



PBS TeacherLine®

Mississippi Students Learn Importance of Gulf Coast Wetlands Through Teacher-Created Web Site and Content

PBS TeacherLine helps Gulf Coast-area teacher build thought-provoking Web site to link curriculum and instruction for school-wide Wetlands project

ARLINGTON, Va. (Oct. 17, 2007) – When Hurricane Katrina swept through the Gulf Coast, it threatened regional wetlands, a vital resource to the area’s ecosystem and community and an integral part of local culture. Thanks in part to Rebecca Lucas, a teacher at Beauvoir Elementary in Biloxi, Miss., and the school faculty, the story of the wetlands is preserved for local students and children throughout southern Mississippi through an engaging Web site.

With the help of PBS TeacherLine®, a provider of high-quality online professional development for preK-12 educators, Lucas was able to organize and publish the Web site (available at <http://www.biloxischools.net/schools/beauvoir/wetlands/Main%20Pages/wetlands%20main%20page.htm>) as part of an ongoing, collaborative school-wide project to teach students about local wetlands and their symbiotic relationship with animals and people. In doing so, the school meets state curriculum standards while showing students the value of their natural environment.

Using an interdisciplinary, multimedia-based approach, Beauvoir Elementary faculty planned and embarked on a K-6 study of the wetlands, which began in May 2005 and continues today. Teachers, students, area businesses, and government agencies collaborate on the project. State and local environmental agencies such as the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources help teachers identify wetlands plants and animals and provide information on the wetlands ecosystem.

When the wetlands project began, Lucas enrolled in the PBS TeacherLine course *Publishing on the Web* to gain the knowledge and skills she needed to create a Web site on the wetlands that could be used as an instructional tool. “This course helped me to organize, publish and get valuable feedback on the site regarding structure, timeframe and content,” Lucas said. “The course helped me to use the information we had gathered about local wetlands in an effective way for students in the entire school. The site is organized to meet science and social studies standards from the Mississippi framework, and can be used to teach students in every grade level. This course motivated me to make the Web site relevant, easy to use and fun.”

Digital photos, videos, maps, cross-curricular activities, and more populate the Wetlands of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Web site developed by Lucas. As the centerpiece of the school-wide project, the Web site brings together curriculum and instruction to provide a valuable resource to teachers and students. In addition, the Web site showcases students’ work on such activities as food chains and illustrated stories and is a source of information to parents and the community.

Following Hurricane Katrina, which struck the Gulf Coast region in August 2005, the wetlands project has taken on a heightened importance as teachers and students are able to document the aftermath of Katrina, its impact on the wetlands and recovery of the area. Lucas explained, “The students see the effects [of Katrina] on their houses, their city and in the area every day. The Web site has helped them to realize that the natural environment was affected in a serious way also. They can see that debris that was pretty simple to clean up on the street is a big problem in a marsh. They can see how this impacts plants and animals in our environment.”

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The wetlands Web site and school-wide project demonstrate two key instructional strategies that are emphasized throughout PBS TeacherLine courses—technology integration and project-based learning. A significant challenge facing educators today is equipping students with the skills needed to compete in an evolving technological environment. PBS TeacherLine courses help teachers apply research-based instructional strategies to classroom activities and integrate technology into the curriculum, while helping students gain 21st century skills. Through PBS TeacherLine, educators have the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in their area or across the country to share best practices and examine new teaching methods.

For more information about PBS TeacherLine, visit www.pbs.org/teacherline.

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