
Telling the Restoration Story

Activity Overview

Students create a photographic essay to document the restoration effort.

Objectives

Students will:

- Engage in team production of an integrated project
- Conceptualize, organize and create a multimedia presentation of a complex subject

Subjects Covered

Science, Language Arts, and Art

Grades

6 through 12

Activity Time

Depends on project design; might be spread across entire school year

Season

Any

Materials

Camera, film, paper and supplies for displays

State Standards

Language Arts:

Create or produce writing (B.4.1, B.8.1, B.12.1)

Plan, revise, edit, & publish writing (B.4.2, B.8.2, B.12.2)

Understand forms, structures, & punctuation marks (B.4.3, B.8.3, B.12.3)

Develop vocabulary (D.4.1, D.8.1, D.12.1)

Use computers (E.4.1, E.8.1, E.12.1)

Create media products (E.4.3, E.8.3, E.12.3)

Analyze & edit media (E.4.5, E.8.5, E.12.5)

Conduct then communicate research (F.4.1, F.8.1, F.12.1)

Background

Engaging in a restoration of a native ecosystem on the school grounds can be a far reaching, school-wide project. There are multiple layers of meaning to such a project. On the simplest level, it is restoring a piece of land to a pre-settlement state. In doing this, the restorationists will be aiding to increase biodiversity, creating habitat for rare and endangered species, and beginning to heal some of the parts of the ecosystem (such as soil, insect populations, and the seed bank in the soil) that have been mistreated in recent history.

In addition to the biological effects of the restoration, the students are creating a much more interesting and aesthetically varied landscape for their school. They may be starting a project that serves as a hook to engage the broader community with the school that reaches beyond their classroom. The project can provide an opportunity for positive and hopeful environmental action. The restoration project may begin to provide students with a sense of their own place and the history of their place. And of course, as the restoration is used to teach various subjects in class, the project will be used to enhance the school's curriculum.

All of these layers of meaning can be interesting stories to tell. Through a combination of photos and text, students can tell the part of the restoration story that they see as important, relevant, and exciting.

Activity Description

As a class, create a vision for the photo essay. Consider the following questions:

What is the product? Do you want to create a photo essay with lots of photographs that largely speak for themselves and minimal text? Are you interested in a book that tells a story through the written word and has photographs to supplement the text? Do you envision a wall display, a slide show, a book, or a different format?

What is the story that you want to tell? What do you want to focus on? Some of the potential angles might include the biological background of the restoration, the site work, the planning behind the work, the educational uses and plans for the prairie, the involvement of different ages, community involvement, planting day or impact of the project. Your project should reflect what you think is the important story.

Divide up into production teams of 5-7 students. Each group will work on a different chapter of the final product. The team should consist of approximately 1-3 photographers, 1-3 writers, 1-3 researchers to gather background information and 1-2 who can do layout of the essay and text into the final presentation format.

Telling the Restoration Story (cont.)

Within the teams, develop a detailed outline of what you want to cover, what you want to convey and a timeline for your work.

Extensions

- Create a video documentary of the restoration effort in a manner similar to that described above. The teams should consist of photographers, script writers, researchers, an interviewer and a narrator.
- A photo essay or a video documentary could be set up so that a new chapter could be added each year documenting the activity and changes in the new year.
- The final product for this production could be web pages for the school website. The site could be regularly updated to involve other students to include photographs, be interactive or could incorporate extensive links to other resources.

Additional Resources

- Myers, Pete. Making Images- Not Taking Images. <http://www.luminous-landscape.com/essays/making-images.shtml>
- Gibbons, Gail. (1997). Click! : A book about cameras and taking pictures. Little, Brown.
- Haslam, Andrew, Kathryn Senior, and Jon Barnes. 2000. Photography (Make it Work! Science). Two-Can Publishers.

Assessments

- Develop a rubric for content, clarity, mechanics, innovation and aesthetic of the final presentation.
- Critique the team's ability to support a collaborative team approach, maintain clear roles and responsibilities, and work effectively together.