Green School Project

By Anita Spanos

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

Students, faculty, staff, and members of the local community coordinated various service-learning activities that earned our school Maryland Green School status. Using our schoolyard habitat and local environments as a context for learning, students demonstrated modeling of effective environmental practices in five areas, including: water conservation and water pollution prevention, energy conservation, solid waste reduction, responsible transportation, and habitat restoration. Students conduct environmental surveys, complete inventory checklists, make earth-friendly contracts, and put forth action plans that focused on caring for and conserving natural resources. Such student driven activities, as making and hanging birdhouses and birdfeeders in the schoolyard habitat, constructing energy-saving light switch reminders, monitoring streams for macroinvertebrates to address water quality, assisting with mapping of the schoolyard habitat, and writing of the Green School application, encouraged and provided for the discovery and development of self-worth, self-discipline, respect for life, and civic values.

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)?

Objective 1 - Curriculum and Instruction

Our school developed a philosophy and approach to the development and implementation of curriculum and instruction that used the environment as an integral part of the school's instructional program.

Objective 2 - Operation and Design of School Building and Grounds

Environmental best management practices were developed and continue to be modeled in the operation, design, and maintenance of the school building and grounds; thus, our school's students, faculty, and staff model what it teaches.

Objective 3 – School Community

Students extended their learning into the community through a variety of projects that addressed local environmental issues.

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

Students reflected upon multidisciplinary and investigative service-learning activities through surveys, journals, peer evaluations, student representative reports, PowerPoint presentations, and from responses and turnouts at sponsored events.

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

Responsibilities were student driven. Team leaders, science club members, and conservation monitors were given responsibilities to plan, oversee, and document activities, projects, and events.

Students became actively involved in the study of environmental issues in the classroom, on the school grounds, and in the local community. Using their schoolyard habitat and local environments as a context for learning, students demonstrated modeling of effective

environmental practices. For example, students recycled and maintained the boxes for paper and aluminum cans, created "turn off and conserve" light switch plates for every light switch in the school, and partnered with numerous groups to make bluebird houses and nature gardens around the school and local community.

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

- Our school partnered with many governmental groups, companies, and individuals including:
- Paper Retriever for in school recycling of paper
- Integrity Recycling for in school aluminum can recycling
- Recycle Reward for in school cell phone recycling
- Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge Center for staff development
- Recycle Reward for in school empty laser & inkjet printer cartridge recycling
- Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge Center for environmental issues, exploration, professional development
- University of Maryland College Park for staff development & curriculum
- Work Place Pro as supplier for Earth Day t-shirts
- Auntie Litter, a percentage of t-sales donated to Auntie Litter
- General Motors & Weekly Reader, provided CD on Fuel Cells
- MD Soil Conservation District, Envirothon training & CD
- Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), for professional development & curriculum
- Maryland State Department of Education, MSDE Continuing Education Credit for Teachers
- National Aquarium in Baltimore, provided Living Waters of the Chesapeake CD and professional development
- Ramsar Convention, for World Wetland Day DVD
- Home Depot & Lowes, donated wood and flowers for Schoolyard Habitat Day
- Maryland Science Center, 2nd & 3rd Grade Field Trip & IMAX Deep Sea 3D, Mystery of the Nile, Alaska
- Trego Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Career Day Event & Speaker
- Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant, 7th & 8th Grade Trip
- Maryland Department of the Environment, assembly for Grades K-5 on recycling
- Maryland Department of the Environment, guest speaker for grades 6-8 on air quality
- Department of Public Works for Baltimore County, for collection of cardboard
- Baltimore Gas Electric Company, provided energy conservation activity books; replacement of oil heat with more efficient gas system, including new lines & burner
- National Wildlife Federation, Schoolyard Habitat Certification
- Ms. Minturn – private beekeeper, guest speaker for grades 6-8
- Maryland Association for Environmental Outdoor Education, for staff development, curriculum, support
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Jennifer Cline - Park Ranger - Career Day Guest
- Speaker
- Baltimore County Department of Public Works Bureau of Solid Waste Management, Tim Dunn – Public Information Specialist, Bureau of Solid Waste Management - guest speaker for K-8 students on recycling
- Marshy Point Nature Center, 6th Grade Field Trip

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

- Proposal to the school principal
- Chairperson/team/interdisciplinary meetings

- Presentation of service-learning projects during PTA meetings
- Asked for donations/volunteers through school newsletters
- Developed partnerships and volunteer contacts for projects and activities

Created an afterschool science club to assist with Green School portfolio and activities
Arranged for media to address events in local newspapers

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

- Arranged for guest speakers and assemblies to promote environmental awareness o Showed past cause/effect relationships of environmental disasters
- Conduced surveys to show the need for implementation of environmental service-learning projects to better local and global communities
- Viewed service-learning projects and activities of other schools
- Class voted on activities/projects to be conducted