Students Become Citizen Scientists in Citizen Science Action Project

CSAP Schools: Beverly J. Martin, Caroline, Enfield, South Hill

This fall, almost 200 Ithaca City School District 5th-grade students in nine classrooms at four schools are training to become Citizen Scientists, taking action on an issue that's been plaguing each of their local communities - invasive species.

The project, one year in the making, is a four-month learning expedition co-created by nine teachers. Through generous support from ICSD and IPEI's Connecting Classrooms Grant, each of these nine teachers committed over 70 hours of planning time into the expedition. Learning expeditions like the Citizen Science Action Project (CSAP) represent a bold commitment by ICSD and IPEI to support innovative and site-specific education.

ICSD 5th graders work on CSAP about two hours each day, learning much of their life science content and fall English Language Arts skills through the expedition. In addition, students are learning how to communicate their thinking with peers across different classrooms through their new Chromebooks.

CSAP consists of three parts - case studies, and a culminating project. In Case Study #1 (September) students built background knowledge of food webs and ecosystem. In Case Study #2 (October) students have been investigating an ecosystem at a local field site, examining the interactions of organisms there. From this, students are discovering an invasive species at their field site. In Case Study #3 (November) students will research their invasive species, and will investigate community approaches to managing their invasive species. For their culminating project, students will argue an approach to managing the species at a poster presentation session.

"In our seven weeks of CSAP, we've seen students living the mission statement - *engaged*, invested in their *education*, and *empowered*, all through **thinking** critically about issues in their own backyards," said Brian Goodman, 5th Grade Teacher, Enfield Elementary.