

Plant Sale

Our plant sale project grew out of my musing about my first grade students' natural interest in plants and science along with doing a project that aligned with our curriculum.

A local horticulturalist had a garage sale, and he sold me all that I needed for about \$60. I understand that may not be easy to replicate but I have found that people are very willing to loan or donate items for the sake of encouraging young entrepreneurs.

I spent about \$200 on seeds, growing medium, trays and other tools.

During the month of January I had a student teacher who was able to work individually with the students to explain how to plant and label their seeds. We planted a variety of flower seeds for the entire month of January, and put them under the grow lights in the corner of our classroom. We cared for and examined them daily. It was fun to see parents come in before and after school to check on the plant progress.

We took a field trip to a local greenhouse and the owner demonstrated her business all the way from seed planting to transplanting the flowers into baskets. She discussed several of the economic terms we were using in class, such as division of labor, assembly line, wholesale, retail, producer, and consumer. The students were so excited because they were seeing on a grand scale the same business that they were doing on a small scale. After the tour she remarked to me that she had never seen kids this interested or knowledgeable about the plant business.

In mid-March we took the flowers we were growing along with some more mature plants donated by a local nursery and each student transplanted three baskets of flowers. They chose the combination and learned about the technique of transplanting.

Then we sent out invitations to family and supporters of our school.

The next two weeks we made three paired products to go along with our plant sale – magnets with flowers on them, colored stationery with flowers drawn on them, and plant decorations put on a wire that could be stuck into containers.

The day before the big sale I reviewed details of the event with each child. Our sale was divided into two sections: forty-five minutes for typical retail purchases of most of our items, and one hour for a plant container auction. For the retail portion, we priced each item at \$1.00. Each student had a job – greet customers, man a table, work the cash register or bag the products. Then, for the auction portion, I put together two folding tables, and placed on them the containers with the student's photo and business card (another item we made). We lined these up in alphabetical order. Then the students were seated in alphabetical order. We practiced so the students would know when to approach the microphone as the auctioneer sold their product.

After we sold the 48 items, I made the announcement that each student had an additional container with their photo attached that we had used to decorate the room. If parents were not able to purchase their child's container they could find this container and offer up a donation for it.

We raised about \$2,000 dollars that night.

The challenge to this project was the daily work that I needed to do to keep the plants alive and healthy. Having a living product generated a higher risk for our business, but that was more than offset by the life and growth we watched in our classroom during the dark days of winter. It drew a lot of attention from the school community – they loved coming in and watching the progress of the plants. My students also learned the necessity of timeliness (watering, feeding, being attentive to light conditions) in a hands-on way that no amount of lecturing could ever impart.