Our Ecosystem, Our Community

Program Overview
In *Our Ecosystem, Our Community*, middle school students (grades 6-8) will investigate the guiding question, “How am I part of my local ecosystem?” The core lessons in this program will provide students with a foundational understanding of biodiversity and interdependence in ecosystems, and opportunities to explore their local ecosystem through nature journaling and community science data collection. In *Our Ecosystem, Our Community: From Me to the Sea*, students will discover how their terrestrial ecosystem is connected to our bay and ocean ecosystems through marine debris data collection and analysis. In *Our Ecosystem, Our Community: Greening Urban Watersheds*, students build and test models to learn how restoring urban ecosystems benefits communities and wildlife and manages stormwater. At the conclusion of the program, students transform their knowledge into meaningful action to understand and protect their local ecosystem.

Program Outline
Students will participate in a set of core lessons that are the same in both program versions, plus a set of additional lessons that are specific to a theme (*From Me to the Sea* or *Greening Urban Watersheds*).

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<th>Program</th>
<th>Our Ecosystem, Our Community: From Me to the Sea</th>
<th>Our Ecosystem, Our Community: Greening Urban Watersheds</th>
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| Core Lessons | ● Ecosystems: Interdependence and Biodiversity  
● What’s in My Ecosystem?  
● People, Water and Ecosystems | |
| Additional Lessons | ● Introduction to Marine Debris  
● Systemic Problem, Systemic Solutions | ● Gray and Green Watersheds  
● Restoring Urban Ecosystems |
| Action Project | Action projects may include gathering and presenting community science data to answer a research question, starting a home garden, or advocating for legislation to reduce and prevent marine debris. | |

*The Watershed Project’s mission is to inspire Bay Area communities to understand, appreciate, and protect our local watersheds.*

If you have any questions about this program, please contact us at: education@thewatershedproject.org

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Program Goals

1. Students will learn about the interdependence between water, people, the earth, and ecosystems through hands-on, inquiry-based activities.
2. Students will participate in outdoor activities that strengthen their connection to nature.
3. Students will understand how community organizations are working to restore and protect local ecosystems, and take meaningful action to contribute to these efforts.

Standards Connections

Our Ecosystem, Our Community supports learning in the following middle school Next Generation Science Standards Disciplinary Core Ideas:

- LS2.A - Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems
- LS2.B - Cycle of Matter and Energy Transfer in Ecosystems
- LS2.C - Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience
- LS4.D - Biodiversity and Humans
- ESS3.A - Natural Resources
- ESS3.C - Human Impacts on Earth Systems

This program also incorporates concepts from the following middle school Common Core English Learning Language and History/Social Studies Standards:

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6-8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.
- Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

The program also incorporates concepts from the following middle school Common Core Health Standards:

- Identify human activities that contribute to environmental challenges (e.g., air, water, and noise pollution).
- Analyze how environmental pollutants, including noise pollution, affect health.
- Analyze the relationship between the health of a community and the global environment.

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