

Straight From the Heart: Blackrock Students Get Hands-On Health Lesson

Studying the heart of a pig allowed fourth and fifth grade students to gain a better understanding of their own anatomy.

By [Lauren Costa](#) | February 26, 2013



Apart from the everyday care of [Blackrock Elementary](#) students, School Nurse Melissa Thibodeau also teaches lessons about health, fitness and well-being to fourth and fifth classes.

Her recent lessons have focused on personal health, including basic anatomy and physiology to provide students with a better understanding of how their bodies work. Thibodeau shares with her students ways to improve and keep healthy their hearts and other organs through proper diet, water consumption and exercise routines.

In honor of February being [American Heart Month](#), Thibodeau obtained a pig heart from a local butcher to use as a visual aid during several classes. Because a pig heart is quite similar to a human heart, it allowed students to identify the anatomical parts from their lessons in a hands-on way.

On the morning that Coventry Patch joined Ms. Thibodeau, she was teaching Christyna Bousquet's fourth grade class. Following a reading lesson and discussion, Thibodeau allowed students on a voluntary basis to take turns holding and touching the heart (with gloves on of course). Some students seemed apprehensive about the idea, but by the end of the demonstration every student had an



interesting story to bring home with them. Several students shared their observations of the heart, which included "cold", "gross", "sticky", "not as bad as I thought" and "like bloody, raw steak".

"I decided to incorporate a hands-on activity into the lesson and lighten it up a bit," said Thibodeau.

"Every one of the kids in each class has touched the heart, even the ones who said they wouldn't ended up doing it by the end of class."

"Obviously you can't be the only one going home without touching the heart," she said jokingly.