Making a Splash in Extension Education: The Junior Watershed Steward Program

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Abstract
Around the world, countries are jumping on to the educational standard bandwagon. Many performance standards initiatives such as the U.S. 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, have altered the course of our classrooms and in many cases hindered both the learning and instructional processes. Due to present guidelines, national and international objectives mandate higher test scores, measurable annual progress, increased accountability and academic rigor, all while providing a better workforce and more successful graduates. Improving the teaching and learning processes are also priorities yet we continue to see dramatic reductions in funding worldwide, coupled with the already pressing challenge of a steady decline in highly qualified certified teachers. One solution which may address budgetary, standards and individual community needs is the inception of turn key curricula such as the curriculum delivered through the Junior Watershed Program at the University of Arizona and its impressive network of partnering organizations. This paper will discuss the importance of an innovative program such as the Junior Watershed Program which integrates learning and problem solving while addressing the demands of math and science performance based educational standards.

The Junior Watershed Steward Program is a cooperative high school extension education program focusing on the education and training of students and teachers across the state to serve as volunteers in the protection, restoration, monitoring, and conservation of their water and watersheds. The J.W.S. program emulates the Arizona Master Watershed Steward Program which is geared towards adults and continuing education and operates through grants from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension office. As a learner centered inquiry based program, the Junior Watershed Steward program cultivates the ideas of environmental leadership and stewardship at the high-school level while simultaneously building a strong and sustainable foundation in water and water related issues for the teachers who participate in the program along side their students

Junior Watershed Stewards Learn about:
- Climate & Weather
- Geology & Soils
- Hydrology
- Mapping & Technology
- Fire in Watersheds
- Ecology in Watersheds
- Water Management
Junior Watershed Stewards Learn through:

- Hands-on Lab Exercises
- Specialist Lectures
- Field Trips
- Volunteer service projects
- Public educations

In addition to surpassing science, math and reading performance standards, and exposure and training with cutting technology, Junior Watershed Steward participants receive leadership and communication skills which will enable them to be successful in any setting. Surprisingly many students and teachers are from countries other than the U.S. which brings this unique multicultural and multifaceted program to life both in and out of the classroom. Ultimately, the Junior Watershed Steward program is riding the water wave of the future. By fostering environmental stewardship, J.W.S. is not just preserving local watersheds it is also empowering students and teachers to “make a splash” by taking action in their own communities and beyond.

**Keywords:** Water, watershed, education, environment, extension