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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2008 Volume VII: Urban Environmental Quality and Human Health: Conceiving a Sustainable Future

Many Neighborhoods -- One Community: Learning Chemistry through the History of the Hunters Point Naval Station

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by Sally Meneely

The purpose of this unit for me is to motivate students to practice thinking scientifically about things they already care deeply about: their safety in their homes and communities in relation to knowledge they gain about elements and compounds. The topic for this unit will be the historic use and current status of the Hunters Point Naval Station in San Francisco and its ongoing effects on local air and water quality, as well as its impact on potential future use of the area. My goal in bringing this topic to my classroom is to relate it to our study of characteristic properties of elements and compounds to events and conditions in the world, specifically my students' world. To understand and interact safely with any urban land area, its historic uses should be known. The fact that those historic uses involve toxins and may very likely be negatively impacting the health of many people, should be known by not only the adjacent neighborhood, everyone in the San Francisco community has the responsibility to become aware of such hazards.

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