

SIU Sustainability Council Project
Final Report

Project title: Sustainable CDL Preschool

Project I.D. #: 14SP107

Award date: April 22, 2014

Completion date: August 26, 2015

Funds used (if different from award amount): \$808.23 (The original award was \$1368.49. However, not all items were available.)

Brief write up of project/project experience (not to exceed 250 words):

The purpose of the grant was to provide a variety of sustainability education items that can be used to support and integrate all pillars of sustainability (economic, sociocultural, and environmental) into the SIU Child Development Laboratory preschool curriculum, professional development for classroom teachers, and pre-service teacher education program in the Early Childhood Education program. We have been able to introduce the items to children and teachers over the last year.

Best things learned/produced from project:

Personally, I have learned that pre-service teachers are quite excited about exploring new ideas and learning about not only sustainable education topics such as solar power, but they are also benefiting from learning about the grant writing and completion process. I think this is especially important for giving pre-service teachers ideas for locating funds for projects that are not a part of the mainstream or standardized curricula used in their schools. I have also learned that the best approach for introducing classroom teachers to the tenants of sustainability education is to offer small suggestions about how to use materials to promote sustainable thinking. For example, one of the items was a solar powered cash register. When it was given to the teachers, I was able point out the benefit of it being solar powered for reinforcing other learning experiences with solar energy afforded by the grant, but also that the cash register could be used to adapt some of the lesson plans they already implement (i.e., grocery store play) to have more of a sustainability focus. Instead of grocery store play with plastic food items in the classroom, the teachers can set up a pretend farmer's market outside, using the cash register to ring up play items made from natural outdoor items (i.e., use collected sticks and weeds as pretend food items instead of plastic food items).

How do you define sustainability?

I define sustainability as a means considering the persistent, long-term impact of our choices, the most sustainable choices have the most positive impact on the environment (including its people and economic ramifications) over time.

Has this changed over the course of your project? If so, how?

The complexity of creating a sustainable practice has been reinforced through this project. When I began the project, it was envisioned between myself and the then-director of CDL. Over the course of the project implementation, there have been multiple staff changes, policy changes, and even a temporary closing of the preschool. I have had to restart the professional development aspect of this project multiple times with a variety of people (who had a varying degree of interest in the project). While this was difficult and frustrating at times, the multiple reintroduction of the idea reinforces the need for persistence and oversight regarding the choices we make as educators.

What do you see as the next step for the project?

The materials afforded by this grant will continue to be introduced and re-introduced to CDL staff members, children, and new pre-service students. Over the next year, I will be working with a new staff at CDL. I hope to inspire them towards the development of sustainable curriculum. If I am successful at this, I hope they will be interested in seeking additional grant funds to further improve our teacher education program.

Optional: Do you have any suggestions for the SIU Sustainability Council to improve the Green Fund award process?

I was unaware when I applied for the grant that I would only be offered half of the funds up front and that my department would be required to supply the other half until the grant was completed. As our department has very little discretionary funding, this caused several delays (especially as we have three different department chairs in place since the grant was applied for and awarded). Clarity about this from the offset would have improved my planning.

Attach a minimum of five images – these will be used to promote interest in Sustainability Council projects. These can be photographs of the progress of the project, the completed project, or promotional materials.