

Our Mission

"To develop an engaged and informed citizenry by connecting people to nature and each other in the context of their home communities."

The Answer is in the Questions

~ by Meredith Lohr

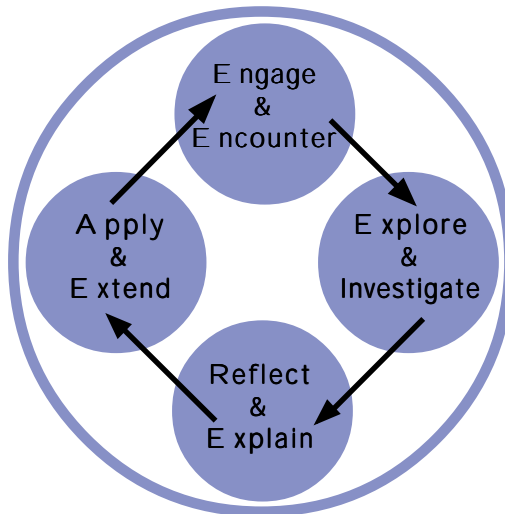
At a recent gathering, a gentleman new to the work of the Homewaters Project posed a thought-provoking and pointed question, "What is it that makes Homewaters' educational programs unique?" Personally, after five years of working closely with the organization, I can think of numerous qualities that set Homewaters apart. As a teacher and scientist, however, I believe that there is one particular characteristic that makes our programs exceptional — our commitment to using questions to drive learning.

The "inquiry-based" method that is the foundation for our educational work builds on students' inherent curiosity and enhances their critical thinking skills. When young people investigate their local communities in search of answers to real questions, they collaborate and problem-solve remarkably well. Given the opportunity to collect data and make their own observations, children will interpret and analyze information thoughtfully and thoroughly. Most importantly, when students reflect on their discoveries, they deepen their connections to nature and community and are inspired to make a difference.



Land & Water students inquire about Thornton Creek.

The Inquiry Method



If you've had the opportunity to witness one of Homewaters' educational programs, you've seen firsthand how inquiry-based teaching motivates students and adds excitement to their learning. I hope that this edition of the Source intrigues those of you who are new to the inquiry approach — maybe you'll craft a few of your own questions. And perhaps once you've read about programs like Green Mapping or Tiny Neighbors, you too will agree that the answer is in the questions.

"It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question."

Eugene Ionesco

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Questions, Questions, Questions

~ by Linda Versage

How do we do field-based, inquiry learning at Homewaters Project? It all begins with finding the connections between classroom learning and the real world and then developing questions and investigations. Focus questions are what guide the field investigations for teachers and students in all of our programs.

An example of a question that could guide an investigation might be: *What are some of the questions that Homewaters Project uses in its inquiry based Watershed Ecology Programs?*

If this were a real investigation, you would have to decide what steps you might take to find the answer/s to this question. You might call Linda Versage, Homewaters' Schools Coordinator, and interview her. You might observe a field program. You could look at our website, speak with a teacher or student, or possibly visit our office and review our materials.

Or, you could get lucky and be given data in the form of clues and questions. You could then conduct a small investigation by exploring and sorting out a list of questions and reflecting on which Watershed Ecology program they refer to.

Today's your lucky day! Please read on!



Directions:

Decide which program each question is used with by putting its initials in the blank. Go to www.homewatersproject.org for the answers.

Here are the clues:

Land and Water:

- ~taught in the Thornton Creek watershed
- ~complements the Land and Water science unit taught in fifth grade at local schools
- ~focuses on the importance of urban streams for salmon habitat

Tiny Neighbors:

- ~supports teachers in carrying out their own field investigations with their students to ponds, lakes and wetlands
- ~an extension to the fifth grade science unit called Microworlds in which students learn to use microscopes and explore microorganisms

Watershed Gardens:

- ~focuses on water conservation
- ~students and teachers conduct school water audits and create water-wise gardens



Linda Versage and teachers inquire about water usage at a recent training with Michael Laurie at View Ridge Elementary.

Here are the questions:

- ___ 1) How does the pond ecosystem provide what organisms need in order to survive?
- ___ 2) How do students use water during the school day and school year?
- ___ 3) What is the relationship between water, water speed and movement of soil?
- ___ 4) How many different types of life live here?
- ___ 5) What are the steps involved in creating a drought-tolerant/water-wise garden?
- ___ 6) How is wildlife dependent on this area?
- ___ 7) How much water do students in our school use during a school year?
- ___ 8) How does the presence and diversity of vegetation surrounding streams contribute to salmon habitat?
- ___ 9) How is a hay infusion a model for a pond environment?
- ___ 10) How does Thornton Creek, a real stream compare to the models of streams you have made in your classroom?

Inquiring About Water & Community

~ by Sharon London

What is a watershed?

Who are the stakeholders in our watershed?

What sort of pollution do different stakeholders contribute?



Eckstein M.S. Teacher, Tina Gourd and her students navigate the world of inquiry learning with GIS.

Using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology and role play scenarios, over 200 middle school students in Seattle and Shoreline are asking the above questions and looking for solutions to water pollution through Homewaters Project's new Water & Community GIS module. The goal of the module is to help students understand how humans impact water resources in the Puget Sound area through inquiry-based learning.

GIS technology is well suited to inquiry-based questioning. Students can ask a question, acquire the data layers (maps) they might need, explore their data, and analyze their

results. They can then apply their findings by simply walking around their neighborhood and seeing first hand if the data on their maps are correct.

Special thanks to the Russell Family Foundation, University of Washington - Geography, and the Homewaters Project Technology Team and community volunteers for making this exciting new program a reality. By helping students inquire about the issues in their own watershed, the Water & Community GIS module is helping create engaged and informed citizens for the future.

Next Fall: E -Democracy and Green Maps

~ by Sharon London

Homewaters Project has been awarded a \$9,000 City of Seattle Technology Grant to create Green Maps with two Seattle High Schools next fall: Nathan Hale High School, who piloted the project this fall, as well as a central or south Seattle High School still to be determined.

Each year the technology fund supports neighborhood groups and organizations with projects to increase technology literacy and access. The "electronic democracy" projects will use information and communications technology to raise awareness of local issues and increase resident participation in community problem solving.

For Homewaters Project, that means first engaging students by asking them *What are some of the ecological, cultural and historical sites of interest around your school?* Using icons from the international Green Map System (www.greenmap.org), students map the assets and liabilities in their neighborhood and check each other's work for accuracy. They then learn GIS software to create digital maps and analyze their findings using other GIS map resources. Finally, the students make recommendations of how to improve their community, and present them to community leaders and the other partner high school.

Homewaters Project is one of only three grantees in the e-democracy program. "I am pleased to see the range of projects, technology and communities served," says Jim Compton, Chair of the City Council Utilities and Technology Committee. "They are an important complement to the City's use of the Seattle Channel and web as a democracy portal to increase meaningful participation in government and the affairs of the city."

South/Central Seattle High School Teachers!

Homewaters has space for one motivated high school teacher to expand our Green Mapping program to a new school (see article).

Interested teachers will have an opportunity to be trained in GIS technology and help students inquire about what makes their community unique and how it can be improved.

Contact Sharon London for more information @ 526-0187 or slondon@sccd.ctc.edu.

Leave it to Beavers!

The 2004 Open Lodge was a huge success, due in part to the cooperative beavers at Meadowbrook Pond.

Over 100 people learned how to live with beavers in Seattle's neighborhoods.

Special thanks to our partner agencies - SPU, Seattle Parks, and Thornton Creek Alliance - and all who got their feet wet.



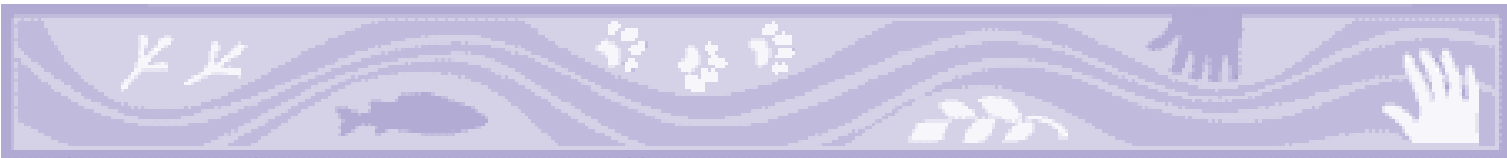
Todd Burley explains beaver adaptations next to an actual live specimen!

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Planning for 2004-5

As we gear up for the 2004-5 academic year, we are excited to continue the successes of this year into the next. With your help we can strengthen our organization's ability to connect students to their communities through our inquiry-based programs.

Please consider making a financial donation to Homewaters Project this spring. With our low overhead, you can be assured that your dollars are going to the programs you support.

Homewaters Project is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization under the umbrella of the North Seattle Community College Foundation. Please make checks payable to *NSCC Foundation* with *Homewaters Project* in the memo line. Thank you for your support!



Mark Your Calendar

South Fork Long Walk

June 4th, 3:00-6:30pm

Homewaters staff will lead this annual urban hike, starting at the south lot of Northgate Mall and ending at Matthew's Beach Park. We'll explore this section of Seattle's largest watershed and learn about it's past, present, and future. Reservations are required, and space is limited, so sign up soon! Call 526-0187 or email tburley@sccd.ctc.edu.

End of the Year Picnic

June 4th, 6:30pm Matthews Beach Park

All are welcome to join us at Matthews Beach following the Long Walk for our annual year-end picnic. Bring a potluck item, a game, and the whole family as we celebrate the year's accomplishments.



For more information, visit our website: www.homewatersproject.org



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