

1973

## School-Community Environmental Improvement Project: A Model for Implementing Change

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### Recommended Citation

Frederick, Charles L. (1973) "School-Community Environmental Improvement Project: A Model for Implementing Change," *Iowa Science Teachers Journal*: Vol. 10: No. 3, Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/istj/vol10/iss3/7>

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May 11-12, 1973: Earth Science Teachers Workshop at Ames, Iowa. Additional information can be obtained by contacting Mr. Ken Frazier, Workshop Coordinator, Project ECO, 102 So. Kellogg, Ames, Iowa 50010.

May 19, 1973: Teachers' "Field Day" Workshop in Eastern Iowa. Place and time will be announced later.

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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: A MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

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Historically, schools have been passive in their roles in helping to facilitate change hence improvement in society. This is a paradox when we consider that schools, and the communities they serve, need major revisions. The disenchantment by certain groups of students in the schools and the citizens within the community might very well focus some light on some of these needs. What then, are our schools and communities not doing in allowing for full growth and needed change to occur? Why do schools remain shackled to an old order that somehow doesn't and hasn't worked effectively? Why do communities remain strapped to worn-out machinery that only serves to maintain the status quo? However, even the last statement could be questioned in light of a deteriorating quality of life for most citizens. What then can schools and communities do?

It is my contention that they must join hands in helping to improve the quality of life for all the people that they serve. If there is to be improvement, a new alliance must be formulated that will bring about a collective approach to solving problems that confront society. This alliance will induce change and I must admit that such change will cause some concern for those who feel comfortable in what they are already doing. Change and its effect is not always comfortable. Change implies adaptation and adaptation requires energy. It is easy for some people to let the world go by without their becoming a part of things. However, this is precisely the problem we are facing! We, as educators,

must help to facilitate maximum involvement by citizens in improvement efforts for a better life for not only ourselves, but more importantly, for all the people with whom we must reside. How can this be accomplished? There are many ways to approach the problem!

First, we must place the single greatest priority on recognizing that schools are for all students and that communities are for all people. When we have done this, we are ready to begin the larger task--that of improving these two environments. Beginning with the schools, we must relate what we are teaching to the real world which also includes that world within the school itself. Secondly, we must activate young concerned minds for the purpose of improving the total of the community in which the school is found. Specifically, teachers must begin to initiate environmental improvement efforts within the school and the community. However, a renewal of practices by staff, students, and other citizens will be required. Within the schools alternatives in education for students must be provided. Student involvement in school policy must also be forthcoming. Future educational practices must be examined in light of present student needs. When all these changes come about, schools might then perform the functions that were intended by their founders.

At the community level, students must be allowed to explore ways which can help to bring about changes for the improvement of the lives of everyone within the community. If the city government is not performing its function, then it is up to students to help catalyze concern and action among citizens about such malpractice. If the elderly or disadvantaged are not cared for properly, then students must become active in helping to bring about an awareness to others about this problem. If the construction of an interstate highway has a higher priority than housing or medical care then satisfactory solutions must be found to rearrange these priorities. In my way of thinking, schools could almost dismiss their traditional role--and turn toward a totally relevant educational practice which deals with real problems and not the abstract irrelevant kinds of experiences that may or may not make a difference anyway.

How does one begin to initiate this kind of education? In order for students to become actively involved in determining the quality of their school and community environment, they must be provided with various research

techniques which can be applied to such environmental improvement efforts. Hopefully, the application of these techniques to real problems will facilitate concern among those who are aware of such investigations.

In a recent program for Community-School Betterment (Environmental Action Program) which was conducted for high ability students attending the University of Iowa's Secondary Science Training Program, many community-school research projects were initiated that focused on the problem of how to improve the quality of the biological and/or social environment within Iowa City. As a result, many of these investigations by these students ranged from determining the quality of water in a nearby creek to how to initiate improvement efforts in local recreation facilities. The results of many of these student-initiated investigations follow.

One team of students chose to conduct research on the problem of how teachers might improve environmental studies courses in their schools. After conducting many interviews with a considerable number of teachers who were participating in the University of Iowa Summer Institute in Environmental Studies, the research team concluded that environmental studies curricula must help to facilitate affective development in students as well as cognitive development. "Are People Satisfied with the Recreational Facilities in Iowa City?" was another student-initiated investigation. This investigating team designed questionnaires and conducted interviews with different age groups throughout the community regarding the problem of determining the quality of recreational facilities. Another group of students elected to investigate "Attitudes on Further Integration of Iowa City." An attitude scale was designed and administered to randomly selected subjects who reside in Iowa City. Further, an investigation of noise pollution was performed by another group of students. One group of students focused its attention on an assessment of "Attitudes Toward Zero Population Growth."

In addition to the above socially-oriented investigations, a study was conducted by another investigating team which attempted to compare, with a previous study, the agricultural runoff into Clear Creek near Iowa City. One student team performed an investigation into the "Attitudes of Consumers and Retailers of Bottled and Canned Beverages in Iowa City Toward Recycling."

"A Comparative Study of the Pollution Levels in the Iowa River at Iowa City: Past and Present" was another environmental assessment study. "Creating a Park or Recreation Area in Your Community" was an attempt to develop a procedural model for developing recreational facilities. "A Comparison of Lifestyles between Urban and Rural Dwellers" was another investigation which proved to be very effective in creating an awareness among the two groups that were studied. Finally, one team investigated "Diversity of Lifestyles in Relationship to Refuse."

The results of most of the above studies were very interesting. However, the primary aim of this article is to merely point out that much can be done within the schools and the communities which will help to create a public concern about the quality of the environment we have. To be sure, while these investigations may lack sophistication in research design and statistical analysis, the important ingredient has been that of developing an awareness in people. It's this kind of awareness that perhaps will help to facilitate action for community-school environmental improvement efforts. Why not have your students investigate your community?

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#### STOM MEETS

The Science Teachers of Missouri's spring meeting will be held at Northeastern Missouri State University (Kirksville) May 18-20. Activity sessions to be held at the three day meeting include: Missouri geology and the energy crisis; environmental studies; limnology and spring flora. For further information contact Ed Ortleb, 5663 Pernod, St. Louis, Missouri 63139.

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