

Wildlife Education in the Suburbs

Article by SHARON KAMAS, Science Coordinator, Crosby I.S.D.



Students of Crosby Elementary participated in a Trinity Field Investigation Day at Sheldon Lake State Park alongside TWA educators and volunteers.

Crosby Independent School District is the center of a growing community just northeast of Houston. Five years ago, the teachers were introduced to several new opportunities to enhance science in their classrooms with the Texas Wildlife Association. With the increasing demands to improve math and reading achievement, it can be challenging to carve out time for science and social studies, but our teachers embraced the challenge and allowed students to feed their curiosity about nature and wildlife.

The first year, we scheduled Wildlife by Design visits that serviced approximately 20 classrooms, reserved Discovery Trunks that were shared by teachers for the two-week period, hosted a successful L.A.N.D.S. Outreach Teacher Workshop and sent educators to the L.A.N.D.S. Intensive Summer Training.

The next year, word got around. Students talked about making aquifers from the year before and others could

explain just about anything involving animal adaptations thanks to the *Skins and Skulls* presentations. *Let's Talk Turkey* was a big hit with the younger students. More teachers wanted to participate. We doubled the number of classrooms served with Wildlife by Design presentations. We reserved the maximum number of Discovery Trunks allowed and added Distance Learning Webinars. Teachers filled another L.A.N.D.S. Outreach Teacher Workshop.

After attending the L.A.N.D.S. Intensive Training the first summer, we adjusted our curriculum in sixth grade science to include specific L.A.N.D.S. curriculum resources. As a result, our students were able to participate in a TWA-supported quail necropsy and an outdoor land stewardship experience. We secured volunteers from a multitude of local and state agencies, parents and students for both events.

Our high school students taking

agriculture courses took time out of their busy spring schedules to attend a Saturday volunteer training and worked with the science coordinators to prepare for the three big days. The first year, we had about 20 volunteers who assisted with facilitating stations such as watershed education using rainfall simulators, riparian area exploration, building quail habitat models and leading necropsies. During the field experience, our sixth graders also learned about a local rancher's conservation efforts and the challenges he faces as he practices land stewardship while balancing the need to make a profit and the passion he has for ranching. Parents and volunteers alike praised the efforts and outcome of the inaugural events.

By the third year, TWA resources and opportunities were integrated into the Crosby science curriculum and utilized at multiple grade levels. The science coordinators Sharon Kamas and Becky Lindsey assisted with the planning and





implementation, but it was teacher support that made it work. Students benefited from the authentic experiences, games, lessons and presentations. Students loved when a Discovery Trunk arrived or when they heard the TWA specialist was coming for a Wildlife by Design presentation.

During the third year of implementation, sixth grade participated in year two of the L.A.N.D.S. Intensive field experience and quail necropsy activities. With skills and muscle provided by husbands Paul Kamas and John Lindsey, we built rainfall simulators of our own. We secured more than 40 volunteers who included local and state agency experts, parents and students, and we planned even more stations for students.

The TWA specialists were an integral part of helping us make the day a huge success, despite the three days of rain prior to the event that forced us to use an alternate location. Even though rain was predicted for the day, campus teachers and principal Walter Berringer were determined that the field experience go on. We took advantage of classrooms and the covered walkway outside and conducted an incredible event.

Due to the increased interest from science teachers, two seventh grade educators will attend the L.A.N.D.S. training this summer. Crosby I.S.D. is moving to neighboring schools and sixth grade will join the middle school, so we are implementing the L.A.N.D.S. curriculum in seventh grade to better integrate

with the Texas science standards.

Since the first year of partnering with TWA in Crosby, a Crosby teacher has won the TWA Natural Resource—Excellence in Teaching Scholarship. In addition, Crosby has hosted several L.A.N.D.S. Outreach Teacher Workshops with educators attending multiple L.A.N.D.S. Intensive Summer Trainings. Crosby has also hosted three volunteer workshops, participated in watershed education field experiences with fourth graders and taken advantage of the multi-faceted resources from TWA.

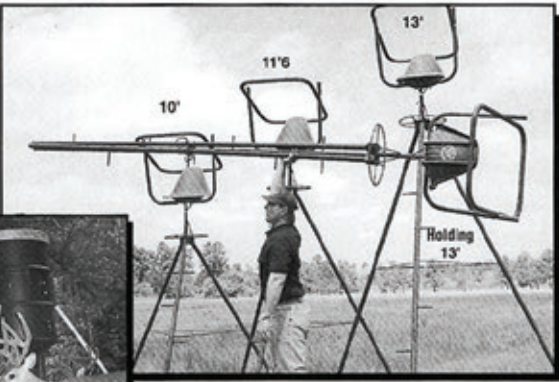

Thanks in part to the partnership with TWA, the excitement throughout the district and support from central administration, every elementary campus will develop Outdoor Learning Centers for the 2016-2017 school year. And teachers are using the rainfall simulators more than just once during the year.

As science coordinators, we are committed to providing quality, research-based, conceptual science instruction required for every student to be scientifically literate. TWA is a key player in our journey. We are thrilled with our accomplishments so far and look forward to continuing our partnership. 🌟


For more information about the L.A.N.D.S. Outreach and L.A.N.D.S. Intensive, visit the TWA website texas-wildlife.org or call the TWA office at (800) 839-9453.

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