



**Educators Consortium
for Service Learning**

Service Learning Lesson Plan: Water Awareness

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The Story

Our water study began about ten years ago when a politically minded parent in our classroom set up a meeting for our third grade teachers to meet with Heal the Bay, Friends of the Los Angeles River and Tree People. We took a field trip to the LA River and heard a presentation about water pollution from Heal the Bay. This inspired us to partner with our kindergarten classes to explore different aspects of water in California the following year. This partnership is called Water Buddies and third graders mentor our kindergarten students. This is a wonderful opportunity for our third graders to take on leadership roles as they transition from Lower Elementary Division at our school to the Upper Division. Our Water Buddy program meets four to five times a year enjoying a wide variety of cooperative activities.

Each year we change the curriculum to fit the needs of our students and school year. We study California in our third grade social studies curriculum, which leads us into how Los Angeles obtains water since we are a dry climate. Next, we learn about our aqueduct and storm drain systems. We discuss the need for water conservation and complete writing assignments. In the past years, we have written odes to the Earth focusing on water and water saving tip essays that we hung near water fountains and sinks throughout the school. We have written persuasive letters to our mayor and governor about improving the LA River along with suggestions on how to deal with the current drought situation.

About five years ago we began a pen pal project with a local public school. We learned to write friendly letters to each other and took up the theme of water conservation/water pollution as a shared topic. We both visited the LA River and shared our ideas and thoughts about this local landmark through letters and Skype. We culminated with a planting project of California Natives and writing water PSAs.

As we studied water, parents in our community shared their ideas and expertise with us. We had a greening project at our school and the landscape architects shared their knowledge of drought tolerant plants on our urban campus and the watershed in our community. Our parents started a Green Thumb committee on campus, which inspired us to plant California Natives next to vegetables to see the difference in water intake of these plants. We have also had presentations from Rise Above Plastic and this year for the first time, the LA River Rover came to the public school next door and both third grades visited the exhibit. In addition we have Skyped with the founder of Free the Children, a Canadian based organization focused on the global needs of children.

For the past three years, our students have created a water musical, which they present to our CEE community. They write skits on the material they have studied throughout the year and sing songs about water and California, which is facilitated by our music and dramas teachers. It is a great culminating experience for the students to reflect on their new knowledge of water in California and around the world. Proceeds from the musical have gone to Ryan's Well Foundation and Free the Children.

Grade Level of Students Involved K-3 (Early Elementary)

Duration All year along

Service-Learning Themes

Environment, Gardening

Community Need

Water pollution, water conservation and lack of water in different parts of the world

Community Partners

Free the Children, Ryan's Well Foundation, Friends of the Los Angeles River, Melrose MST Elementary

Academic Connections

Key Content Areas

Social studies Music
Drama Writing

Skills being introduced or developed

Paragraph writing, writing a friendly letter, poetry writing, collaboration, communication,

Books, Media, Websites, and other Resources Used

Ryan and Jimmy and the Well that Brought Them Together

FOLAR.org

One Well

freethechildren.org

healthebay.org

riseaboveplastic.org

ryanswell.ca

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtewmJ78hzw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-gqJAsXiKQ>

gqJAsXiKQ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfQ-waFZCo>

<http://pbskids.org/loopscoops/magazines.html>

<http://www.charitywater.org/whywater/>

<http://www.bewaterwise.com/tips01.html>

http://www.zone7water.com/story_of_water/html/story.htm

<http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/kids/hose.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL8QCenmMYA>

<http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/100-ways-to-conserve/index.php>

Five Stages of Service-Learning (Procedure)

(Investigation, Preparation and Planning, Action, Reflection, and Demonstration)

Investigation:

Fall: Third graders partner with Kindergarten students to learn about water conservation. Students watch the Admiral Splash Video together and use sequencing cards to help explain how water is brought to Los Angeles.

Winter: Water buddies study water pollution by exploring different websites.

Third graders learn about gyres when studying the continents and oceans. Third graders partner with pen pals from a public school, Melrose MST and observe and record the trash they throw away for a week. Watch videos on how to repurpose materials thrown away.

Preparation and Planning:

Fall: Third graders act as mentors to explain material to kinder students. We explore websites on the importance of water conservation. Later, 3rd graders write essays about how to save water at school, at home and in our yards. Read aloud of 2 books – *One Well* and *Ryan and Jimmy and the Well that Brought Them Together*.

Spring: Water Buddies think about how they can contribute to their community. See a presentation from Heal the Bay. Third graders explore the LA River Rover and have a field trip to the LA River.

Pen pals go to the LA River also. We Skype and ask each other questions about the river. Have a presentation from Rise Against Plastic. Students learn songs about water in music class. Participate in a Water Walk to see how it feels to lose free time to complete a chore. Plant a drought tolerant garden next to a vegetable garden, observe which plants do best with little water.

Students discuss ways to fundraise for organizations they have learned about.

Action:

Water conservation essays are hung around sinks and water fountains at school.

Water Buddies decorate reusable bags to be taken home by Kindergarteners.

Water Buddies create a water conservation video using the Sock Puppet and Toontastic apps.

Pen pals visit our school with the repurposed trash they have made into something useful. We have a gallery walk and observe other students creations. Other classes from our school participate in the gallery walk and discuss how trash was made into something useful.

Water Buddies write a pledge to the Earth together.

Third graders participate in a LA River clean up.

Third graders plant California natives at their school and their pen pals' school.

Write persuasive letters to our governor and mayor on water issues in our community.

Reflection:

In groups, students talk about how they felt on the water walk. Students take turns leading the discussion. Students think about ways to redesign the LA River so more people will want to use this resource after visiting and discussing issues with FOLAR.

Demonstration:

Third grade students partner to write scripts about what they have learned regarding water this year.

Students have created a water play for the past three years, which they present to the other students, faculty and teachers at our school along with their families.

Any Assessment and Evaluation

Writing rubrics

Technology Integration

Ipads, Skype, Garage band

Examples of Youth Voice & Choice

This is an area for further development.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Through this process I have learned that I need to create more opportunities for my students to reflect on their learning. We are in such a hurry to cover the material that we don't take the time to solidify our learning in a meaningful way. Water fits perfectly into our social studies curriculum however it would be great if we could have the children have more of a voice in the service topic.

1. One of the most memorable highlights was when our students pulled a shopping cart out of the Los Angeles River. The children were so curious and excited by their find.
2. Building a model of the LA River for Open House.
3. Seeing the students work together to create their skits.