



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2012 Volume VI: Asking Questions in Biology: Discovery versus Knowledge

Inquiry in the Middle School Classroom: Students as Watershed Stewards

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by Georgia Karns

This curriculum unit is designed to build inquiry skills and teach environmental stewardship in 7th grade life science. The unit is intended for the beginning of the school year, and is expected to last about 6 weeks. The unit is focused on the James River, which runs through the city of Richmond, Virginia, and empties into the Chesapeake Bay. Students will learn how their daily choices can affect the health of the James River and thus the Chesapeake Bay. Students will discover the importance of conserving habitat for a diversity of species that are integral to the health of the watershed, and how a healthy watershed benefits humans. The unit integrates environmental science and ecology, while emphasizing inquiry and scientific investigation along with cooperative learning skills. By scaffolding inquiry, students will be better prepared to conduct independent scientific investigations for the science fair.

(Developed for Life Science, grade 7; recommended for Science, grades 6-7)

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