



It's Our Water!

(Join us and schedule a workshop TODAY!)

N.C. Division of Water
Resources

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Place-based Education, Service Learning and It's Our Water! — Using What Works



Looking for ways to make your class more relevant to your students? Try getting outside with It's Our Water!

In the Fall 2007 IOW newsletter, I highlighted the *Environmental Literacy in America — What Ten Years of NEETF/Roper Research and Related Studies Say About Environmental Literacy in the U.S.* This comprehensive report discusses not only the low rates of environmental literacy in the U.S., it also addresses proven environmental education methods that can greatly improve environmental literacy, academic performance, and character building in school children. These methods include place-based education and service learning.

Place-based education emphasizes how the human and natural environments shape each other encompassing both the natural world and the built environment, history, culture, and other human elements of an area. It sets learning within the everyday world of the students, making learning more relevant and personal as well as supporting a complete and well-rounded educational experience.

It's Our Water! seeks to build upon this pedagogy by having students investigate the water quality and quantity of a local stream, as well as the surrounding land uses and history of those uses affecting that stream. It further asks the students to think critically about ways to protect the water quality of their stream based on what they find. It is this combination that makes It's Our Water! such a powerful tool for teaching both environmental science and promoting true environmental literacy.

Pairing service learning and It's Our Water! could further strengthen your environmental science program and improve the behavior and self-confidence of your students. Helping students to engage in local community service projects has gained tremendous sup-

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Want to Host a Workshop 3

You can download a **free** copy of the entire report, *Environmental Literacy in America — What Ten Years of NEETF/Roper Research and Related Studies Say About Environmental Literacy in the U.S.*, at:

<http://www.neetf.org/public/index.htm>.





Place-based Education, Service Learning and It's Our Water! — Using What Works (Continued)

Don't have time for service learning projects during school hours? Why not make it an voluntary after-school or Saturday activity? Think about inviting members of the community to join you as you work to improve the water quality of your stream!



port in schools across America, and the environment is the number one subject of choice for student community service projects and programs. According to the Roper Report, 70% of educators involved noticed that students in the environment-based programs saw improved behavior. Ninety-three percent cited increased civility towards others among the students as well. Students who are taught about action strategies through these programs assume personal responsibility for realizing their values. This sense of responsibility increases confidence, self-esteem, and helps them feel a part of something important.

What kind of service learning projects would be appropriate for your students? Many of your student-generated recommendations for improving or maintaining their stream's water quality may spark ideas. If they feel ongoing monitoring is needed, you could help them officially adopt the stream through Stream Watch or a municipal Adopt-A-Stream program. If something more short-term is suggested, you could participate in Big Sweep, a statewide trash cleanup of waterways. Students may want to get involved in stream restoration work by planting vegetation and trees to stabilize the banks or build a nature trail along the stream so others may enjoy their stream. Whatever project you choose, you will be empowering your students to actively participate in being a part of the solution to the problems they identified as important.

For more information or ideas, check out the following Web sites:

NC Big Sweep: www.ncbigssweep.org

Stream Watch: www.ncwater.org/Education_and_Technical_Assistance/Stream_Watch

Corporation of National and Community Service: www.nationalserviceresources.org/node/17228

Learn and Serve: www.servicelearning.org

Promise of Place: www.promiseofplace.org

Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative: www.peecworks.org



N.C. Division of Water Resources

It's Our Water!

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Sponsored by: The Environmental
Education Fund
www.eefund.org

www.ncwater.org

It's Our Water!...

- Is a North Carolina-specific high school Earth/ Environmental Science curriculum and resource guide for North Carolina students and teachers. It covers the importance of water quality and quantity, monitoring and maintaining water quality, and the impacts individual choices and actions have on water quality.
- Centers around field activities in a local stream that leads to a final report and recommendations by the class, coordinated with a series of videos, demonstrations, classroom activities, homework and quizzes.
- Is aligned with the new (2004) North Carolina Standard Course of Study for **high school Earth/Environmental Science**.

Would You Like to Host an It's Our Water! Workshop?

All you need to do is...

- Gather up 10 high school science teachers from your school or district.
- Pick a workday or other day you can meet for 6 — 10 hours.
- Find a place to have this meeting.
- Ask the school district or another sponsor to pay \$25 each for your materials (Including: It's Our Water! DVD and Curriculum Guide, Project WET, Healthy Water Healthy People Testing Kit Manual, and NC River Basin Booklet with inserts and posters, and more).
- Contact Shelby Gull Laird <shelby.gull@ncmail.net>, who will arrange for another facilitator or herself to come to your facility and work with your group learning about It's Our Water!

