Helping Students Protect the Environment and Live Well
Summer 2015 Teacher Workshop Evaluation Summary

UNI Center for Energy & Environmental Education, UNI Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction and UNI Continuing & Distance Education. Thanks to solid waste agencies, landfills, REAP Conservation Education Program and the DNR Solid Waste Alternatives Program for support.

“I thought this whole class was AWESOME! Thank you so much for ... giving me resources to teach about a topic that I feel strongly about but didn't know how to approach in a classroom.”

“...I'm amazed at the number of people [who] don't understand clearly the 3Rs. I learned so much more from this class and I am living the benefits.”

“Students were amazed to learn about other ways to protect our environment besides just recycling.”

--Teachers, Summer 2015

Summary—Seventeen PreK-12th grade teachers completed the Part II workshop evaluation. This is the 15th anniversary for the course, which focuses on four learning objectives (see below, “Positive student response”).

The current course undergoes revisions annually, resulting in better, more focused teacher workshops. As a result, teachers and their students are becoming increasingly more engaged. This year, 100% of the teachers said they “definitely want to use the resources again,” and 94% said they met one or more Core, Stem or Next Generation Science Standards requirements. (This is critical to their continued use of these resources.)

All participants indicated they would recommend this course to others and, in just five months, these 17 teachers reached more than 1,000 students and adults.

Although 30% toured a landfill or recycling center as part of their mini-unit, and another 6% are planning a tour. Similarly, 65% of the course participants contacted a solid waste agency staff member for information or to have them as guest speakers in their course. Another 6% are planning for this.

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Positive student response—Curiosity, motivation to help the planet, and excitement were reported as the most dominant emotions of participants’ students. Teachers found increased or new understanding among their students:

1) All products come from natural resources (94% found increased or new understanding),
2) Humans depend on natural resources for products used daily (88%)
3) Product life cycles tell a more complete story of environmental impact (93%*)
4) Reduction is preferable to recycling and reuse (93%*)
5) “Stuff” and life satisfaction are related, but only to a certain point (88%)

Teachers also reported seeing increased signs of reducing, reusing and recycling (82%) and other environmentally friendly behaviors among their students (71%).

*Three teachers didn't teach this concept, and they were likely pre-school or early elementary teachers
Transferability to classroom—On a scale of 1 to 10, participants were asked to rank their ability to integrate environmental issues into the classroom before and after the workshops and mini-units. A 3.5 point increase, or **35% increase, occurred**, with **most teachers feeling they had average abilities (5.2) before the workshops, and high (8.7) after.**

Iowa students and community members reached—Participants talked to an average of three teachers each for a total of 59 colleagues. They also, on **average**, talked with 13 friends and family about the issues addressed in this course for a total of 209. And, most importantly, the participants, on average, introduced the topics to 48 students for a total of 824 students reached. **In just five months, these 17 teachers reached more than 1,000 students and adults!**

Reaching new-to-conservation teachers—71% said it was the first environmental education workshop they took for credit and, of those, 62% plan to enroll in more EE workshops.

Tangible increases in knowledge and actions—Teachers are not only changing their students’ lives, they are changing their own. Prior to taking the workshop, 82% said recycling was the best waste management strategy for the environment, and 18% said reusing. After the workshop, 100% answered correctly that reduction was the best waste management strategy.

Below are examples of concrete behavior changes. In parentheses are the percentage of teachers taking this action.

- I've thought more carefully before buying things (65%).
- I have been more intentional about living according to my values and priorities (59%).
- I've increased what I reuse in my own home and/or by donating what I don't use to a good cause (76%).
- I've reduced the amount of shopping I do (47%).
- I've increased the amount of materials I recycle (88%).
- I'm using my own coffee mug, grocery bags, and/or other products more (82%).