the experience. Teachers believed that students overcame the sense of other and

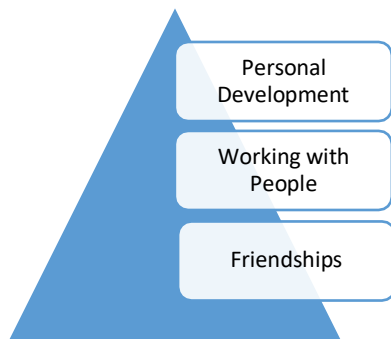
succeeded in personal development. Finally, the teachers accepted that through this experience students identified personal development, working with other people, and developed friendships.

Figure 2 displays the sub-assertions developed from teacher daily journals and concluding reflections. The figure illustrates the sub assertions of student personal development, working with other people and developing friendships. These sub-assertions inform the student data in the assertions.

Student Comments

Student comments were more forceful than the teacher comments and typically for the age focused on relationships. The student comments covered a spectrum from xenophobic to risk-taking to friendship, and the most extreme comments focused on students from geographically dispersed locations. “I learned that some people from other schools aren’t as bad as we think they are” (Nickalas). The student equated otherness with difference, as alien, or dangerous. Fortunately, the student seems to have overcome this initial xenophobia. McCorkle (2018) determined that angst and fear based situations were not good for any students and promoting acceptance was important.

Figure 2.
Teacher Beliefs



The learner who takes an active role in their education incurs some element of risk-taking in the process. Karademir and Akgul (2019) found that students who think of themselves as successful in social studies then take more academic risks in that area. Students in the camp identified this risk-taking aspect when they described their experiences. “This camp was important for my future because it has taught how not to be afraid to try new things.” (Cody). For the students becoming open to try new things was a positive and pleasant experience.

In addition to new experiences the students found pleasure at meeting new people

and developing friendships (Cepni & Öner, 2015). “I was able to make new friendships. Learning new things and learning how to work with others is a part of life” (Jordan). Another student echoed the same sentiment when he said, “I learned that I don’t always have to have a set friend group. On the first day I had my friend group, but it changed after I met people. As the week went on my friends got bigger. At the end of the week I was friends with a lot of different people. I’m still friends with them today” (Caleb). The students saw this experience as an important way to make new friendships and that this type of interaction might have future application to their lives. Moving on a continuum from fear to openness, the students saw the value of the experience as encountering others. Students will encounter new experiences, places, and people for the rest of their lives; moreover, the experience of overcoming apprehension of things foreign or new is an important skill.

Figure 3 illustrates the assertions derived from the student comments found in the daily journals and the end of the experience reflections. The assertions describe the xenophobia, risk taking, and friendship of the camp. The assertions from the sub assertions supported the themes.

Discrepant Cases: Pitfalls and Solutions

Discrepant cases are the interesting aberrations of working with a population. While most responses fit neatly into one category or another these are the one or two people who dissent, want something different or go a different direction. These discrepant cases were not looked for in the research question or anticipated in the literature review, but these discrepant cases are included to see that outliers provided responses that furnish important questions for future programing. The five serendipitous discrepant cases point to anachronistic, drama, duration, inquiry, or multiple perspectives (see Figure 4).

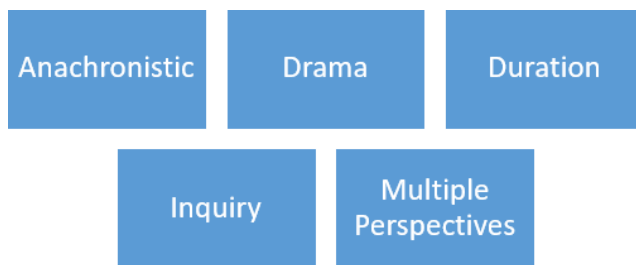
Figure 3.
Student Beliefs



There was little student or teacher indication that social studies inquiry took place, and it would seem as if the activities would naturally encourage question formation. Obviously, the staff placed the Lewis and Clark trip in a disciplinary context. There was

one passing reference in an evaluation to using the journals of Lewis and Clark by a teacher, but no indication that students used the journals to discover new information. There were no mentions of students sharing information or taking action in the community which would lead the staff to believe that an Inquiry Arc as described in the NCSS (2013) C3 Framework had not been an important part of the experience for the camp. However, these oversights could be easily remedied in the future Lewis and Clark camps with minimal restructuring such as recording questions to investigate in the journal or creating a project to share information with the greater community after the camp about what the students learned. Students could be given passages of the Lewis and Clark journals to act out or to compare with other passages from journals from other explorers.

Figure 4.
Discrepant Cases



Furthermore, drama may hold the key to the next iteration of the camp. As the camp moves from explanation to investigation, staff and students could co-construct a dramatic adventure of being part of the camp as it prepares to move down the river. One teacher commented that they could, “Reenact some of the moments or events as described in the journals; [in addition to] skits such as portaging and when the group encountered the bear” (t-6). More of the staff could adopt historical clothing and role-play a persona at a traders’ camp where Lewis and Clark stop and rest before returning to St. Louis. The students and staff play the role of traders who swap stories and skills of life on the frontier with the staff and other students who are part of the Corps of Discovery. Across four days they must find out how America has changed while they were gone and what the explorers have learned from their journey.

Some students wanted anachronistic experiences added to the camp such as football or zip lining. Students said that they wanted to “add football” (s-34) to the experience or “put in fishing, canoeing, and zip lining” (s-24). Less anathema to the purist but still a stretch for most of the trip would be including “learning to kayak” (s-19). While all of these are fun adventures for pre-teens these would distract from the authenticity of the experience recreated by the Corps of Discovery. If games were to be introduced it should be a Native American game that Lewis and Clark witnessed such as lacrosse, games they brought with them such as, quoits or prisoner’s base, and if boating were to be introduced it should be canoeing since the men spent more time in canoes than kayaking. Furthermore, the anachronism of an aluminum canoe is not accurate to the time or place. Does the experience

of canoeing overcome the inaccuracy of what the students are taught by using modern materials? Does the inaccuracy make the experience less real for the students? Does the experience itself give more value than just hearing that Lewis and Clark canoed? Staff members need to carefully consider how they can best help their students reconstruct the world of Lewis and Clark and how that can be best interpreted.

Including multiple perspectives in the exploration of the time period was introduced when a teacher suggested adding, “some American Indian presenters” (t-6). Including Native people next year is a very sound idea that would greatly enhance this experience. Adding the perspective of people who were not completely enchanted by their new neighbors from down river could help the students view events differently. The arrival of the United States on their doorstep did not have universal benefits for Native peoples even if some of them benefited in the short run with enhanced trade opportunities. Perhaps a two-day rotation of Lewis and Clark from the perspective of the Corps of Discovery one day followed by the perspective of the tribes they met the following day would be interesting for both the students and the teachers.

Many of the students enjoy the experience so much that they called for it to be both a “longer camp and overnight” (s-44), but the additional cost for feeding the students two more meals per day would not significantly enhance the academic or social/emotional outcomes of the experience. A second meal could be provided on the last evening as a sendoff celebration with “music [and] dancing from that time period” (t-3) as the traders and the Corps of Discovery get ready to depart. Another option would be to turn the last evening into a community showcase where students display and discuss what they have learned from the experience and why it is important for society in the twenty-first century. Perhaps it should just be noted that in the minds of the students the program was a success, and they wanted more.

Conclusion

In the context of Appalachian regionalism, summer enrichment camps break down isolation and localism. Students meet new people from differing communities to find them to be similar and accessible. Meeting and working with new people was an important skill that adolescents enjoyed experiencing. This important skill has future implications as they leave their mountain homes for short or long durations. The abolition of the idea of stranger as enemy is important for future engagement in civil society.

In the context of rural poverty seeking and finding food security and getting another meal is an important part of the Appalachian experience. Rural poverty depressed the ability to get experiences working with others or to experience new content. The out-of-school time program confounded rural poverty for a few days one summer where students could learn new material, work with peers, and experience the environment. The summer camp format allowed students to have experiences that elevated their interests and attracted their attention

for new people, places, and events. The community is fortunate that services are available to meet the educational needs of students in counteracting the effects of rural poverty.

Rural poverty limited educational opportunities by the separation of distance and especially time between spaces. Social studies enrichment allows students to encounter a larger world than they can explore during the academic year. Social studies summer provides for additional out-of-school time beyond the school day to enrich the experiences of the student.

Appalachian social studies enrichment provided a pleasant summer space to learn content. The weeklong enrichment experience ameliorated some of the effects of rural poverty as students learned additional knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions.

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