
Getting the Word Out

Activity Overview

Students write and develop outreach materials such as a brochure, flyer, door hanger, article or poster that informs the community about their rain garden project.

Objectives

Students will:

- Explain the purpose of rain gardens and their project
- Learn how to develop outreach materials
- Participate in a service-learning project

Subjects Covered

Language arts, Science, Environmental Science, and Social studies

Grades

4 through 12

Activity Time

In class: 10 minutes introduction, ~50 minutes for student presentations

Season

Any

Materials

Access to information about rain gardens (see resource lists in “Resources and Vocabulary”), card stock, poster board, a computer and printer (optional), markers, pens and pencils, clip art, pictures, scrap booking materials, and other design materials, etc.

State Standards

Language Arts: A.4.2, A.4.3, A.4.4, A.8.2, A.8.3, A.8.4, A.12.2, A.12.3, A.12.4, B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3, B.8.1, B.8.2, B.8.3, B.12.1, B.12.2, B.12.3, C.4.1, C.4.2, C.4.3, C.8.1, C.8.2, C.8.3, C.12.1, C.12.2, C.12.3, E.4.1, E.4.3, E.4.5, E.8.1, E.8.3, E.8.5, E.12.1, E.12.3, E.12.5, F.4.1, F.8.1, F.12.1.

Science: A.4.1, A.4.2, A.4.3, A.4.4, A.4.5, A.8.1, A.8.3, A.8.6, A.8.7, A.12.1, C.4.1, C.4.2, C.4.4, C.4.5,

Background

An important component of building a rain garden on the school ground is making the connections with surrounding community members and sharing the story of the project. Getting the word out can be as simple as writing invitations to celebrate the planting to developing colorful brochures explaining what a rain garden is and why build one.

In all probability, citizens in the community may not be aware of rain gardens or understand the storm water and water quality issues that rain gardens address. The development of informational brochures or articles can bring about awareness, understanding, and citizen action. Student-developed outreach materials is a powerful way to inform and advise local citizens about local issues.

Activity Description

Your assignment is to create an attractive and inviting outreach product that you will use to inform the community about your rain garden project and/or related topics. Follow the three steps below to develop your rain garden outreach product.

1. Form teams.

2. Decide on the purpose, content, and format for your outreach product.

Other things to consider when deciding on an outreach approach include your time frame, the audience(s) you want to reach, the message you intend to send, and financial resources available (if any).

There are several types of outreach materials to choose from including:

- brochure or informational pamphlet
- poster
- door hanger
- invitation
- article for a school or community newspaper or newsletter
- Web page on the school Web site
- radio or television news broadcast
- P.S.A. (Public Service Announcement)
- video

Many topics, stories and messages are possible. Consider the following suggestions, or brainstorm other ideas with your teammates:

- invite the public to the school rain garden planting and celebration
- develop a sequence of posters announcing the coming new rain garden
- write advertisements for help with short and long-term maintenance
- organize an open house featuring the new garden
- publicize the event along with a contest to choose a rain garden name

Getting the Word Out (cont.)

C.4.6, C.4.7, C.4.8, C.8.3, C.8.4,
C.8.6., C.12.3, C.12.4, E.4.8, E.8.1,
E.8.8, F.12.8.

Social Studies: A.4.1, A.4.4, A.4.6, A.4.8,
A.8.5, A.8.6, A.8.8, A.8.11, A.12.4,
A.12.6, A.12.12, E.4.1, E.8.1, E.8.4,
E.12.4

- put together a PowerPoint presentation to show at a PTO/PTA or school board meeting
- design a T-shirt introducing the garden (You may consider selling T-shirts as a fundraiser.)
- compose a song dedicated to the rain garden
- write a persuasive article to motivate community members to build rain gardens on their properties
- provide information about what a rain garden is, how it improves water quality, and why the school is building a rain garden
- explain the value of rain gardens
- offer information on how to build a rain garden and where to find help and resources
- design a permanent sign and other signage
- create a map of the watershed and locate your rain garden (and others, if known). Show the distance the garden is from its water body (lake, river, creek, etc.).

3. Present and distribute outreach materials.

After your outreach materials are developed, present your project to the class for constructive feedback. Disseminate your materials.

Extensions

- Develop a documentary of the rain garden project.
- Invite public relations professionals to share how they develop new products and materials.
- Compile materials and photographs to keep as a record for the rain garden project.

Additional Resources

- ... (2006). Outreach materials: Creating solutions to storm water pollution. *Storm water curriculum and teaching guide*. Madison, WI: Earth Partnership for Schools. University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum.
- ... (2003). *Getting in step: A guide for conducting watershed outreach campaigns*. Washington, D.C.: United States Environmental Protection Agency. (EPA 841-B-03-002) www.epa.gov/nps/outreach.html

Web sites

- University of Wisconsin Extension, Environmental Resources Center. <http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu/>

Getting the Word Out (cont.)

Assessments

- Use the following rubric.

	Not so hot	Getting warmer	Hot!
Audience	It is not clear who my/our audience is or what they are asked to do.	My/our audience is identified; but the information is not useful to my/our audience.	My/our audience is identified and the information applies directly to their situation.
User-friendly	My/our materials are messy and difficult to read.	My/our materials help explain the issue and solution but include too many points.	My/our materials are eye-catching and help make my issue and solution clear to the audience.
Message	The message is long, wordy and confusing.	The message is clear but not written in an active voice.	The message is clear and direct.
Grammar and Punctuation	Words are misspelled, and punctuation is sloppy.	A few careless mistakes and typos are missed.	Grammar and punctuation is correct.



You're invited!!

Why: For the unveiling of a rain garden and sign

When: Wednesday June 7th at 8:15-8:30

Where: Winnequah park across from the gazebo

Questions: Call Bob Schlaefer 221-7676

Hope to see you there!!



Student-designed rain garden sign, dedication invitation and display board, Winnequah Middle School, Monona, WI. Photos: Bob Schlaefer.