



## Colonies, Clusters, and Classrooms

*Shelby Fuentes, Grace Kegley, and Chelsea Pasfield, 2nd Grade  
High Tech Elementary North County*

Students researched a variety of animal communities through fieldwork, experts, non-fiction texts and online resources and then applied their knowledge to our own class and school community to create school-wide norms. Our essential questions were: 1) How do animals act in their communities to help and protect each other? 2) How can we use those characteristics to build guidelines for how we should care for each other in our classroom? Students had three final products. First, individually, students wrote informative paragraphs connecting research on animal communities and how it could apply to our classroom culture. Next, in small groups, students established school norms based off of a researched animal behavior and data collection within our school, and then designed a banner to be hung throughout the halls. Finally, the 2nd grade classes collaborated to design and create a kinetic ‘school of fish’ art installation comprised of scientifically-inspired ceramic fish that represented the school community. A student-designed kinetic prototype became the basis for final large-scale kinetic mechanism, produced by Mike Amarillas’ HTHNC Engineering students.

### Teacher Reflection

This project was exciting because it brought all three 2nd grade classes together. Students built quality relationships across the grade level as they worked together. As teachers, we designed this project as a way to collaborate across the grade level and incorporate engineering, art, and science in meaningful ways. As challenging as it was to collaborate with six separate teachers, we think the final project was well worth the effort.

### Student Reflection

I like the project because I like to see how animals work together. Also I like to see how animals move, swim and hunt together. My favorite part of the project was when we did our field work. I learned that animals stick together and help each other. —Nethra

*To learn more about this project and others, visit <http://cepasfield.weebly.com/> ; <http://mskegley.weebly.com/> ; <http://shelbyfuentes.wix.com/shelbyfuentes>*