

Harrisonburg City Public Schools

– Field Experiences – presentation at PWP Kids in the Wild – 12/11/12



Stephanie Nelson, life science teachers at Thomas Harrison Middle School, and Andy Jackson, secondary science coordinator and HHS STEM Academy director for Harrisonburg City Public Schools presented at Kids in the Wild about the middle school field experiences HCPS has been conducting for the last decade.

Ten years ago, in 2002, HCPS began a coordinated effort to meet the requirements of the Chesapeake 2000 agreement to have every child have a Meaningful Watershed Education Experience. We started with a program brought to us by Tom Bailey of the US Forest Service. Tom brought a grant and a desire to build a program for our sixth graders at (then) our one Middle school, Thomas Harrison Middle

School. This program continues today. The cost is covered as a part of HCPS budget and the program has evolved in some ways but remains true to its origins. Every sixth grader in HCPS sixth grade at both of our middle schools studies environmental watershed issues culminating in the Plant-A-Seed field experience where they rotate through four different stations. These stations are water chemistry using LaMotte's Greenwater test kits, Hydrology, Macro-invertebrate survey, and riparian tree identification using <http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/forsite/key/intro.htm> . Half of the students travel to Riven Rock park. This is a mountain stream in a park owned by Harrisonburg West of the city. The other half go to Sandy Bottom at Bridgewater. This public park is on the North River. The stream at Riven Rock is in the North River watershed as is the city of Harrisonburg.

Since 2002 we have expanded the program to include a component for our seventh grade life science students. They spend a day at a 64 acre piece of land owned by Harrisonburg on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. The North River and the Riven Rock creek are tributaries to this River. The students spend the day here rotating through several stations. They spend half their day on a rafting trip on the river. The other half they spend rotating between stations. These stations are a macro-invertebrate survey, a tree identification, tagging, and monitoring activity, and a mapping of the watershed activity.

Harrisonburg City Public Schools is also the lead organization in the Valley Ridge Regional Governor's School that serves about a dozen counties and cities in the Valley-Ridge area surrounding Harrisonburg. Each year twenty students are accepted from about a dozen different high schools to participate in a week of science oriented adventures. The adventures and science topics vary from year to year but center around the unique geology, environment, and science opportunities of the Valley-Ridge area of Virginia.

If you would like further information about HCPS field experiences, please feel free to contact Andy Jackson at ajackson@harrisonburg.k12.va.us or call at 540-437-3302 or Stephanie at snelson@harrisonburg.k12.va.us

