

Journey North Tulip Project

For the past five years my (grade 1-3) students and I have participated in the Journey North Tulip project <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/>. Every September I order Red Emperor Tulip bulbs, so that my students can plant their tulips on the long weekend in October. Not all of my students have access to a flowerbed or garden, so I also plant a control group of bulbs at my house. I take photos and share these with my students. We also go to the Journey North Tulip site and gather information from their online source. Most of the schools that participate in the project have flowerbeds and courtyards where they can plant the bulbs together as a class, which is ideal.

All of the students who can plant tulip bulbs at their home get at least three bulbs because it better to have tulips planted in bunches. We have had many scientific discussions about bulbs as compared with seeds. In addition, planting in the fall as compared with spring planting piques the curiosity of many students. I also give each student a journal and they record their actions for each stage of the planting project. Students are encouraged to present their journals with photos and paragraphs to the class. They are very excited about preparing the earth and following the planting instructions. It is an excellent way to have students read with a purpose and if the student does not read yet, it is a great way for the parents or grandparents to practice a "Read-aloud."



It is so exciting to enter all of our data online where we can see how other classes are progressing. There has always been tulips planted in Calgary and we find it amazing how sometimes our tulips emerge before theirs do. The ones in Alaska usually do not emerge before ours as usually most of the United States is red and we are still waiting in great anticipation for our tulips to poke their little heads through the earth. Yes, reading the maps and comments from other classes helps the students gain a global understanding of other communities near and far. I integrate the map reading skills and community awareness with my social studies curriculum.

For the very young students counting the bulbs and constructing word problems can also be used in a mathematics class. The variety of learning experiences that the Journey North Tulip project offers can be as creative as the teacher. I recommend this project to other teachers and have found the support from the Journey North organizers to be just what a class needs to be actively involved in science and many other subject areas. Journey North would like more classes from Saskatchewan to take part in the project. So join the fun, start planting and put your class on the map!

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