

GREENSPACES ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION GRANT FINAL REPORT

ORGANIZATION: Northwest Regional Education Service District

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PROJECT TITLE: "Education and Experience: The Preservation Connection"

METRO CONTRACT NUMBER: 905432

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Goal: The major goal of the project was to develop a program for up to 1400 elementary and middle school students that incorporated both classroom and hands-on restoration experiences in urban greenspaces through service learning activities. Specific objectives included:

1. Twenty classes of thirty students will engage in an interactive classroom learning experience that emphasizes the importance of Metro urban greenspaces and their personal role in preserving these greenspaces.
2. The students will engage in a day long hands-on experience where they will be involved in the restoration of an urban greenspace.
3. The students will document their group project and be able to describe the results of their restoration experience in relation to the natural ecology of the area.

II. PARTNERS

Several partners were involved in the project from the beginning. Without their support the project would not have been possible.

1. Portland Community College, Rock Creek Campus(Dick Hollenbeck, contact). One of the major restoration sites was the Rock Creek Environmental Studies Center at PCC Rock Creek. PCC provided tools, supplies, project planning and supervision.
2. City of Hillsboro, Jackson Bottom Preserve(Pat Willis, contact). Jackson Bottom was another major restoration site. Jackson Bottom provided tools, supplies, project planning and supervision, and direct instruction of students regarding wetlands.
3. Northwest Service Academy(Joe Parvankin, contact). In the fall of 1996, the Northwest Service Academy, an AmeriCorps program, provided an individual placed member to develop curriculum materials. In the summer of 1997 another AmeriCorps member served as coordinator/supervisor in organizing and carrying out the greenspaces grant.
4. EnviroCorps(Ian Reigns, contact). In the fall of 1997, Envirocorps, another AmeriCorps program, Provided a crew of ten member who led and supervised groups of students during the restoration activities.
5. Local schools. Classroom teachers from most school districts in Washington County participated in the project. They taught the classroom curriculum before and after the restoration field trips, provided supervision during the field trips and made logistical arrangements for their students. Local districts provided bus transportation as well.

III. ACTIVITIES, EVALUATION, AND SUGGESTIONS

1. CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION

Activities: The curriculum focused on two areas-the role of greenspaces in urban communities and the ecology of the wetlands. Because of time and financial constraints, most of the actives were borrowed or adapted from existing curricula such as Project Wild. The ESD has an extensive curriculum library and the expertise to facilitate access to appropriate materials. The activities encompassed a variety of learning strategies with the emphasis on some sort of hands-on process. The principles of service learning were woven throughout.

The final products included a teacher's handbook describing the project, organizational suggestions and detailed lesson plans and "Greenspaces, Wetlands and Me!", the student handbook. Copies of the hand book are included with this report. The handbooks were backed up with a large number of student and teacher handouts from Metro, newspapers, United

Sewage Agency in Hillsboro, US Forest Service-water quality department, The Feinstein "33 plus" club-"I Can Make A Difference Program", etc.

Evaluations: The curriculum product proved to be quite good. Of note is the set of activities related to greenspaces. These activities emphasized the social and political aspects of urban natural areas.

Suggestions:

1. Use pre-existing curricula where possible. It is faster and easier. Use your expertise to fill in gaps and build bridges.
2. Be prepared with extra copies of curriculum and student workbooks.

POPULATION SERVED

Activities: 25 sixth grade and 2 fifth grade classrooms participated in the project in the fall of 1997. These classes contained approximately 1000 students. The participating classrooms represented public and private school districts in Washington County. Information was sent to all schools, and teachers reserved their spaces on a first come-first service basis, though efforts were made to secure wide geographic and school district representation. Transportation reimbursement funds were available through the Metro Grant and used by most schools. Schools provided their own buses.

Evaluation: For the most part teachers pleased with the program. Most of the difficulties were logistical with teachers not having materials for enough in advance and school scheduling. The major constraints were matching schedules of the EnviroCorps teams, the school schedules and restoration site schedules

Suggestions:

1. Schedule classes as early as possible. Get materials to teachers as early as possible.
2. The time line of completion is to compact. From start to finish-4 months. Use more time needed to sign up and work with the students before they get out to do restorations projects. This is easily a 6 month project.
3. If you schedule field trips in late fall or winter, be prepared for cancellations and rescheduling due to weather.

CLASSROOMS ACTIVITIES

Activities: The curriculum was designed to provide twelve classroom activities before and after the field trip one a day over a period of two to three weeks. It was planned for the teachers to do all of the activities, but many elected to do only a portion of them. Class visits were made before each class came out to the restoration site. The class visits were an effective way to orient the students and generate enthusiasm and a personal connection to the project. The topics discussed at these class visit were: What to wear, behavior expectations, what is service learning, and brief review of any lessons covered.

Evaluation: The classroom activities proved to be quite usable. The teachers were encouraged to 'get creative' with the lesson plans and suite them to fit their teaching style. It would have been more helpful to have a teacher orientation, for information to be spread more effectively. The classroom visits were quite useful and needed.

Suggestion:

1. Provide orientation for classroom teachers.
2. Have Envirocorps teams member participate in classroom visits.
3. Have activities which require minimal preparation on part of the teacher.

RESTORATION FIELD TRIPS

Activities: The restoration field trips to Jackson Bottom and PCC Rock Creek Environmental Studies Center occurred during the fall of 1997. They were scheduled one class at each site, two days a week (Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday) for seven weeks. The site managers identified restoration actives which could be accomplish by young students working in teams under adult leadership. At Jackson Bottom projects included building bird boxes, putting up bird boxes, putting in snags, planting willow and dogwood shoots, pulling non-native species, and picking up liter. PCC-Rock Creek projects included cleaning and maintaining handicap access trail, building a brand new trail (pulling sod, laying bark dust, pulling stumps, cut out the trail), clean up and trim boardwalk, lay chicken wire down on boardwalk, and pulling non-native species. Each student completed two to three hours of restoration work.

Evaluation: Sponsors were pleased with the program, realizing that this was not really a program to accomplish major pieces of work. Some projects were inappropriate for the students in that they were not well defined, vague on expectations, and not enough tools available. As a result teachers felt there was not enough work to do for their students. One class per

restoration site was ideal. One major challenge was being able to communicate clearly with the entire EnviroCorps crew. They were split up at the two different sites. A weekly morning meeting with the crew and having a leader at each site to check in with eased this problem.

Suggestions:

1. Have plenty of supervision. Small groups work very well. EnviroCorps team member each receive their group and set expectations and have a tool safety demonstration.
2. Spend one day of full training with the EnviroCorps team on child management, before field work begins. Many do not have experience in managing small group of children, processing and teaching. Good training makes good leaders.
3. To improve communication with EnviroCorps crew, when the team is split have a leader to check in with and give progress reports daily.
4. Have EnviroCorps crew visit each site and receive background on the site before they come to work with students.
5. Make sure the projects are well defined. Ideal projects are those which make a lasting change to the area. Routine maintenance activities are not motivating to students.
6. Be flexible. If students come by bus, arrival times and length of stay are out of your control.
7. Schedule no more than one class at a site at a time.
8. Have enough tools and materials for each student. This eliminate students standing around.
9. Parent volunteers are valuable.

FINAL PROJECTS

Activities: Students are to go out into their community and school to share information about the importance of urban greenspaces and what they could do to help

Evaluation: These projects were thought up by the students and carried out by the students, with guidance from their teachers. The more involved the students were in developing their project idea, the more creative and excited students got. Students have written letters to local newspapers, the Governor of Oregon, the Mayor of Portland, President Clinton, and to their school newsletter. One class created their own newsletter and handed it out to the entire school. One student created a web page on the internet. A couple of students made a video commercial on animals in the wetland. Several classes have made posters and put them up in the school. One school will be putting on a mini assembly about their experience. Groner Elementary will be adopting a wetland close to the school and will help improve the site. A couple of Cedar Park classes will be going back out to

Jackson bottom in the fall to check on their work and do some up keep. Forest Hills Luthern made the entire month of October Water Quality month and worked this grant project into there program.

Suggestions:

1. Have students brainstorm to increase creativity.
2. Let students have a say and even create the project. This forms the connection to the project we hoped for.

IN KIND MATERIALS AND VOLUNTEER LABOR

PERSONNEL COSTS

Northwest Regional ESD	
Secretary:	\$120
Northwest Service Academy:	\$2,080
EnviroCorps:	\$5,000
Student services projects	
1000 students X 3 hours X \$5.50	\$16,500
It was estimated that each student spent three hours on direct greenspaces restoration activities. Actual time varied by class, project and weather.	
Jackson Bottom	\$4,162
Rock Creek Enviromental Studies Center	<u> </u>
TOTAL	\$28,862

MATERAILS AND SUPPLIES

Jackson Bottom	\$292
Rock Creek Enviromental Studies Center	<u> </u>
TOTAL	\$292

TOTAL IN-KIND SUPPORT \$29,154