

Out and About

Scavenger Hunt: Take students on a water scavenger hunt or a winter water scavenger hunt. Go on a 30-minute hike outside your school. Have each record any water they see. When you get back, list all of your “finds” on the board. How many were solid? Liquid? Gas? Don’t forget to include clouds, squirrels, frosty breath, blades of grass, and other less visible sources of water as well as puddles, holding ponds, and streams.

Water Properties: Use the book, *A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder* by Walter Wick to have students see pictures of different states and properties of water in action. Challenge students to re-create demonstrations of the same properties. If you have access to cameras, have your students take pictures of water properties or different states of water outside and create a presentation to share with their classmates.

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Follow the Drop: Follow the water from your school roof as far as you can, then use maps and sources to find out the name of the major river through which it will travel.

Snow Gage: In winter months, keep a “snow gage” outside your classroom window. When it snows, measure the snowfall. Then bring the gage indoors and let the snow melt. Compare the ratio of snow volume to water volume for snowfalls at different temperatures. Is there a correlation?

Label Your Lake! If there is a lake within walking distance, visit it as a class. Use observation to learn as much as you can about it. Based on what they can see from shore, do students think it is oligotrophic, mesotrophic, or eutrophic? Can you characterize it and its watershed? Check the DNR website’s Lake Finder or your local watershed district to learn more. Be sure to talk about water safety ahead of time and enforce water safety rules during your visit.

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Wetland Walk: Take a walk to a wetland near you. Discuss: What type of wetland is it? Where does the water in the wetland come from? Where does it go? What kinds of plants and animals live there? How does the wetland benefit your students and their families?

Perc Test: Have students contact a local septic system installer who performs “perc” tests (percolation tests) to demonstrate and explain his or her findings and why it’s important to perform such a test before building on a site.

Groundwater Treasure Hunt: If you live in an area where the water table is fairly close to the surface, take a shovel out onto your school property and dig a hole until you hit water. (Be sure to check with the power company first!) If you have time, try various spots: high spots, low spots, spots near a drainage ditch or pond. Is water always the same distance below the surface? Are there any springs nearby? What would happen if you tried this another day? Be sure to get permission first, and fill in your holes when you are done!

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What's in the Water? Collect a jar full of water from a nearby pond or creek. Take it back to your classroom and pour it into white plastic bins or glass pie tins sitting on white sheets of paper. Have students use magnifying glasses to find and observe the activities of tiny living things in the water. How many different types of organisms do they see? How do the organisms move differently from one another? Where might they live in their natural habitat (on the bottom, floating in the water, under a rock, etc.)?

Windowsill Water Observation: If your circumstances allow, place a large bowlful of water outside your classroom window. Keep a clipboard, paper, and pencil near the window so students can record observations. What animals use the water, and how? Do plants start to grow in it?

Pond Study: Do a local pond study or macroinvertebrate monitoring of a local stream to learn about what lives in the water and help determine the water quality.

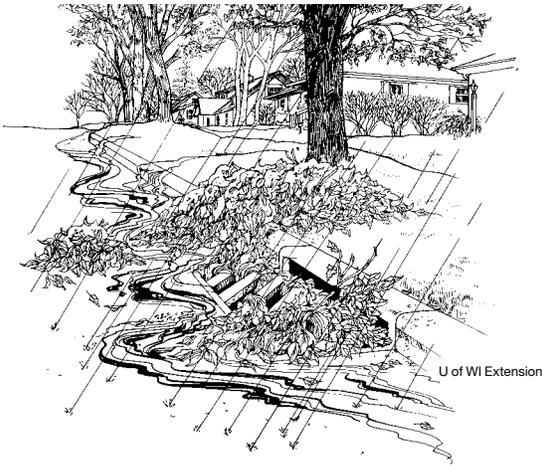
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Neighborhood Water Use: How is water used in the vicinity of your school? Go for a hike in the neighborhood and look for different ways water is being used. If you encounter a business, ask how water is used there. Take a clipboard and pencil to record your discoveries. If your circumstances allow, split into several groups and head out in different directions, then compare notes when you return.

School Water Use: For very young children, arrange for a tour around the school to see all the different places and ways water is used.

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Investigating Storm Sewers: Many storm sewers empty directly into rivers and lakes. After researching where the drains in the vicinity of your school drain, get permission to stencil messages near the drains reminding people not to dump harmful chemicals down them where they can wash into drains. Write an article for your local newspaper explaining the importance of keeping pollutants out of storm sewers.



Rain Garden: With students in the lead, design and install a rain garden at your school. Talk to your local watershed district or county environmental services staff to see if they can help you with planning or planting costs (many offices have cost-share programs and free raingarden planning advice.) Invite local media to tell your story so others can learn what you did and why you did it.

Stewardship and Service: Look at the list of things you can do to care for Minnesota waters. Choose one of these practices as the focus of a service-learning project. Develop and carry out a plan to encourage residents of your community to adopt the practice.

Visit with Local Water Officials: Visit a nearby soil and water conservation district or watershed district project with a staff member from the organization who can tell you what happened/is happening and why.

How much is Impervious? Map and calculate impervious surfaces on school grounds. Where does the runoff water go? What would be the advantage of slowing it down? What could you do to make that happen? (e.g., rain barrels, rain gardens)

Save Water = Save Money: Help your school save water and money while learning lots about measurement and calculation by doing a school water audit. Search “school water audit” online for example audits.

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Attend a Government Meeting: Attend a local government meeting that involves discussion of a water-related issue.

Attend a Citizen Meeting: Attend a meeting of a citizen group involved in influencing policy that protects Minnesota's water resources.