

Towser's Branch Project

By Joanna Heckman

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental or public safety need)?

The Towser's Branch project is a multi-year habitat clean-up effort. Students began their project by evaluating Towser's Branch (a stream on school property) and assessing the health of the stream. Students then planned and executed a stream clean up and storm drain-stenciling project.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum (e.g. what course outcomes were met and/or how did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning)?

The curricular objectives achieved satisfied the objectives for the 7th grade environmental outcomes and skills and processes.

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project?

Students were asked to reflect on their experiences by writing in their journals, writing poetry, and writing a letter to the principal.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project?

Involving students in the planning and execution of the project fostered student responsibility. Some of the responsibilities the students performed were: testing water quality (pH, D.O., N, Phosphorous, etc.), recording and assessing data, evaluating the area for biodiversity, and looking for trends or patterns in the data collected.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project (e.g. non-profits, civic organizations, business that provided donations, etc.)?

In planning and executing this project, community partnerships were established with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Trust, community nurseries, and a local Boy Scout group.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project?

I worked closely with my department chair and my interdisciplinary team to ensure the success of this project. In preparation for service-learning, we discussed our environment, the Chesapeake Bay and human impact on the Bay. Students identified their role as well as that of their teachers and community members in our project.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project?

Students learn when they are actively engaged. They also learn when what they are doing has relevance to their daily lives. Service-learning provides an opportunity for students to realize the impact that they have on the world. This enables them to grow into concerned and active members of our society.