

Directorate of Public Works-Environmental

News Release
May 16, 2006



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DPW teaches students about protecting the environment

“What can you do to help the environment?”

Students’ hands fly up into the air, waving them hoping to be the next one picked.

“We can use those pitch forks to pick up trash and help the environment,” said Devaundre Carmona, a 4th grader from Clear Creek Elementary.

“I’m going to save energy by not playing my video games so much,” said Tyler Hawkins, a 5th grader from Clear Creek Elementary. “I’m not going to make any promises, but I’ll try!”



Personnel from the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division went to elementary schools to give presentations to over 700 students about environmental topics related to air, water, energy, cultural resources, recycling, and pollution.

“The Environmental Division wanted to educate students about everyday decisions that can help the environment,” said Bobby Poff, DPW’s Air Quality Specialist. “We know it’s important to be interactive with the students, and that is why we provided six short 10 minute stations to help the students understand how to protect the environment.”

Students from Clear Creek Elementary, Oveta Culp Hobby Elementary, and Peebles Elementary School went through six stations to learn about air pollution, water and energy conservation, archaeology on Fort Hood, and recycling.

“Normally elementary students are not aware of their impacts on the environment,” said Rich Rinehart, a 5th grade teacher at Clear Creek Elementary. “They know that they live in it [the environment] but they have to realize that, now at their age, if they don’t learn to control what goes on around them...they’re not going to have anything left.”

Rinehart’s students and hundreds of others learned about the effects of air pollution. Poff used a poster to talk about the six air pollution gremlins.

“Gremlins like Smelly Sulfur Dioxide and Cranky Carbon Monoxide are bad for us,” Poff said. “Cranky Carbon Monoxide comes from cars,” said Poff, “so that’s why car manufacturers are trying to reduce air pollution with hybrid electric cars.”

Students traveled from the air station onto the energy station, where Emely Silva, DPW’s Environmental Support Services and Energy Sales Specialist talked about how light bulbs work in their homes. She used a meter to illustrate to students how much electricity is used for a regular light bulb versus a fluorescent light bulb.

“The fluorescent light bulb will last for seven years,” Silva said. She points to a student and asks him how old he is.

“I’m 8,” the student said.

“This light bulb will last until you’re 15 years old!” Silva said.



When students went to the pollution prevention station Christine Luciano, DPW’s Environmental Outreach Coordinator, presented herself as “KP” the environmental scientist. “I’m an environmental scientist that is a part of an elite organization called the ‘Planet Protectors’ and I come to schools to get ideas about how we can protect the environment,” Luciano said.

She pointed to her construction hat with a paper light bulb attached and explained to the students that it’s her ‘thinking cap’. “My light bulb is out and I need ideas about how we can give a helping hand to the environment,” Luciano said.



The students discussed about what they had learned from the previous stations about conserving water, saving energy, and recycling. Then the students traced their hands on paper and wrote how they were going to “give a helping hand to the environment.”

Teachers volunteered to take their classes to the environmental presentations to reinforce what students are learning in the classroom.

“Having guest speakers present interactive and engaging activities to our students is an important part of their learning experience,” said Jennifer Poff, a 4th grade teacher at Peebles Elementary. “These environmental presentations help our students with our theme of ‘how we share the planet,’” Poff said.

Peebles Elementary School is a candidate school for an international program called the Primary Years Program that focuses not only on the academics, but also social, physical, emotional, and cultural needs of students. The program consists of six themes of which one is ‘how we share the planet.’

“Our students enjoyed the presentations and you can see how much they’ve learned from the thank you letters they wrote,” Poff said.

In a thank you letter a 2nd grader from Peebles Elementary wrote about the water presentation by Kevin Scholz, DPW’s Municipal Storm Water Specialist. *“Dear. Kevin, thank you for teaching us the three types of water. I like it. I thought it was fun. My favorite water is waste water. I like waste water because it can come from the toilet and be turned to clean water. Have a good day.”*



In another thank you note a 4th grader from Peebles Elementary commented about the recycling presentation by Ricky the Raccoon and Lena Rayls, DPW’s Recycling Clerk. *“I was at the recycling table. I learned that things get stuck in the oceans and never move. I thought that there are a lot of things that we need to do to help the world.”*

“Getting feedback from the students about what they learn is rewarding,” Scholz said. “When hundreds of students take what they’ve learned and say they’re not going to let the water run when they brush their teeth, turn off the television when they leave the room, or start to recycle cans, it’s great to see these young students getting environmentally proactive.”

Students from Clear Creek Elementary school are also being proactive in the environment. Polly Harvey, a 4th grade teacher from Clear Creek Elementary has a strong passion about the environment and teaching her students about everyday choices that can make a difference.

“The environmental presentations are a good way to teach students about conserving resources and the difference between what’s renewable and non-renewable,” Harvey said. “The presenters were professional, informative, and kid friendly and because of that my kids got a lot out of it.”

“DPW Environmental is committed to being involved in the community and teaching not only Soldiers, but also students, teachers, and the general public about our resources, conservation, and decisions they can make to help the environment,” Poff said.