**Needs Assessment**

**Bault, Jennifer 2017**

My classroom is my refuge. I love to teach. I love captivating students’ interest and seeing them grow. Education is a powerful medium to change the world. In capturing hearts, you can capture minds. My students are the life-blood of my classroom.

The vision I have for my classroom is that students will develop a passion for science, for finding and understanding reputable data and developing a sense of how to look at an issue with impartiality and make conclusions based on solid evidence. With respect to my experience with PolarTREC, I hope to use this experience as a means of increasing awareness of and interest in scientific research in the polar regions. Truly though, I want more than this for my students. I want them to walk away with a profound yearning to venture out into the world and learn about the natural world in which we live. I want them to desire to see the world and explore. I hope my students will leave my classroom excited about science, holding it in high esteem and with an interest in protecting our planet.

This is a tall order and certainly, there are and will be obstacles that will need to be overcome. Among those obstacles, is a growing divide between those who trust in science and those who do not. There are time issues, noone ever has enough. This is especially true in the classroom. If you add something, regardless of its merit, something else must be cut. There is only so much room in a curriculum and only so much learning that can be accomplished given our traditional calendar. There are however, many students who are eager to learn and embrace science lovingly. Our school has an outstanding science dept. and students are excited to take science classes and realize its value. We capitalize on this as much as possible.

Sharing my experience with the classroom will come naturally. I am an avid story-teller and this is exciting to students. There will be lots of questions and certainly interest in what I did in Antarctica. Developing lessons that can be utilized with my students will further engage them and allow them the opportunity to develop a greater interest in research.

I am definitely looking to incorporate more research-based science into my teaching methods. I would like for my students to have greater access to scientific data and to actually use that data to form conclusions of their own. I would like them to start “thinking” like scientists and this will mean turning my classroom into a more student-centered /directed classroom. This is always a difficult thing to accomplish. Many teachers, myself included, have difficulty giving up control in the classroom. I am a perfectionist and allowing students to guide their own learning can end in disaster if not done well. I want to ensure my students are actually learning what is required of them rather than simply memorizing , to help them sharpen the tools they will need throughout their life in the way of analyzing, thinking, and applying.

In my experience in Antarctica, I am hoping to learn much. I am so fascinated by the interactions of the Earth, air, water, ice, salinity, currents, and how it all works together. I want to be able to make connections to the topics I teach in class and to talk with scientists doing research. I want to learn what drives them to do their work, how they became interested in it and the path they took to get where they are. I think this could be very powerful for my students. There are so many avenues to travel down in science. Many of my students are in my classes because of their interest in science and perhaps, if I can provide them with stories, true stories of scientists, maybe they will decide that science is a path they want to pursue. All of us have struggles in life, but with dedication and passion, one can really take the world by storm. I want to empower my students to accomplish whatever is on their dream list.

My personal professional goals are not yet accomplished. I have a strong desire to pursue an academic doctorate. This may be the platform that springboards me to take action on that. I am a learner and this experience has already piqued my interest in moving forward with that personal goal. I have always questioned whether I would have the time, inclination and ability to make this happen. Here is hoping this experience will answer that question. Ultimately, I desire to teach, until I retire, but teaching without learning and growing is not an option. I will continually seek out opportunities that will satisfy my own desire to learn and to use that learning to better engage my students and inspire them to become life-long learners too.

PolarTREC will and has already been an amazing experience to that end. I look forward to this experience and all that it offers for my students and myself alike.