

## **Reflections on Learning II: Saving the Wetlands Presentation Reflection**

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**Course:** Masters of Arts in Teaching 640

**Instructor:** Dr. Cynthia Elliott

**Assignment:** Service-Learning

### *Description*

Preservation of Louisiana's wetlands is vital to the future of our state. In order to convey this important message, I presented my wetlands project to the Highlands Horse Project 4-H Group. The lessons and activities took place at the barn where some of the girls board their horses. I used a wide variety of posters and resource materials that I received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force. The objective of the presentation was to promote awareness, interest, and concern for the wetlands and their preservation by discussing their functions, values, and even inhabitants. I began the lesson by introducing different types of wetlands through the use of posters and other pictures and pointed out the characteristics of swamps, marshes, and bogs. I then discussed how the wetlands provide a habitat for many water and land animals. Next, I used another poster to point out a wide variety of organisms that depend on the wetlands. After giving each club member the handout entitled "Welcome to Nature's Nursery," I asked her to look for other examples. A third poster was used to point out other important functions and values of the wetlands, which include flood control and erosion protection. To further illustrate this, I conducted an experiment demonstrating how the wetlands can reduce flooding by absorbing water.

Following this experiment, I gave each girl the pamphlet entitled "Turning the Tide," which emphasized the land changes and loss of wetlands in Louisiana since 1932. I wanted the

girls to understand how critical this issue is for our state. To conclude my presentation, I gave each member three different bookmarks, which list ways to protect the wetlands; they took turns reading them aloud.

Following the presentation, we took a break and snacked on cookies shaped like alligators, dragonflies, turtles, and birds—all wetland inhabitants. These cookies were made especially for the group by their 4-H leader. As they ate their refreshments, the girls completed a wetlands word search, crossword puzzle, and questionnaire. I then handed out an activity sheet that showed people doing harmful things to the environment. I told them to circle the negative activities and check their answers online when they got home. At the conclusion of my presentation, each girl received a decorated paper bag containing several wetlands brochures and handouts, a map, a CD-ROM, bookmarks, and a magnet.

### *Analysis*

As shown through the foregoing description, I believe my project made an important impact on my audience and my original objectives. First, regarding the documentation used, I was amazed by the amount of materials and resources I received from the EPA and Louisiana Wetlands Task Force. Both organizations were extremely generous and seemed to appreciate that this issue was being introduced to young people. I spent quite a while sorting through all the materials I received and choosing the ones I thought would most interest and entertain girls of this age group; I wanted the lesson to be informative, but also fun. I feel I was successful in meeting this goal, as the girls seemed to really enjoy the presentation and became extremely involved in the discussion. Moreover, because all of these girls experienced Hurricane Katrina, I think the experiment helped them understand how the wetlands provide flood control and their importance in Louisiana. In addition to the experiment, I also was pleased with the other

activities, such as the word search and questionnaire. Each focused on a topic presented in the lesson and reinforced wetlands vocabulary. Overall, I believe that the objectives of this project were met, as the presentation seemed to leave a positive impression on the girls.

### ***Reflection***

This is the type of project that actually can make a difference, and I look forward to using it again. Because of the vast amount of materials and resources available, it is easily adaptable for all age groups. But, the materials, experiment, and activities used in this project all were extremely effective in meeting the objectives of this particular assignment, and I definitely would use them in the future. However, I wish the group could have visited a wetlands area, such as the Honey Island Swamp, so they could have developed an even greater appreciation of those environments and their importance. If I use this lesson in the future, I will be sure to include this excursion. Nevertheless, this particular project seemed effective and made a lasting impression on the girls; I hope that this now will translate to further preservation of the wetlands.

**Dr. Elliott's Comments:** *Teacher candidates are asked to write as accomplished teachers based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) where they describe, analyze, and reflect on the teaching-learning sequence.*