

Blue Marble Initiative

Students at West Colchester Consolidated School in Bass River celebrated Earth Day, April 22, in a big way through the Program Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) sponsored project Blue Marble Initiative: Earth Day Workshop. “This initiative engages students in highlighting the interconnectedness of all things on Earth, the Blue Marble,” says project coordinator, Sybil Flemming.

Flemming is in a unique position of having a connection with all 137 students in the Grade Primary to 9 school. She teaches P to 6 Music; 7 to 9 Science; 8 to 9 Family Studies; 7 Healthy Living and also serves as the school guidance counsellor.

Community member Dr. Karen Ewing, MD instigated the Blue Marble Initiative, and the project team members include Flemming, program support teacher Sherry Patriquin and library specialist Leah Unicomb. “We are so fortunate to have Dr. Ewing’s support and guidance for this program,” says Flemming. The concept of the Blue Marble is based on the Earth as seen from space. Flemming points out that our Blue Marble is facing many environmental challenges, including global warming, species at risk, and rising sea levels, and actions must be taken now. “The Blue Marble Initiative aims at raising hope in the midst of these issues.”

Through the project, Grades Primary to 6 students now have access to resources that address conservation, environmental activism and peace, while meeting learning outcomes in the Grades P to 6 science. “The activities and resources complement the existing science curriculum while raising awareness of the uniqueness and fragility of all forms of life on Earth,” continues Flemming. “We want this initiative to be used as a starting point in challenging students to be life-long supporters of a sustainable planet.”



Students build a web of life as a way to experience the interconnectedness of all of Earth's creatures as part of the Earth Day workshop at West Colchester Consolidated School.

Flemming says that the project is also cross-curricular in nature and includes activities and outcomes met in music, art and literacy. She’s also pleased that the junior high student volunteers are meeting outcomes in their caregiving course by mentoring and assisting younger students.

The Blue Marble Initiative kicked off on Earth Day during an afternoon school-



Students create their own Earth Day T-shirts as part of the Blue Marble Initiative Earth Day workshop. Tech-ed junior high students and those taking the child care course were able to meet outcomes through their involvement with the Blue Marble Initiative.

wide event, which included some 19 stations that students could visit and get their Blue Marble passport stamped. “Some of the things students are doing include signing a declaration of caring for the Earth, creating post cards regarding caring for the planet to mail to government officials and using yarn to illustrate the interconnectedness of the web of life,” adds Flemming. Flemming also points out that students will recognize their school and other places as ‘Hope Spots’ for the Earth, and visit stations that highlight water conservation, rising sea levels, endangered species and animal habitats, and their importance for a sustainable environment. “Students are also creating personal Earth Day



Above are some of the Earth Day Workshop project team members with Chignecto-Central Regional School Board superintendent, who dropped by for the event. From left to right: Gary Clarke, West Colchester Consolidated principal; Clint Oakley; Grade 9 students Shelby Rushton and Noah Tremblay; Dr. Karen Ewing, MD; and teachers Sherry Patriquin and Sybil Flemming. Team member missing from the photo: Leah Unicomb, library specialist.

T-shirts, participating in a domino activity to demonstrate how one event on the planet can impact others, and using large blue bags to demonstrate changes in sea level.” Representatives from the SPCA, Resource Recovery Fund Board, Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, and the Colchester Waste/Resource Management were involved in stations included in the Earth Day event.

The \$2,000 from PDAF was used to not only fund the afternoon Earth Day activities, and purchase supplies for the event, but to also purchase books—close to 40 titles of appropriate reading levels, which will become part of the school’s permanent collection of resources. The



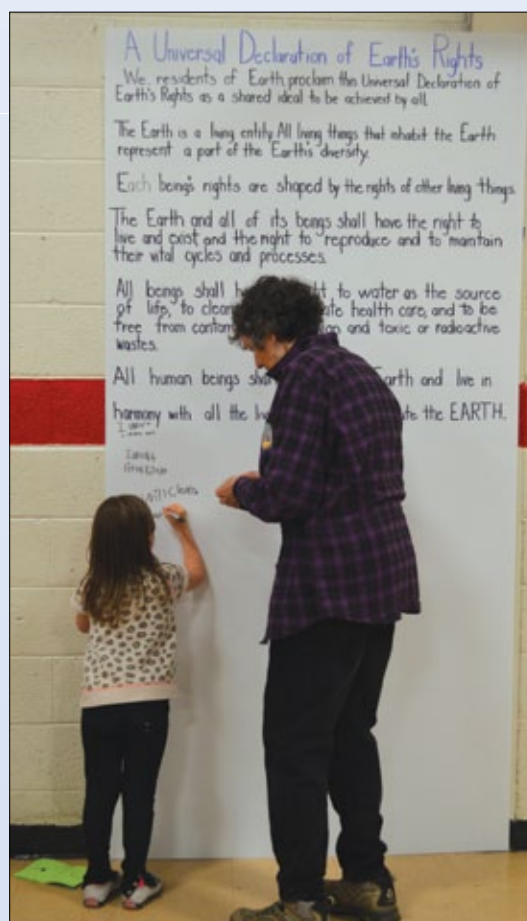
Students engage in one of 19 stations included in the Blue Marble Initiative and learn about the importance of the honeybee to the Earth's ecosystem.

Blue Marble Initiative is designed to be on-going. Team members hope to share their activities and lists of resources with science teachers in Nova Scotia. “This project is intended to foster a desire in students to continue to make sustainable

connections throughout their schooling and become active stewards of the Earth.”

The PDAF program encourages innovative program development in Nova Scotia's public schools. Co-sponsored by the NSTU and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with an annual sum of \$200,000, it provides financial support for projects directly related to the Public School Program. Application deadlines coming up are June 1 and August 1 by 4:00 p.m.

For more information visit the Professional Development portal of the NSTU website at www.nstu.ca or contact NSTU executive staff officer, Gérard Cormier at 1-800-565-6788 or 477-5621 or gcormier@staff.nstu.ca or pd@nstu.ca.



A student signs A Universal Declaration of Earth's Rights.