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# Community-Based Education Program



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## Promotional Copy

### Water Education Does it Make a Difference: an Evaluation process for the Haliburton Muskoka Children's Water Festival

#### Organization Information

The Haliburton-Muskoka Children's Water Festival is a project of Friends of Ecological and Environmental Learning (FEEL). FEEL is a registered charitable organization whose purpose is to support educational and interpretive programs; undertaking specific project initiatives and special events that are related to Ontario's ecosystem and stimulating community interest, understanding and support for educational and interpretive programming.

The Haliburton-Muskoka Children's Water Festival brings together the expertise of educators, water quality and quantity specialists, community volunteers, conservation groups, industry and government to provide elementary students from the Haliburton, Muskoka and City of Kawartha Lakes with the opportunity to discover the importance and diversity of water.

Two of the primary objectives of this holistic-focused event are to develop personal awareness of the importance of water, and to foster respect for the natural environment. It is hoped that by increasing awareness and respect, as individuals we will make a commitment to use natural resources wisely.

#### Project Information

The Haliburton-Muskoka Children's Water Festival is a fun, experiential water education event which is used by schools and teachers of the Trillium Lakelands District School Board. The idea is to not only provide children with an outdoor, active learning experience but to compliment the elementary curriculum and aid teachers in achieving their goals.

The HMCWF has tried on various occasions to elicit feedback from teachers through post evaluations to help maintain a high quality event which aligns itself with the goals of the attending schools but have not been very successful. The purpose of this project is to design a simple but effective evaluation process which will occur on site during the festival to elicit the feedback required from teachers, parent supervisors as well as the students, for analysis after the event. The results of the evaluation process will be used for constructive maintenance and upgrading of the festival activities and to demonstrate its effectiveness as a water education tool.

## **Benefit to the Community**

In the past, a post festival evaluation has been provided to teachers. The intention was to use the feedback gathered to guide any needed improvements to the festival as well as to provide evidence of the need and usefulness of the HMCWF to supporters. Unfortunately, very few teachers returned these evaluations.

A more useful evaluation, with immediate results, should be conducted during the festival before the teachers leave. This would provide the needed information on site and would give the required results with no follow up necessary. This would reduce the workload of the teachers as well as with the HMCWF committee in trying to retrieve information after the event.

The premise of all water festivals is that by educating youth our water will be better protected and managed in the future, ensuring a healthier environment for the communities in which the students live. There is a need for an outcomes based measurement for several reasons. The HMCWF committee needs to show that the festival is making a difference with regards to, children and their general knowledge of water and its importance, aiding teachers in complimenting their curriculum goals as well as providing sponsors with evidence of the festival's impact on water education, our youth and healthy communities thus valuating their support of the event.

## **Potential Learning for the Student**

The students will learn to design an effective evaluation geared towards an adult population, teachers and parent supervisors, as well as one which is unconventional but creative and designed for children to express their experiences and new found knowledge. To accomplish this task, students will need to research different and effective evaluation processes which are relatively short yet concise. They will also have to be inventive, creative and be familiar with elementary learning to develop a feedback activity centre initiating responses from the students attending the HMCWF. Students will need to design an assessment of the results to help measure the answers in a simple, comparable and meaningful way for the HMCWF committee to use year after year.

## **Resources Required for Project Provided by Host**

**Host:** - The host will provide any support sourcing materials related to curriculum planning, activity centres and specific themes.

**U-Links:** The cost of a rental vehicle **OR** reimbursement for fuel (student owned vehicle) to travel to and from Haliburton County for up to **four (4)** visits.

All costs for transportation beyond the four visits, including rental and fuel costs, as well as fuel costs for project related travel within the county are the responsibility of the host organization.

## **Screening or Training Requirements**

There are no requirements for this project. This project would be of particular interest to a student looking to acquire new skills and knowledge related to the field of education

## **Skills that Would Be an Asset to the Student(s)**

Students may find this project more do-able if they have had some experience in working with children, perhaps through volunteer activities or summer camps.