



Raptors for Rodents

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We were literally seeing mice run across our floors during our morning meetings. Custodians were spending valuable time trying to trap and remove the endless stream of field mice besieging our school from the open landscape surrounding the building. This was one of those projects that had an “in the moment” purpose which set up the kind of authentic product that we project based teachers are always seeking. After researching the local predators of rodents and carefully considering the impact each might have on the school environment, students decided that owls would be the safest and most effective choice for natural reduction of the rodent population. The students researched, designed, and built their own unique owl nesting boxes. Each team of students created three separate prototypes before building their final products. They also created power-point presentations and wrote persuasive letters that successfully raised more than half of the funding necessary for materials.

Post Script: The owl boxes did indeed attract nesting owls and the school's rodent population was substantially decreased.

Teacher Reflection

I was thrilled and surprised at the variety of skills this project touched. In math—measurement, conversion, fractions, mixed numbers, area, perimeter, 2-dimensional nets into 3 dimensional products. In writing, research-based persuasive letters to raise funds revealed the deep knowledge students had gained about local predators as well as the owl boxes themselves.

Student Reflections

My favorite part was the actual exhibition because it was fun to show everyone our work. The most challenging step for me was the building because it was hard to get all the measurement right and I had never done anything like it before. —Yasmin

My favorite part was making the prototypes because we made a miniature owl box. —Heriberto

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