MAKING WAVES AT DCS

DCS Staff Take the Lead

Presenting at Conferences and District Professional Development

Wylie Elementary Welcomes Educators for National Place-Based Education (PBE) Conference Satellite Event

In November 2025, Wylie Elementary hosted an Immersion Event for the national Place-Based Education (PBE) Conference, which was held at Eastern Michigan University this year. Participants from various districts across Michigan, as well as from the State of Utah, attended the conference. Twelve conference attendees spent the day learning about place-based Education with Wylie teachers and students. The Immersion Event, which took place along Mill Creek, into Dexter, and in the classroom, was a joint effort organized by Instructional Coach Pam Krebs and Wylie teachers Sarah Russell, Marisa Lerner, Jim Barnes, and Narda Black.

Meeting at Mill Creek near downtown Dexter, the day began with Mrs. Russell's class investigating the factors that influence weather patterns and exploring scientific instruments that collect data and make forecasts (thermometers, barometers, rain gauges, etc.). Mrs. Lerner's class then explored the features of a park and surrounding cityscape, and compared human-made and natural elements and predicted how each one affects the environment. The group returned to Wylie for Mr. Barnes's class discussion on how runoff enters the drains, travels through underground pathways, and reenters local waterways, using a hands-on model. Students illustrated the connections between streets, stormwater systems, and the health of nearby rivers and streams.

During lunch, conference participants had an opportunity to take a deep dive into the ways to look at "place" with Mr. Barnes. The first afternoon session was led by Mrs. Lerner and Mrs. Russell, who shared how they plan for PBE experiences. They then returned to Mrs. Black's classroom, where students used an EcoScape simulation model to share what can happen with and without a wetland riparian zone as pollutants, herbicides, and chemicals alter the watershed. Pam Krebs closed out the afternoon back at Mill Creek with some history about the waterway in Dexter, and led a group reflection of the day.







“Hosting educators and partners from across the United States positions Wylie teachers as leaders in place-based learning,” says Krebs. “Designing firsthand experiences at Mill Creek showcased how authentic, student-centered learning comes to life in our classrooms.”

"Presenting at a national place-based education conference with several of my students about Indigenous Ways of Knowing transformed our work from something we talk about into something we practice,” adds Barnes. “When young people speak alongside educators, the work shifts from curriculum to relationship, reminding us that knowledge lives in land, community, and lived experience, not just in institutions.”

Mill Creek Teachers Present to Colleagues at District PD

In addition to presenting at local, state, and national conferences, Dexter staff share their expertise with their peers at district professional development meetings. Last year, Mill Creek teachers Britnie Bell and Steve Wincent co-presented a session on Kagan cooperative learning techniques at a district PD day. Dexter teachers from Creekside and Mill Creek chose between a number of sessions of this presentation, which was geared towards middle level education.

Kagan cooperative learning techniques are structures that teachers can use in any content area to get students talking and working together. Quiz-Quiz-Trade is one Kagan strategy where students use flashcards to quiz each other, give quick feedback, trade cards, and then move on to a new partner. One student asks the question, the other answers and gets coached if needed, then they switch roles, trade cards, and repeat the process with someone else. Because students are moving, talking, and seeing the same content multiple times, it keeps energy up and helps reinforce key concepts through repetition and peer support.

“We have a lot of great staff here, with great ideas,” says Wincent. “It's nice to have an opportunity to share our knowledge and learn from each other.”

