High Creek Fen Natural Area

Keeping the heritage in "South Park National Heritage Area"

Monitoring Field Day

Purpose: To introduce historical aspects of land use in the area of the High Creek Fen Nature Conservancy property, and gather baseline data to enable future monitoring of changes and desired conditions.

Method: Give the historical background of settlement and use in the area. Give on-site demos of wetlands and how they work. Look at the whole picture and then focus on specific indicators, invasives and impacts. Walk the site and record in student journals differences in vegetation, impacts, soil types, lasting effects of peat mining, signs of past settlement (fences, structures), signs of present day use and hypothesize possible future impacts.

Recording: Students record findings in journals.

I. Safety Talk and Intro to the day, split into groups
II. Heritage group of 12 starts with demo on the way wetlands work: Project WET activity "Capture, Store and Release" , p. 138
III. Discuss 3 R's: Respect for Self, Respect for Others, Respect for Natural Environment
IV. Start walk to record past, present & future impacts as well as baseline data on vegetation & soil conditions.
V. Journaling activity based on Project WILD p. 278 "Learning to Look, Learning to See". Have all the students sit, close eyes for 30 seconds, open them and look at the "whole" picture and record in journal; have students close eyes again for 30 seconds, open them and focus on a specific part of the landscape (1 piece of grass, 1 tree, 1 rock, etc.) and record observations in journal.
VI. Continue walk and record impacts, invasives and indicators.
VII. Return to start point.

VIII. Journaling prep activity “Wetland Metaphors” Project WILD Aquatic p. 39. Students look at items in “grab bag” and describe how they represent a wetlands (sponge, pillow, bar of soap, baby carriage, whisk, box of cereal, etc)

IX. 1 hr journal time to record findings.

X. End of day: all students play Macroinvertebrate Mayhem, Project WET p. 322

Conclusion: Students need more prep on how to write up findings or some type of chart to record impacts so that monitoring can be consistent in the future. There were some great journaling entries and I would not change this. I would develop a tool to record impacts/vegetative & soil types from visit to visit with map points.