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Hobe Sound Elementary School makes an extraordinary commitment to the environment

Hobe Sound Elementary School (HSE) is a wonderful, 30-plus-year-old public school serving 675 students in Hobe Sound, Florida, 90 miles north of Miami. We joined the ACSP for Schools in 1994, accomplished most of our certification in 1996, and became the first school in the nation to be certified as an *Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary* in January 1997.

Certification was just the beginning.

Every year since becoming certified, our program has grown by leaps and bounds. Sometimes I wonder how we can possibly do more, but inevitably it happens as each new school year starts, and more and more teachers, staff, and parents take an active role in the program.

Our theme at HSE is *Helping Save the Environment* and our motto is *Together is better*. We strive to instill a love of nature and ensure that our students and community are aware of how fragile and special our environment really is. We want our students to grow up to be responsible, environmentally aware adults who continue to “walk the walk,” just as they do now at HSE.

—Shelly Foy, *President, HSE Audubon Committee*



Hobe Sound Elementary

Hobe Sound Elementary School skillfully weaves ACSP activities into their curriculum. Learning about Florida's native habitats sparked this third grade activity, Oceans in a Bottle.

Tips For Busy Teachers

HSE is no different from most schools—teachers are forever busy trying to meet state mandates, curriculum requirements, and the day-to-day demands of their jobs. To the teachers who say, “*I can't possibly take on another program,*” here are a few tips for implementing the ACSP, or getting an existing program really going:

- Don't do it all yourself. Make it a school-wide effort.
- Start at the top. Get the support from your principal and assistant principal.
- Form an Audubon Committee that includes the principal, assistant principal, at least one teacher per grade level, parents, community members, and students.
- Develop a mission statement and short- and long-range goals.
- Consider hosting a fundraiser so that you will have money to implement programs at your school. There are a lot of grants available as well. At HSE, we host an annual dinner/dance/silent auction in which we raise \$10,000 per year for our Audubon programs. It has certainly taken us several years to get where we are today, but we are making the most of it.
- Don't forget to focus on curriculum. It does you no good to have a butterfly garden if you don't teach kids about the life cycle of the butterfly. Everything you teach your children about the environment, in science, and even math and language arts skills can all be implemented through the ACSP. Look at this program as the format for your environmental education efforts. *Curriculum is a big key!*

What has participating in the ACSP meant to you? Perspectives from administrators, teachers, and parents

environmental CASE STUDY

The Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program has gone beyond my expectation in its impact upon my school and the school community. Initially, I thought it would be another program that could be done in a classroom. But soon, I began to see the “bigger picture.”

The look of our school began to change as we planned for campus beautification. We removed many non-native plants and exotics and replaced them with natives, according to our landscape architect’s plan.

Our school logo was re-designed to reflect an environmental theme. We sold new school spirit shirts and purchased a school sign, both sporting the new logo.

Our students and parents became co-owners in the campus with our monthly *Help Save the Environment Days*. During these days, we devote time to campus beautification and environmental projects inside, as well as outside, the classrooms. Campus-wide discipline improved.

Parent participation increased. Community awareness of school and school events blossomed.

I cannot endorse highly enough the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. It has made our school more than a building, desks, and books. It is the heart of our small community.

—Don Merritt, Principal

In my classroom, I teach Audubon related programs every week. These unique programs allow me to integrate environmental education with science, language arts, writing, social studies, math, and other subjects of the school curricula. The children love the Audubon programs.

—Betsy Gunderson, 3rd Grade Teacher

In 2002, Florida and Hobe Sound Elementary are gearing up for the statewide Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in the area of science. The FCAT science test will not be a standardized test, but one based on rigorous standards. *Hobe Sound is ready*. The students understand not only concepts, but also the processes of science. They see the big picture and how they fit into the often-fragile environment around them.

—Mary McWilliams, Assistant Principal

Our students are actively engaged in the preservation of their environment and REALLY know about it—just ask one of them!

—Julie Stellman, Speech/Language Pathologist

Since the Audubon committee has “adopted” a section of the library, we have established a separate section for Audubon materials, which we call the “Audubon Corner.” The bookcases are stocked with an assortment of field guides, books about birds, plants, endangered animals, composting, habitats, teacher’s activities, and more. The area has children’s outdoor furniture so they can have a cozy corner to read. A local artist painted a fabulous mural of Florida endangered animals and habitats.

Every child and teacher will benefit from our environmental reference center for years to come.

—Sheryl Molter,
Media Assistant

Many of the things we learn as a child stay with us throughout our lives. Give children the opportunity to learn about the environment, as we are doing at HSE, and they will remember it. Our students are exposed to the importance of conservation from kindergarten through

5th grade. Planting butterfly gardens, composting, weeding, and maintaining various conservation projects are stepping stones to responsible adult behavior toward our earth.

—Janet McCorkle, Parent/Volunteer

Bringing students outdoors to interact with their environment will assist them in gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to make responsible decisions in wildlife conservation and environmental protection.

—Janet Moran, ESE Teacher

At first, many of the teachers at HSE thought that participating in the ACSP was an imposition. But I am finding that now many feel as though the school and the students have really benefited from all that is done through the Audubon and the Green School programs. It has enriched not only my classroom and the way I present things to my class, but also how I feel about my home. I am much more aware of the importance of the unique relationships between humans and the earth and her inhabitants.

—Barbara Riggins, 2nd Grade Teacher

The opportunity and resources for students to *Help Save the Environment* have instilled a sense of pride and accomplishment in our young people because they feel they are making a positive difference each day.

—Judy Moskal, Parent/Volunteer



Hobe Sound Elementary

HSE’s many murals help to link academics with hands-on habitat enhancement projects, such as butterfly gardening.