

15.4. K-12 Education

The opportunity to educate Hendry County youth is of equal value to the immediate ecological value of the oxbow restoration. Southern DataStream will give the K-12 educational program the critical attention it requires and integrate educational functions into every aspect of the hydrological and ecological assessment process. The goal will be to both increase youth awareness and understanding of our regions valuable natural resources and the better engage and prepare students for a variety of careers in technical and natural resource-based careers.

Southern DataStream has met with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Hendry County School District to develop a plan to initiate an environmental education program using the oxbow restoration program and LaBelle Nature Park as starting focal points. The key educator in this effort will be Margaret England, certified teacher and certified UF-IFAS Master Naturalist. With certification in ESOL (English as a Second Original Language), Margaret will be able to ensure meaningful participation of all segments of the student population. The educational program envisions 3 categories of K-12 educational interaction:

1. Classroom & Field Trips
2. Kiwanis Environmental Club
3. Mentorship Program (maybe)

Existing opportunities and access points include:

- A. Summer Camp Program run by Phillip Pelletier, founded by Kiwanis Youth Services
 - 6 weeks, 100 students, buses available
 - Good opportunity for field trips during construction
- B. Student Environmental Club organized in cooperation with the Kiwanis Club
 - High School students Kiwanis club
 - Use of library on Monday nights (6-8pm) at Elementary School
- C. Elementary and Middle School Programs
 - After school programs targeting migrant population: (Sep – Mar)
 - Daily program after school until 4pm
 - Buses already provided.
 - Good opportunity for Kiwanis environmental club meetings/programs
- D. Elementary School Library Lectures
 - Margaret England's program for K-5 (elementary school)
 - High degree of flexibility, 15-minute lectures, guest lecturers welcomed
 - 10 internet stations and power point available
- E. High School Program
 - Block scheduling: 2-hour time periods affords opportunities for field trips and extended lecture/discussion.

F. Mentorship program

- to be discussed further on June 20th (Connor/Cooper/Ramos/Capece)

Southern DataStream has engaged the Hendry K-12 students and teachers continuously throughout the oxbow restoration program development. SDS university student interns provide lectures to Hendry County science classes and develop individualized science projects, some of which have earned state level awards from Florida DEP and the Florida Senate.



Figure 15-6. Classroom science lectures for Hendry County schools based on oxbow restoration.

The oxbow restoration also provides opportunities for field trips for biology and other science courses. These classroom and field trip activities will continue and expand as enabled by the continuation of the Hendry County oxbow restoration program. An oxbow environmental education program will also incorporate digital technology components to demonstrate to youth the applications of modern planning tools in visualizing and shaping our future communities and region.



Figure 15-7. Example field trip activities for biology and other physical science curriculum.



Figure 15-8. Example of computer game technology (SimCity) that can be applied to education.