

Soaking Wet

This section of the Dragonfly Gazette recognizes Project WET Facilitators, Teachers and Schools and provides a place for them to share their ideas and accomplishments.

Award-Winning Facilitator, Teacher, and School

On Saturday, March 18 at the Georgia Environmental Education Awards Ceremony at the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia's annual conference, Georgia Project WET presented the Facilitator of the Year award to Dawn Hudson for her leadership in Paulding County. Ken Suttles received the WET Teacher of the Year award for giving his students life-changing water education experiences, and Armuchee Elementary School's commitment to "Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning," specifically local water resources, earned it recognition as the Project WET School of the Year.

Georgia Project WET Facilitator of the Year — Dawn Hudson, Paulding County Schools



In November 2005, Dawn, the Science Specialist for Paulding County Schools, organized an event that has never been done before in Georgia. She coordinated an intensive two-day facilitator training for over 30 teachers using all three of the Projects – Learning Tree, WET and WILD. In the last issue of the Dragonfly Gazette (Winter 2006), Dawn explained why and how she coordinated this training. Below, she elaborates on her plan for teachers in Paulding County Schools to USE the Project WET Curriculum and Activity Guide.

1. What are your expectations for implementing WET throughout Paulding County?

Establishing a teacher who is a facilitator and a user of the materials in his/her own classroom sends a message to the teachers at the school. The message is that environmental education is pertinent, "real life" (what could be more real?), GPS-based, easily facilitated through inquiry, and most importantly, cross-curricular. Another advantage of having the trainer on the school grounds is to have the resource close by. If teachers feel timid or feel they did not have enough time in training to quite feel comfortable with the material, they have a resource down the hall.

When the redelivery of Projects WET, Wild and Learning Tree occur in the 2006-2007 school year in Paulding, the trainers can gear it toward their local school schedule. For example, one school may have local in-service days in the fall where they choose to redeliver the training whereas another school decides they want to all meet on a couple of Saturdays.

2. Now that over 30 teachers have been trained as WET facilitators in Paulding, how do you plan to motivate them to do workshops at their schools?

Motivation for the curriculum is not an issue. Many teachers have already heard about the courses, and I had more than enough teachers volunteer their time to become state trainers. The books themselves are motivation for teachers to come to the classes. In fact, in Paulding the trainers only received books, free substitutes to cover their classes during their training period and lunch. We did not pay a supplement, although we did give PLU credit.

3. Do you plan to offer any incentives to facilitators in Paulding to conduct workshops?

By having teachers volunteer to be trainers, it was not a "forced issue" and the teacher trainers already have buy-in. Also, when they volunteered, I made it clear that my expectation was for them to redeliver the training at their own school the following year. Since we have three levels of trainers - elementary, middle and high they can pick and choose activities and units that are specific to the GPS in science at their own level and differentiated for learners at their specific schools.

4. Is there a time frame you have in mind for implementation of the workshops at the schools?

We have received word from the Department of Education that our Math Science Partnership grant was funded for the 2006-2007 year. A portion of the funds will be used to buy a full set of books (PLT, WET, WILD and Conserve Water) for EVERY teacher in EACH school. The trainers agreed to provide training for the teachers in their schools in the following school year.

5. What do you expect the outcome of offering workshops in all the schools will be?

Have you taken time to look lately at the cost of Professional Learning Courses? On average, it costs a school system \$300 per day to train a teacher for a one-day workshop including materials, substitutes and a trainer. However, if you add up the cost of Projects WET, WILD, Project Learning Tree, Conserve Water, the additional modules in Project Learning Tree, and Aquatic Wild, it only costs \$90 plus a substitute! Teachers receive so many useful materials from this training that they literally cannot carry them in their arms.

The final outcome is to increase teacher content area knowledge and pedagogy in environmental education, aligned with state and national science standards for a resultant increase in inquiry and content test scores in science county-wide. And if more schools adopt this program and model, it will increase scores state-wide. Even more importantly, it will provide an awareness of environmental issues to students and create better citizens who react and reflect toward the world around them.

