

Interdisciplinary Projects

The JCPS Center for Environmental Education bases much of the educational support it provides on research indicating that interdisciplinary teaching provides relevance to learning. This relevance is expressed as engaging, motivating work with meaningful outcomes. Using the environment (or some aspect) as an integrating theme creates authentic, experiential learning situations at Blackacre, Beargrass Creek, Outdoor Classrooms, school campuses and the community at large.

Using the core content for assessment, core content guides, and curriculum maps, interdisciplinary units are specifically constructed to meet the needs of classroom teachers participating in Center for Environmental Education programs. These units are available for all JCPS teachers upon request.

In planning field studies or work at the school site the C.E.E. staff provides professional development to explore, plan, and implement interdisciplinary studies. The curriculum maps are used to identify points where there are strong interdisciplinary links. In identifying the links, clarification is made about how to use the core content in linked subject areas as teaching tools for the target instruction. Approximately 200 field studies are planned and implemented collaboratively with classroom teachers over the course of the year.

Each field study is a multi-disciplinary approach with the potential for interdisciplinary teaching. The academic needs of the students and teacher preference at the time of the field study determines the instructional approach. Examples of these types of projects are:

- Using social studies and science content as a vehicle for writing instruction
- How Have Kentuckians and Americans Changed Over the Past 200 Years?: An interdisciplinary unit set up to use the experiential learning at Blackacre as a springboard for learning through other discipline areas back in the classroom.
- Change Over Time: A thematic approach to looking at historical, geologic, and personal change.
- Using Visual Arts (Inspired by Nature) as the Integrating Context of the Curriculum: A ten day unit based at Blackacre
- Urban Watershed Studies: Applying observation and scientific study to social studies (how people use and manage land, etc.)
- Long term stream studies using math, science, reading, and writing as integrating disciplines

Interdisciplinary units are an area of curriculum development that correlate well with the experiential, hands-on nature of environmental education. The staff of the Center for Environmental Education seeks opportunities to assist teachers in applying this method

to classroom learning through professional development, collaboration in planning, and implementation at Blackacre, community sites, or the school campus.