



FAST FACTS

Project : Colorado Flood Recovery–Science Project

Teacher: Anna Mills;
mills_anna@svvvsd.org

School: Trail Ridge Middle School

Location : Longmont, Colorado

Website:
www.trms.stvrain.k12.co.us

Start/End date:
February–May 2014

Mentors provided by: Agilent Technologies, City of Fort Collins, Google, Inc., Hewlett-Packard Company, Intel Corporation, MasterCard, Merck & Co., Inc., Thomson Reuters and U.S. Forest Service

Contact: David Neils,
ITP Founder/Director
970-481-9795
davidn@telementor.org

When disaster strikes, students respond with solutions for recovery



Ditch school

Terry Plummer, Left Hand Ditch Company vice president, explains how this section of ditch infrastructure was destroyed by the flood and the repairs made to it.

for her students, Mills chose to partner with the International Telementor Program (ITP) and its mentors who are professionals working on the same flood-related issues. “I read the description of ITP and it made the classroom applicable to life outside of school. Too many times students are asked to regurgitate information and complete mindless worksheets. I had a desire teach students to critically think and problem solve on real world issues. ITP seemed to be the perfect fit for my desire.”

With mentor help, Mills expected her students to research various aspects of the Colorado flood affecting northern Colorado communities and choose one for which to offer a solution. She also expected her students to be able to articulate

“As educators, we need to be at the forefront of progressive education. We need to teach our children to be exemplary critical thinkers, specifically in the way they analyze problems in the abstract to best come up with solutions. It is vital to give them the best opportunities, whether it be in academia, the world or the societies that they choose to be a part of,” states Anna Mills, Trail Ridge High School science teacher.

And this was her intent when she designed a project for her 6th graders focused on the 2013 Colorado Flood recovery efforts. She wanted them to gain real-world knowledge by exploring issues related to the flood and especially how the northern Colorado communities and residents affected by it repaired and rebuilt their lives.

To help provide authentic support



“As educators, we need to be at the forefront of progressive education. We need to teach our children to be exemplary critical thinkers, specifically in the way they analyze problems in the abstract to best come up with solutions...”

Anna Mills, Trail Ridge Middle School Teacher

their research projects and share their solutions in creative ways, such as producing a short video or an informational brochure to distribute to the public. What Mills didn't expect was how much value mentor support added to each student's educational experience.

“The support students received from their mentors was incredible,” she says. “There was no way I could have given that much care to each student project.”

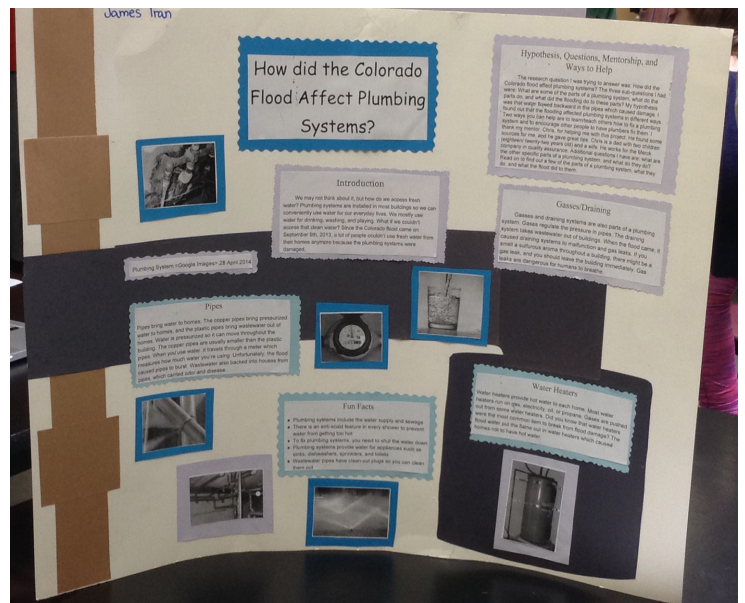
Yet according to David Neils, ITP founder and president, “Anna Mills is an exceptional teacher who has a solid relationship with every student in her classroom. She's also passionate about working closely with mentors and topic experts to maximize the benefits for her students. It was incredibly motivating to watch the quality of their work skyrocket as they invited feedback from mentors, thanked their mentors in a heartfelt way for the support and became more confident in their work.”

At the end of the semester, every student group had incredible products to share about their research and solutions. Even so, Mills says she will organize the project differently next time. “I will have students do field work before they choose their specific project ideas, because the one piece that was the most difficult to create was empathy for students' end users. I spent a lot of time trying to evoke emotion from the students and I think if they had seen the devastation with their own eyes first, this wouldn't have been an issue. Once we established empathy, all of the students were completely enamored by their project.”

Mills also learned that it's critical to communicate early and often with mentors so everyone is on the same page. “Communicate exactly what you want from the mentors every week. The mentor piece is the most important part of ITP because mentors can create individualized instruction for each student. ITP mentors are absolutely wonderful and take a huge burden off a teacher's shoulders. I highly recommend all teachers do an ITP project in their classrooms!” 🌍



Hard work pays off
Students prepare products to help others cope with flood recovery issues



WWW.TELEMENTOR.ORG

The International Telementor Program ■ **David Neils, Founder/Director**