School Yard Report Card

How does trash make it to the bay?
How do we evaluate our local environment?
What is run off and erosion?
How can we improve the schoolyard environment?

Objective

Students will evaluate the yard around their classrooms and identify some problems and start to develop solutions to make their school more environmentally friendly.

Preparation

Students should have completed the Life of a Raindrop lesson, or have an understanding of watersheds and the fact that water that falls onto the school ends up in the bay.

Delivery

Tell the students that today they’ll get the chance to give their school a grade! Review with students what a watershed is and what happens to the rain that falls onto their school or their homes. Each student gets a copy of the Schoolyard Report Card. Students will work in small groups. All points can be tallied and an average score for each category can be calculated. Depending on the size and layout of your school yard you may want to split up students into different areas or release them out to the yard at different times. Some questions require students to talk to school employees (principal, or maintenance people). Plan a good time to send one student from each group to talk to these “consultants” or have them come to your class. Once everyone has completed the report card have student groups brainstorm improvements. Discuss improvements as a class.

Extension—Writing: Taking into account all you know about healthy environments, design the ideal schoolyard. Think about biodiversity, habitat, runoff, water quality, and recreational/educational values. Write a description or draw your ideal school yard.

Extension—Homework: Have students use the Schoolyard Report Card as a guide to evaluate the area surrounding their own home.

Extension—Engineering: Once you’ve determined what improvements your schoolyard needs to be environmentally friendly, design and build a model of the ideal schoolyard.

Debrief

When we think of environmental challenges we think of the cutting down trees in the rainforest, or melting polar ice caps, but there are environmental challenges that are close to home and we can solve them!

- What challenges would we face in the implementation of our improvements? (funding, different opinions or values)
- What other environmental challenges can tackle in our daily lives? (energy consumption)