

Jefferson Elementary-Fox River Academy, Appleton, WI - Chosen as a National Green Ribbon School April 22, 2013

Integrated sustainability in school wetlands, forest, stream, pond and gardens

Jefferson Fox River Academy (JFRA) is a public charter school that runs a wetland restoration project on a 36-acre site. This is one of many outdoor learning opportunities afforded to JFRA's K-8 students, more than 40 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged. Students have access to five school gardens and a five-acre wooded site adjacent to the school. The gardens are designed to teach students about different topics such as the life cycle and the interdependency of plants and butterflies. In addition, JFRA is working to register a school forest with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Another regular outdoor activity is a citizen science project using Schildt Pond—the site of a previous restoration effort in which JFRA students planted more than 3,000 native plants along the shoreline. Students monitor the stream in September, October, April, and May, collecting data and classifying invertebrates. They learn responsible fishing practices, observe wildlife, and study the pond's hydrology.

The school has integrated sustainability topics to the academic curriculum. These include energy, transportation, recycling, wildlife, forestry, and water conservation. The school uses much of Wisconsin's *K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP)* curriculum, which teaches energy topics across all grade levels. JFRA has also adopted *KEEP* field experiences such as field trips to a nuclear power plant, and a *KEEP* activity in which students conduct an audit of energy usage in their school building. In addition, JFRA has started a service learning project that will allow students to work with the City of Appleton to attain Bird City USA designation.

JFRA formed a Green Team that engages all students and staff to create a healthy, sustainable learning space. One of the Green Team's projects is to work with the YMCA After Care program to educate students about simple energy conservation measures such as turning off light switches, using natural light from windows, and unplugging appliances during school breaks. In addition, JFRA has held a number of special events including Leopold Weekend Observance; Earth Day celebrations with Paper Discovery Center, Habitat Restore, and Harmony Cafe; and Environmental Education Week observance.

JFRA's Green Teaching Building, which is owned by the city of Appleton, houses fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms. The JFRA community retrofitted the building with green features including technologies for lighting, heating, and water conservation. The building recently installed demonstration solar panels, allowing students to calculate and monitor energy use. In 2010 JFRA received EPA's *ENERGY STAR* certification with a score of 96. The school has installed energy efficient T-8 bulbs and occupancy sensors.

JFRA maintains multiple composting bins, including vermicomposting which allow students to compost snack and lunch waste, and learn about the flow of energy and nutrients. The school composts yard wastes, and uses composted material to enrich the soil for their community garden.

JFRA promotes student and faculty health. It is a *Wisconsin Green and Healthy School* and a member of the *Wisconsin Green Schools Network*, which encourages schools to implement a healthy environment. The school has a comprehensive IAQ program and takes measures to prevent exposure to asthma triggers. It also provides students with fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain food. JFRA has adopted several fitness programs including intramural sports, *Fuel Up to Play 60*, *Movin' and Munchin'*, *Walk to Win*, and *Healthy Kids*. It has used Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) rewards such as basketball, dance, and open gym. JFRA also provides bike racks and awards prizes to students who participate in *Ride Your Bike or Walk to School Day*.

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