



SEMESTER@DEP

Teacher Portfolio



Program Planning and Development for the
LIFE – Ichetucknee Springs State Park Parknership Program

Irene Johannesen & Linda Richardson
Ft. White Middle School

Submitted to the Office of Environmental Education
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
June 2005

Introduction

Summer Employment for Minority Environmental Science Teachers Engaged in Research at DEP (SEMESTER@DEP) provides practical and guided research experience for middle and high school teachers. This program serves the needs of the agency (often looking to fill gaps arising from staff on summer annual leave) and those of middle and high-school science teachers looking for real-world research experience especially during summer months. Teachers are employed for short periods ranging from 3-6 weeks and are assigned a DEP Research Mentor to work with. A position description outlines the knowledge and skill requirements of the position as well as the specific responsibilities and duties.

The Office of Environmental Education is implementing the SEMESTER@DEP internships as part of the Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program as one way of achieving its objective of increasing teacher professional development.

The SEMESTER@DEP Teacher Portfolio summarizes the experience of the teachers and guides the continual development of the program.

SEMESTER@DEP Participant Information:

- Name(s): Irene Johannesen and Linda Richardson
- School: Fort White High School/Middle School
- Grade: 6th- 8th Grades - emphasis on 7th grade
- Subject: Comprehensive Science 6th -12th Grades
- Years working as a teacher: 32/21
- Location of SEMESTER@DEP experience: Ichetucknee Springs State Park
- Supervisor's Name: Sam Cole (Park Biologist, Ichetucknee Springs State Park)



Linda Richardson



Irene "Trini" Johannesen

Prior to SEMESTER@DEP Internship

QUESTION: What do you hope to gain from the DEP experience?

Fort White High School/ Middle School (FWHS) 6-12th grades are actively involved in a ParKnership Program with the Ichetucknee Springs State Park. For the past three years our students have made frequent trips utilizing the Park as our Outdoor Laboratory. In April of 2005, we were contacted by Greg Ira, Office of Environmental Education, with the proposal of becoming one of their Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) Programs.



We enthusiastically accepted and have worked diligently to develop the program, train the staff, and prepare for the implementation of 4 themes and 12 outdoor laboratory experiences for our 250 seventh-grade students this year. Our goal is not only to implement the seventh grade outdoor laboratory program but, in the future to develop the sixth grade outdoor laboratories to prepare the seventh graders for their intensive outdoor laboratory sessions and continue the development of the curriculum for the eighth grade, as well as more advanced, long-term projects for the upper grades. Linda Richardson and myself were employed for the month of June to orchestrate the development of the seventh-grade curriculum and prepare for the training of the staff for the seventh grade program.

During the SEMESTER@DEP Internship

QUESTION: How did the hands on approach to learning science differ from book learning?

The past three years we have experienced an increase in student involvement in their learning of science. We attribute this to the students being actively involved with hands-on activities at the Ichetucknee Springs State Park. The real life experiences provide a clearer picture of concepts the students have read about or heard about in the classroom. These concepts are reinforced and enriched by the students applying what they learned about in their classroom environment and what they were able to do at the Park. We believe our student achievement will continue to improve on assessments and FWHS's student awareness of the need for our environment's protection will be enhanced.



QUESTION: What lessons can you take back to the classroom?

Ms. Johannesen presently teaches 6th grade science students and Linda Richardson is teaching 9th grade Earth Science. Developing the LIFE Program for the seventh-grade students at Fort White High School has provided both teachers with an excellent arsenal of potential hands-on laboratory activities to introduce, reinforce, and expand in the development of the sixth-grade curriculum, the eighth grade curriculum, and in the high school Earth and Environmental Science classes.

QUESTION: Describe a field experience you enjoyed.

During the month of June, my co-worker Linda Richardson and myself participated in the development of the curriculum scope and sequence for 6th through 8th grade science at FWHS. This enabled us to systematically layout the science curriculum our students would experience throughout their middle school years. Taking this curriculum, we were then able to analyze the Ichetucknee Springs State Park and what it offers in relationship to field experiences that would enhance the 6th through 8th grade curriculum. Honing in on the 7th grade curriculum, we developed the 4 themes/12 field experiences to coincide with classroom instruction throughout the school year. Students will be experiencing 2 themes/6 field experiences per semester. The last week in August, staff members from FWHS and myself experienced every field experience, improved its delivery system, and are presently preparing the final document and setting up the field experience calendar for the 7th grade classes.



QUESTION What did you learn from your SEMESTER@DEP experience?

The opportunity that is being provided for our Fort White High School students by our involvement with the LIFE Program is going to be wonderful. The benefits of what my fellow staff members and I can offer our students will pay off ten-fold in the years to come. I learned that what a few of us at Fort White High School and Ranger Sam Cole of Ichetucknee Springs State Park believe, that hands-on field experiences are necessary for our students to show improvement in science, is in fact being supported and reinforced by the Office of Environmental Education. We will do everything we possibly can to continue this relationship in the years to come.

Question: Describe a field experience that taught you something about yourself.

Collecting algae and using field microscopes, counting water lettuce clones, collecting soil samples, doing a tree coring – all things we have never experienced – but now know we can utilize those experiences as I teach my students and make sure they don't get to be 58 years old before saying they had these experiences.



Upon Completion of the SEMESTER@DEP Internship

QUESTION: Overall, what did you think of your involvement in SEMESTER@DEP?

We are looking forward to a long-term relationship with this Program and hope that we can expand and improve on it in the years to come.

QUESTION: Will you be able to use your experience to enrich your students' learning experience, if so, how?

Within the next two years, there will be a field experience program for our 6th and 8th grades at FWHS. These students will be experiencing the same quality of field opportunities that our 7th graders will experience this year.

