Chicago River Schools Network

Educational Continuum

- Workshops
- Field Explorations
- Evaluation
- Classrooms Lessons
- Student Congress
Curriculum-Based Workshops

- **5th - 8th River Citizen** – Habitat Monitoring, Scientific Method, Personal Actions, and Personal Connections to the River.
- **6th - 12th Rivers Curriculum** – Hands-on, place-based learning for biology, chemistry, physics and language arts.
Lessons written by teachers - linked to science standards. We have a variety of lessons that teach:

- **Science**: Watersheds, erosion, and chemistry.
- **History**: Social and cultural significance of rivers.
- **Bridges**: Beauty and function of bridges.
- **Ecology**: Biodiversity and map reading.
- **Taking Action**: Restoration and conservation.
Field Explorations take place at/on/in the Chicago River. Multi-disciplinary:

- Macroinvertebrates, chemistry and stream flow.
- Language arts and journaling.
- Habitat restoration.
- Team-building and cooperation.
Students come together to share their knowledge and passion for the Chicago River.

- Includes CPS/non-CPS, public/private, suburban/urban schools from all over the watershed.
- Held at Taft HS every February.
Every year we conduct Teacher post-tests.
Every year we conduct Student pre- and post-tests.

- Surveys test knowledge about, attitudes towards, and willingness to take action for the Chicago River.
- Short (10-minute) online survey.
- Anonymous, non-paired data.
- Given to all students in our Adopt A River School program.
Student Surveys

When you think of the Chicago River, what is the first word that comes to mind?

Response coding:

Positive – “beautiful”
Neutral – “water”
Negative – “smelly”

% of student responses coded as “Positive”

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10 Year Avg.
Student Surveys

Select the image that best shows your relationship with nature...

% of students responding as either Image E, F, or G

Adapted from “Inclusion of Nature in Self” scale. Schultz, W. 2001

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The **CRSN began in 1996** - a strategy to build relationships with teachers and help students become future river stewards.

Last year, we taught **5,400** students about the river and **100** teachers took a river workshop.

Since 2001: Face-to-face contact with **40,000** students on over **800** field experiences.

75% of the students in the program are CPS students. Of those, **66%** are from low-income neighborhoods.

Students are citizen scientists who monitor water quality - significant discoveries like the **dobsonfly larva** (shown to the right).
What do students and teachers have to say about us?

“The value of this program is immeasurable. My students learn an appreciation for nature, plus they gain confidence in how they can make a positive difference. I have never had a student regret going on the trip - in fact they talk about it for days afterwards and want to go again the next year.”

-Caterina Plummer, Schurz High School

“This is beautiful; the trees, the birds… Is this place free?”

-6th grader, Gary School

“You taught us tons of things and helped us with our understanding of the Chicago River. Your presentation actually inspired me to try to be more active with our ecosystem, specifically my neighborhood.”

-7th grader, Chicago Jesuit Academy

“Being a part of the Chicago River Schools Network has given me a fun, interactive way to teach students about their natural surroundings and to create projects that combine the arts and sciences.”

-Amy Andrews, Mozart School
What do students and teachers have to say about us?

“I can think of no better way to get the students involved, first hand, in the learning process. To let them know that what we are learning is important, and what they do on a daily basis does make a difference.”

-Jeff Hoyer, Deerfield High School

“I had so much fun on this field trip. I loved going into the water to catch the crayfish, going hiking and reading by the tree. But my favorite was crayfish hunting even though I didn’t catch a crayfish. At the end of the field trip I sprained my elbow doing a cartwheel. I hope I get to go on this field trip again. It was so much fun!”

-3rd grader, Audubon Elementary

“Even on a rainy, cold spring day, my 8th graders had a truly valuable nature-education experience at the Chicago River. I never heard a single complaint, and the students could not stop talking about their positive experiences once we got back into class the next day.”

-Jennifer Stubbs, Young Women's Leadership Charter School