

Contract Number: 922612
Project: Madison EcoSummit

FINAL REPORT

1. Summary of Grant Activities

In the fall of 2000 a team of ten teachers and four students began planning a spring EcoSummit event. The team focused on overall structure first and progressively moved to the details of who we could recruit to lead sessions that would engage high schoolers in meaningful learning about the environment. The week before the event, we extended our "Reg. Room" period so students could sign-up for EcoSummit activities. Each teacher explained the event, answered questions and had students fill out a registration form listing their preferences for workshops on EcoSummit day. As we had in the pilot, we encouraged students to sign-up in pairs so we had less registration forms to sort through. For the next week, a team of AmeriCorps volunteers from Northwest Service Academy sorted through registration forms and prepared a schedule for each student for EcoSummit day. The actual EcoSummit event was held on April 26. We had approximately 43+ presenters leading 40 workshops over the course of the day. In addition, we had had two large group assemblies that all students rotated to once during the day. See attached for the full listing of activities and assemblies. A week after the EcoSummit event we had an assembly that included a power point slideshow of pictures highlighting all the different activities that went on during EcoSummit and we "premiered" of the animation clip created during the EcoSummit day by a group of students. Our goal was to celebrate the activities and accomplishments as well as to try to solidify the theme and purpose of EcoSummit. Students loved seeing the pictures of themselves and their friends. It was a good addition to the event! A few weeks after the event (enough time for some of us to recover), the planning committee had a debriefing meeting to look through the student evaluations, talk about what worked and what didn't (see evaluation), and lay the framework for the following year's event.

In the fall of 2001, with a planning grant from the Carnegie Foundation, all Portland High School's began investigating the possibility for re-designing our high schools into smaller learning communities. We had one year of funding to research and initiate faculty discussions. Many of the EcoSummit committee volunteers, being of the proactive, "let's try new things" type of people, volunteered to serve on the leadership team for the re-design effort. This quickly became a very time consuming effort for all of us who were involved in leading the effort. One of the exciting pieces was that EcoSummit was held up many times in the discussion as one of the things we are doing right. The down side was that there wasn't the same energy or time to pull off the event. It was clear to many of us that if and when we restructured our high school event like EcoSummit would be much easier to pull off, there would be many more formats we could use that would be less time consuming to plan. The question was what to do in the interim given the time resources we had available. The other thing we were greatly concerned about was the attendance challenges (see below) that we faced the previous year.

The EcoSummit committee began meeting in earnest in January of 2002 to plan a spring 2002 event. There were many new faces on the committee. We laid out the issues and began brainstorming. There were several generations of plans. We finally settled on a structure that

included a school-wide assembly where we rallied students around a wide variety of environmental issues that closed with announcing nine opportunity for students to get out of the classroom and make a difference in their environment; and/or explore an aspect of environment that they maybe haven't seen or experienced before (see attached for descriptions). The school-wide assembly this included Madison staff and students doing a mix of things to stir passion & interest and a keynote speaker (Eric Sten) to lay out more of a call to action. We ran an activity sign-up at lunch that day. We were mobbed. We had decided to use the mandatory assembly and the optional field trips to make sure all students had access to the activities but not "forcing" them to participate in the activities. Students could choose on EcoSummit activity day to either go to their standard class or participate in an EcoSummit activity. If they chose the EcoSummit activity, they would not be penalized and have to make-up work from the classes they missed. It was the entire staff's way of saying both kinds of learning were equally important. Over 450 students signed up for an EcoSummit trip. In the end, roughly 320 participated in one of the nine EcoSummit field day activities.

2. Evaluation of Project

Our original goals for the project included:

- Opportunity for Madison students and staff to explore a wide variety of environmental topics
- To build a sense of community and spirit around environmental education at Madison
- To provide an opportunity for Madison students to make choices about things they want to learn about or experience related to the environment.
- To strengthen District and community attitudes towards Madison by providing a unique event that showcases Madison and Madison student's achievements

There is no question that the EcoSummit event both years allowed Madison students and teachers to explore a wide variety of environmental topics. Both years students made comments like "I can't believe we're getting to do this in school"; I've never been in a school where something like this happens." Teachers, particularly that first year were very skeptical that we would pull this off without utter chaos. Many of the teachers commented that they learned something as well as had fun. I think our session list (attached) easily attest to our attaining this goal.

In terms of building a sense of community around environmental education at Madison and strengthen community attitudes about Madison and Madison students, there's no question that we did that as well. That's not to say every teacher at Madison is personally committed to incorporate environmental education into their curriculum but that it is one of the pillars of the school and one we get positive recognition for. Many more students than in past years also recognize it as a unique focus of Madison. The place I notice it the most though is with community partners. Even community members who haven't directly participated in the event but are connected to environmental education seem to have heard about it. That's very exciting for us!

The student choice element is definitely critical to success. Students really value that piece. Unfortunately, we made some mistakes in our pilot year. Students were asked to choose but then we used a student group to schedule. The schedulers too often, for whatever reason, did not

necessarily give students one of their top four choices. This backfired on us, students like to be given choices, but when they are asked and then don't get what they asked for, they can get cranky and untrusting. The second year, AmeriCorps volunteers did the placement of students and were very careful to find a way to match students to their selections. But students didn't believe that we would really give them what they wanted so it added to our attendance problem in 2001. The format of 2002 alleviated the problem because students signed themselves up directly. They knew that they would be doing what they signed up for. The student choice element has been one of the EcoSummit successes that have been carried into our schoolwide reform elements. It's helped more staff recognize the importance of choices for students.

Two other signs of positive impact include:

- Increased teacher participation both in the delivery of EcoSummit activity, and in the planning for the event
- Increased teacher & student anticipation for the event. Students and teachers ask about it now, "what's the plan for this year", "what are we going to be able to do this year", "can you include an opportunity to...." Are all common questions.

Some of the challenges we faced included:

Attendance. When we piloted EcoSummit concept the year prior to receiving the grant we had told students we would be monitoring attendance and that there would be consequence for not attending we didn't actually track attendance and there weren't consequences. The first year the event was under the grant, we paid for that mistake. Our sophomores, juniors and seniors took for granted we wouldn't be monitoring attendance again therefore it was, in their minds, an "optional day" and many chose not to attend. It also didn't help that the day we chose for the event was *Take Your Child to Work Day* which took even more kids out of the building (we just didn't see the date conflict until the date was too late to change). Roughly 2/5ths of the student body did not attend the full days worth of EcoSummit activities. Of those who did attend, they overwhelming felt it was one of the best experiences they'd had at Madison.

Finding quality large group assembly presentations appropriate for a high school audience. Our pilot year and the first year under the grant we really struggled with this issue. The assemblies were the least popular activity in EcoSummit. They were either too much talking or geared for younger audiences. To do a schoolwide day, we had to intermix large group and small group activities to make it manageable with 1200 students. This was another reason we felt it important to switch formats for last spring.

3. Photo Documentation

See attached

Attachments:

2000-2001 Information Packet

2001-2002 Information Packet

Photos

Therese Fisher - Re: final report for greenspaces grant # 922612

From: "Julie Howland" <jhowland@pps.k12.or.us>
To: Therese Fisher <fishert@metro.dst.or.us>
Date: 6/11/2003 5:21 PM
Subject: Re: final report for greenspaces grant # 922612

Therese:

You didn't receive the final report? Sorry about that! I know I was late with it but that was a year or more ago. I have pulled up the file on my computer with the narrative for the report and have attached it. I looked quickly for the grant folder which would have everything in it but it wasn't in it's typical place which means I pulled it for something and it's in one of my piles in the office. I'll dig through the piles in the next few days to find it and will send on the full report with attachments which included pictures, programs, etc.

Again, I am sorry you never received it. I'll dig up the rest & get it to you.

Julie

From: "Therese Fisher" <fishert@metro.dst.or.us>
To: <jhowland@pps.k12.or.us>
Subject: final report for greenspaces grant # 922612
Date: Wed, Jun 4, 2003, 5:39 PM

Hi Julie,

We never received the final report on your greenspaces contract #922612 (EcoSummit). There are emails in the file from you saying you completed it. Can you look through your files and see if you can't find it and resend it. We are waiting on it to close out the project.

-Therese

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