

Artist Evaluation

ArtStream June 2006

Participants: Willow Springs Summer School 8th graders

Teacher: Sharon Lewis

Artist: Pat Hight.

GOALS

1. To teach and practice the skills of observing and recording in the out of doors, i.e., Nature Journaling, in order to increase awareness of the life in aquatic and riparian ecosystems and to foster an understanding of the connection between clean water and healthy ecosystems.
2. To teach the connection between the system of dry and losing streambeds in Willow Springs that make up the headwaters of the Eleven Point River, and that same river miles downstream at Thomasville where it has become recognizable as a high quality Ozark stream.
3. To teach what lives in a healthy aquatic and riparian ecosystem and why clean unpolluted water is important in all parts of the system including the ground water system.

NATURE JOURNALING

Introduction to Nature Journaling by showing transparencies of pages from published nature journals, and my own nature journal. Showed them how to prepare their journal page with name, date, location, time of day, weather, what is being observed, and any other things of note to be written in upper right or left hand of page.

We then walked to their outdoor classroom, which happens to be on one of the losing streams that is part of the headwaters system of the Eleven Point River. They walked through their outdoor classroom crossing the stream twice, then spread out on the terrain to observe and record the information from their five senses, sight, sound, hearing, smell, touch.

RIPARIAN ASSESSMENT FIELD TRIP

We spent two mornings walking the dry stream that begins in their outdoor classroom. We did riparian assessment, trash pickup, distinguished between trash and artifacts like horseshoes, and pieces of ceramic tile. We identified trees, plants, birds, and reptiles. We all learned how to use the dichotomous key to identify trees.

On day two of our walk we found pools of water with type two taxa indicating pretty good water quality, and an example of point source pollution from a pipe emptying into the stream bed. We couldn't identify what was flowing in or what the pipe might be connected to.

DEVELOPING DRAWING SKILLS

More drawing lessons including contour and blind contour, and negative shapes.

FIELD TRIP TO MDC REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

The students had time to draw from mounts in the headquarters lobby and to spend time on the nature trail, which has a herp pond, a fishpond, and small woodland. They observed and recorded and drew in their nature journals.

POLLUTION AND WATERSHED STUDY

Lecture and discussion about point and non-point pollution, losing streams and groundwater, study of our geographic location relative to the Eleven Point Watershed, map study.

FIELD TRIP TO ELEVEN POINT RIVER AT THOMASVILLE

The class met an MDC education specialist and BWEP volunteers and did water quality assessment and riparian assessment on the Eleven Point River at Thomasville.

COMPUTER LAB

Study of assigned "critters" in preparation for creating a food web of flora and fauna in the aquatic and riparian environments.

SHARING WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN

Students selected primary level books about water and life in water. They rehearsed reading them, and then went to the lower elementary classrooms for reading and game sessions.

CLAY EFFIGY POTS

Students created clay effigy pots of the animals they had studied. I discussed Quapaw effigy pottery using illustrations from local expert Roy Hathcock's book, *The Quapaw and Their Pottery*. Some examples of this pottery have been found in Howell County. My goal in this lesson is to help the children understand the kind of observation and relationship that other people have had with animals in their environment and to give them a model of one way to view and care about their environment and the other living beings that they share it with. We glazed and fired the effigy pots by the fast fire Raku method.

CONSTRUCTING A FOOD WEB DESIGN

With the direction of their teacher students constructed a food web design. First they made a horizontal list of all of their assigned "critters" with what they eat listed below, and what eats them listed above. The students then transferred that information to cards and made a more complex arrangement of the information.

TIE DYE DAY

Students tie-dyed t-shirts and 24 paper mache' masks to be used for costumes in their Food Web play. A local craft artist volunteered to set up the tie dye and took the students through the process.

FOOD WEB MURAL

With the help of art teacher Ron McGarry students laid out and painted a 4-foot by 8-foot mural of the food web in an aquatic and riparian ecosystem. This mural will be on permanent display at the middle school.

FOOD WEB CAFÉ, PREPARATION AND PERFORMANCE

With the help of their teacher Sharon Lewis, students wrote and performed a play called *The Food Web Café*. This play used all of the information learned about the food web in riparian and aquatic environments and was performed for more than 100 summer school students on the last day of school.

Preparation for performance included a morning of doing acting and improvisation exercises taught by Lois Reborne and artist Pat Hight, as well as making costumes (tie-dye day), and making a banner and menus for props.

Their painted mural served as part of the scenery for the play, and their effigy pots were on display. Younger children in the audience were included in the end of the performance by being invited up on stage to play decomposers to take care of some of the animals that succumbed to predators and polluted water.

SUMMARY

During a one-month summer school term in June of 2006 this class of 12 eighth graders going to freshmen in high school in the fall did a remarkable amount of work. They studied nature journaling and drawing, made clay pots representing animals found in their local environment, worked in the computer lab doing research on a fairly extensive list of animals, took four field trips, painted a four by eight foot mural, and made props and costumes for the play that they wrote and performed for the rest of the summer school classes. This remarkable group of young people learned where they live in their watershed and how important clean water is to them and to the "critter" they share their watershed with.

LEARNING

Integrate the nature journaling with the research.

We hoped to add interviewing local residents and officials to determine what the historic names of the losing streams are.

The ambitious schedule kept the pace up and gave the teacher some late nights keeping up with preparation.

So much variety gave everyone a chance to be successful.

The dry stream hikes in town were eye opening for the kids, as was the connection between these mostly dry streams and the Eleven Point River at Thomasville.

RESOURCES

Willow Springs Schools Outdoor Classroom

Taxidermy mounts and Nature Trail at MDC Regional Headquarters in West Plains, Mo.

MDC Education Specialist

Informational Handouts from MDC
Middle School Computer lab

MATERIALS

Nature Journals constructed in class

Pencils

Dyes, white cotton t-shirts, paper mache' masks

Clay and Glazes, portable kilns for firing

Masonite board and acrylic paint, brushes

Art supplies for making banner and menus for play