

Developing an Action Plan

OVERVIEW: Through role-playing their interest groups, students identify major problems impeding sustainability of the river system. In the search for solutions, the common good is considered. Local community problems, related to the river or watershed, are identified. A plan is created to resolve one of the problems. Students engage in a simulation of a hearing to gain insight into their proposed plan. They translate the plan into a class project, or present their ideas to an actual panel of community leaders.



OBJECTIVES:

- To identify major problems of the river system and to find compromise solutions that will contribute to sustainability
- To identify a problem in the local community related to the river or watershed
- To create an action plan to solve the problem
- To simulate a hearing of a presentation of the action plan
- To practice advocacy of their solutions to a community group

Procedures—Part I

1. The focus is to identify the problems that will contribute to the sustainability of the Rio Grande. Ask the students to return to their interest groups. Have them **brainstorm the following: What are the Problems Threatening the Sustainability of the Rio Grande?** (1) Identify two major problems. (2) Keep in mind what is needed for the common good as well as by your interest group.
2. Have the interest groups report their two problems to the group as a whole. The class then narrows the list of problems down to two.
3. In their interest groups they should come up with solutions to the two problems just identified by the whole. They must once again keep in mind what is beneficial to the common good as well as for their interest groups.
4. Write the two problems on the board as headings for two columns. Have the interest groups report their solutions to the problems. Summarize the solutions in the appropriate column.
5. Leading the discussion, the teacher should

Time:

Indefinite

Suggestions:

After a year of community hearings, Senator Pete Domenici's Rio Grande Bosque Conservation Committee issued a report in 1992 outlining water and land use problems on the river system. The primary problems the committee identified include: (1) surface water contamination from non-point sources and (2) ground water contamination from septic and storage tanks. Other problems related to water quality include: (1) illegal trash dumping in the bosque, and (2) litter. Problems affecting the bosque itself include: (1) public safety; (2) fire control; (3) loss of bird and wildlife habitat. These are issues that students, in some small part, could help resolve

<p>attempt to find consensus on the solutions by circling those on which the students can agree. Ask the students if these solutions will contribute to the common good and sustainability.</p> <p>6. Of the remaining solutions, examine ways to reach compromise on those solutions which further contribute to the common good and sustainability.</p>	
<p>Procedures—Part II</p> <p>1. The focus in this portion of the instructional program is on the local community and its relationship to the river or the watershed. Many river system problems have already been identified. These may or may not be a problem in your community. Have the class brainstorm a list of river or watershed problems <u>specific to your community</u>. Record their responses on the board.</p> <p>2. Have the class select a problem from the list to which they possibly can make a contribution in finding a community solution. Eliminate from the list those problems which are not within their ability to resolve, e.g. unequal allocation of water resources which would require legislative action. The objective is to give young people a sense of accomplishment in deciding and implementing public policy.</p> <p>3. After the class has selected a problem, have them clarify the problem by asking the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence is there that this is a problem? • What are the causes and who might be responsible for creating the problem? 	<p>Time: Indefinite</p> <p>Suggestions: Ask each student to select one problem from those remaining on the list. Assign each student a two-paragraph essay explaining how he or she perceives the problem and possible remedies.</p> <p>It may be necessary to explain what is meant by evidence. Evidence should be scientific reports, data supplied from respected agencies, eye-witnesses, personal and family experience, etc.</p> <p>You may want to have the students think about what comprises the most persuasive or convincing kind of evidence.</p>

- What is the extent of the problem? Does it affect the common good?
- What are the long-term effects of the problem? Does it affect the sustainability of the river system?

4. Divide the class into groups of three or five students. Assign one student to be the recorder for the group. Instruct the groups to brainstorm possible responses to the following questions:


- How can we discover those creating the problem?
- What can be done to correct the problem?
- How can we prevent the problem from happening again?

5. Have the groups report out, recording their suggestions on the board. Ask the class to reach consensus on the items contained in the final plan.

6. Conduct a class discussion to help the students evaluate their plan. Ask students the following questions:

- Does the plan effectively and responsibly address the problem?
- What community interest(s) does the plan affect or address?
- Does it fairly affect or address the interests of individuals and groups that need to use the river and bosque?
- What might its impact be on the river community? the common good? sustainability?



<p>7 . It may be necessary to revisit the plan to correct any elements that are not effective and responsible, or which unfairly limit the interests of individuals or groups, or that does not address the common good and sustainability.</p>	
<p>Procedures—Part III</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Simulation of a panel of government officials or community leaders. Students should now be ready to participate in a simulation of a hearing. The panel is to hear the explanation of the problem(s) and the students' solutions. The students should be ready to respond to questioning by the panel. 2. The presentation should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of the problem • The evidence that there is a problem • Evidence of the causes • Possible ways in which to proceed to resolve the problem • Effective and responsible ways to ensure that the common good and sustainability are considered. 3. The panel will invite designated students to present the information collected and organized by the entire class. Based on the presentations of the students, the panel can open up the questioning to the entire class in order to allow 	<p>Time: One class period</p> <p>Suggestions: To maximize participation, you may want to divide the class into five groups (one group for each question). The group will give a 5 to 7 minute prepared statement and then be ready for questions from the panel.</p> <p>The simulation panel of hearing officers could be made up of you, the teacher, or a group of teachers from an interdisciplinary team, administrators, or parents, etc.</p> <p>In preparing their presentations, encourage students to use visuals or other material they have created during this unit of instruction or will create for this activity.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>

<p>as many voices as possible to engage in the exchange.</p> <p>4. The panel may then offer its reaction to the ideas of the students providing feedback as to the feasibility and appropriateness of their ideas.</p>	
<p>Procedures—Part IV</p> <p>Option #1</p> <p>1. Have the class prepare an oral presentation of their plan to a real panel of community leaders or government agents.</p> <p>2. After the oral presentation, the students should stand for questions from the panel. The panel should give the students feedback on their performance.</p> <p>Option #2</p> <p>1. Have the students form committees, and take the necessary steps to implement their plan of action.</p> <p>2. Have students keep journals recording their activities and evaluating the effectiveness of their actions. This may be an on-going project for the remainder of the school year.</p>	<p>Time (Option #1): One or two class periods</p> <p>Suggestions: The panel could include two political leaders and an educator. Any combination of community leaders is possible. The objective is for student to develop a sense of advocacy and civic participation.</p> <p>Time (Option #2): Indefinite</p> <p>Suggestions: This may be an on-going project for the remainder of the school year. It would be possible to involve state and federal agencies as well as the local community leaders and citizens in helping the students with their projects.</p>



HANDOUT: POEM

The Miracle of Water: Here's to H₂O

There once was a drop of clear water
That dropped where it shouldn't have oughter!
So, it slid all around
It's history, and it's maugter and faughter.

Two hydrogen atoms - its
They both got together
In all kinds of weather
And beget 'H₂O', their dear daughter.

Here's to Water—

They told her she once was in rain,
Amid amber waves of that grain;
In the Garden of Eden,
Frozen tundra in Sweden,
And even In dinosaur brain!

In the snowmelt atop of the mountain,
And one city statue and fountain,
And thrice in a river
With a sigh and a shiver..
She traveled so much there's no countin!

Here's to H₂O—

She certainly, assuredly has been
Recycled again and again;
She was flushed down your toilet,
You may have to boil it..
And she certainly has been on your skin!

She finally did understand,
As a molecule long in demand,
That all living creatures
From amoeba to teachers,
Rely on this resource so grand.
Here's to the Miracle of Water—

So, let's take a moment and think..
To make a nice toast with our drink,
As to where she has been..
we toast with a grin..
To water, our global link.

