

Stewardship Lesson #1: CONNECTING TO THE LAND

Overview: This lesson uses a variety of activities to explore what youth believe are the essential ingredients of stewardship. It also explores the importance of place in relation to stewardship.

Learner Outcomes

Youth will:

1. Share their connection to nature through their special place.
2. Know what skills and knowledge they can bring to their stewardship project.
3. Understand how to transfer stewardship knowledge and skills from one setting to another.

Getting Ready

Materials: Youth need a journal, pencil, and colored pencils; staff need handouts.

Preparation: Example of a special place map.

Suggested Procedure

Stories of Stewardship (15 minutes)

Staff will:

1. Introduce youth to stories of stewardship to gain different perspectives (refer to handout: Stories of Stewardship).
2. Lead a group discussion by asking participants to summarize the story they read and answer the following question: What makes this story unique?
3. Conclude by asking: What do these stories have in common? Explain that these stories will act as a springboard to dive deeper into stewardship through a silent conversation.

Silent Conversation (20 minutes)

Staff will:

1. Instruct youth to sit in a close circle so that they can easily share with the person sitting next to them. Everyone needs a pen and a hard surface to write on.
2. Introduce the activity:
 - a. Explain that they will be exploring the concepts of stewardship through a silent conversation. They will be given a stimuli paper and asked to reply to the idea, question, and their peers responses, see example the conversation on the next page.

Lesson at a Glance

Stories of Stewardship (15 minutes)

Different perspectives of stewardship are presented through stories about youth who completed stewardship projects in their communities.

Silent Conversation (20 minutes)

Youth explore stewardship in-depth through a silent conversation.

Connection to Stewardship through Special Places (20 minutes)

Youth reflect on a place that is special by drawing a map of this place.

Concluding the Lesson (5 minutes)

Youth discuss stewardship projects and how they helped to protecting Yellowstone National Park.

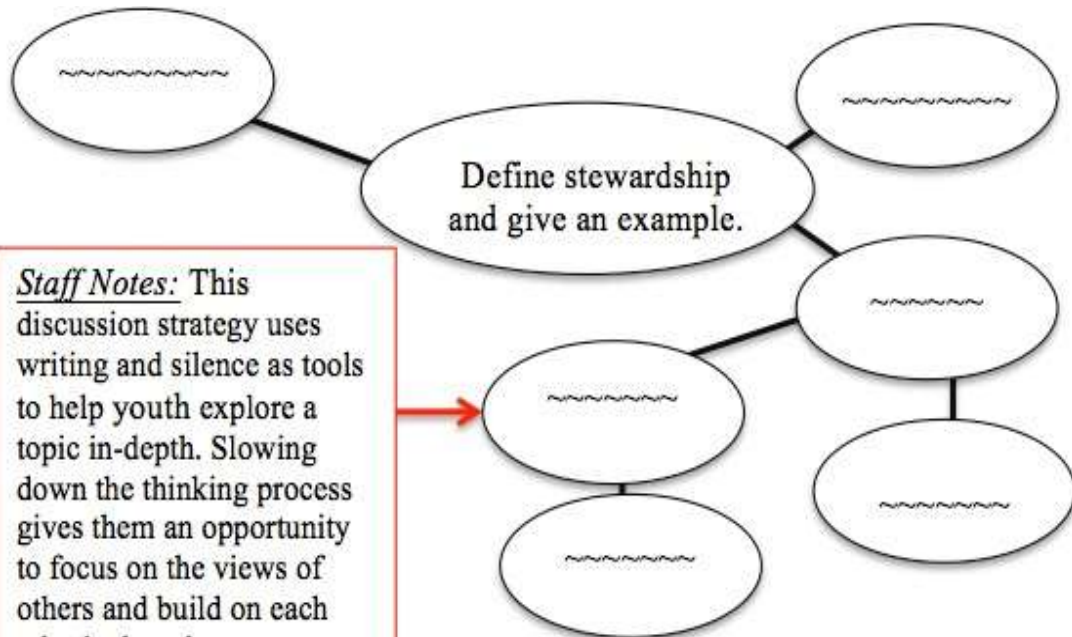
Background

The following material is supplemental information. Adapted from Johnson, 2005.

What Is Environmental Stewardship? At the most basic level, stewardship means taking responsibility for our choices. Environmental stewardship is defined as: the shared responsibility of the environment by those that impact it. This sense of responsibility is a value that can be reflected through the choices of individuals and groups; unique environmental, social, and economic interests often shape it. Environmental stewardship is a commitment to the efficient use of natural resources and the protection of ecosystems. It is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it has deep and diverse roots. From farming to hunting, conservation practices to spiritual beliefs, one can find an appreciation for natural resources and the valuable services they provide in many settings. Environmental



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Staff Notes: This discussion strategy uses writing and silence as tools to help youth explore a topic in-depth. Slowing down the thinking process gives them an opportunity to focus on the views of others and build on each other's thoughts.



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- b. Read the content off the stimuli papers or refer to sample stimuli below:
 - a. Define stewardship and give an example. Copy your definition into your journal.
 - b. *“A way of life in which land does well for its inhabitants, citizens do well by their land, and both end up better by reason of partnership.” -Aldo Leopold*
 - c. What questions do you have about stewardship?
 - d. Who in your life would you call a steward? Describe them and use examples to explain why.
 - e. What personal strengths do you bring to your work project this week?
 - f. How does your stewardship of place affect others?
- c. Explain that they will be writing responses to the stimuli and their peers’ thoughts in the areas surrounding the stimuli.
- d. Present youth with an example of a silent conversation on the dry erase board.
- e. Emphasize that the conversation is silent; all communication is done through writing. They will have time to speak in the large groups later. **(D1)**
Before they start, ask if they have questions, so that they do not interrupt the silence.
- f. Distribute the papers to the group with instructions to read and respond to the stimuli. Let them know that they have two minutes to complete this task.
- g. After two minutes, papers will be passed to the left. Repeat the process until everyone has responded to each stimulus and has contributed to everyone else’s thoughts. They should end up with the same paper they started with.
- h. Next, break the silence by having each person read the comments on their paper out loud. Encourage discussion about the different ideas that were presented.
- i. Ask them to identify a question or comment that stands out from each of the seven stimuli areas and journal about it. **(F1)**

7. Discuss the relationship between youths’ special place and stewardship with the following prompt:
 - a. Imagine you came back to your special place and it was damaged or vandalized. How would you react? Give them time to process, and tie it to stewardship by asking: How do you treat your special place? What can you do to maintain it?

Conclusion: (5 minutes) **(S1)** Explain that Yellowstone is also a special place for many people. Our work projects can be thought of as stewardship projects, since we are caring for this special place. Ask: How do you think our work projects care for and protect Yellowstone?

Assessment Check Ins:

(D1): Examines prior experiences with special places.

(D2): Provides insight into youths with stewardship.

(F1): Assess what youth have learned by identifying their special place experiences.

(F2): Provides insight through reflections.

(S1): Assesses what youth have learned about stewardship while at YELL-YCC.

Staff Notes:

- Silent Conversation: This discussion strategy uses writing and silence as tools to explore a topic. A written conversation with peers slows down the thinking process and gives them an opportunity to focus on the views of others. This strategy creates a visual record of everyone’s thoughts and questions that can be referred to later.

3. Finish with a group discussion about the questions and ideas raised from the silent conversation.
 - a. Begin conversation with a simple prompt such as: What did you learn from having a silent conversation?
 - b. This is a time for youth to delve deeper into the content and bring out the thoughts about stewardship. The discussion can also touch on the importance and difficulty of staying silent.
4. Transition by asking: What inspires someone to be a steward? Can you think of any examples from the stories you read or the ideas brought up in the silent conversation?

Connection to Stewardship through Special Places (25 minutes)

Staff will:

1. Ask: What makes a special place? If people struggle to respond, staff can prompt them with examples like places where happy memories occurred, places that are famous, etc. Remind them that places can be special to different people for different reasons. **(D1)**
2. Explain that special places can connect us in many ways to who we are as individuals.
3. Explain that everyone will be reflecting on their special places and creating a map. Show them your own special place map and point out specific details that you included that explain your connection to the place.
4. Next have them draw their own map. Encourage them to include specific objects that they think makes their place special.
5. After everyone has finished, encourage youth to share their maps with the group. Make sure they point out the important details that make the place special to them.
6. Staff should ask questions such as: **(F1)**
 - a. Why is this place special to you?
 - b. What does it smell like?
 - c. What sounds do you hear?
 - d. Who is there with you?
 - e. When was the last time you visited this place?

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Reference

Big Paper-Building a Silent Conversation. (2013). Retrieved from:

<http://www.facing.org/resources/strategies/big-paper-building-silent-con>

Incorporates the Silent Conversation activity, which served as the central activity. It was modified in the following way: Instructional language was changed to match the REC.

Johnson, S. (2005). Everyday Choices: Opportunities for Environmental Stewardship. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Retrieved from: <http://www.epa.gov/environmentalinnovation/pdf/rpt2admin.pdf>

President's Environmental Youth Award Winners. (2013). United States Environmental Protection Agency. Retrieved from: <http://www2.epa.gov/education/presidents-environmental-youth-award-peya-winners>

Handouts:

- Youth's Stories of Stewardship
- Concept Map for Silent Conversation

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Youth's Stories of Stewardship

The following material is from the President's Environmental Youth Award Winners, 2012.

Stories of Stewardship #1: Save the Blackland Prairie

Chandler Burke

Chandler planned, led, and carried out four very significant projects in natural resource conservation and environmental improvements at the Connemara Conservancy. He obtained four tons of rock to build a rock apron and dam around a storm sewer to slow erosion and to redirect water into the Blackland Prairie Meadow at the Connemara Conservancy. In the area of Invasive Species Control, he removed Johnson grass and Bermuda grass from the Meadow and replaced them with native Texas grasses. Chandler also reintroduced native wildlife by releasing box turtles and rabbits in the Meadow. . Additionally, he removed trash and flood debris from Rowlett Creek and monitored the water quality. S/he publicized his findings and obtained a Proclamation from the Mayor of Allen which declared September 18, 2012 as "Water Monitoring Day". The mayor commended Connemara Conservancy for its "commitment to promoting good stewardship of our water resources". He completed over 1,000 volunteer hours and recruited hundreds of volunteers. He won a \$1,000 Disney grant to help complete his projects and has applied for other funding to continue his work initiatives in the Blackland Prairie.

Stories of Stewardship #2: Green Kids Now

Pavan Raj Gowda

Pavan founded the non-profit organization "Green Kids Now, Inc" when he was twelve years old for kids to join together to care for the environment, raise awareness, take action, and share ideas & experiences. He has written two children storybooks; "Two Tales from a Kid" shows the importance of a community coming together to keep their environment clean. "Geckoboy: The Battle of Fracking" introduces the new method of innovation and raises awareness about the side effects of fracking. He is the International Reporter for the Primary Perspective Radio Program in Australia, a show that is created by kids for kids.

His short interviews with experts on environmental topics are broadcast from Melbourne, Australia and New York's Earthpreservers EPTV; about 150 schools in the Asia-Pacific region listen from their classrooms. He also founded the annual Green Kids Conference that focuses on children to promote, encourage, and reward innovative ideas from them. He was able to initiate a partnership with Microsoft, which allows him to reach out to other organizations and groups for future participation. Pavan has been working with schools to help obtain the Green Star Award. He has created a step- by- step document that was published in September of 2012 that helps youth move into the Path of Innovation: how they can apply their academic areas like STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), introduces Biomimicry as the method of innovation, and show the fundamentals of industry standard project management.

Stories of Stewardship #3: Rehabilitation of the Boise River Greenbelt

Carl Breidenbach, William D'Onofrio, and Nathan Wong

Carl, William, and Nathan, along with community support, undertook the rehabilitation of a stretch of eroding bank on the Boise River greenbelt. As part of a class project, the students decided to write a mock grant proposal. However, they decided to submit the proposal and were accepted for funding. Originally it was supposed to be a year-long project, but circumstances caused it to last for nearly two years. Even though the students transitioned from junior high to high school during this time, they saw the project through to completion.

To protect both land and aquatic life, they were determined to stabilize a destroyed area of the Boise River bank. Their plan was to provide a limited access trail complete with native plants, but the seemingly simple landscaping project required more than anticipated. Soon after contacting the city with their proposal, they were working with the government, non-profits, and businesses. After students explained their vision to the Rock Placing Company, they made a significant contribution by donating the materials needed to create access to the popular beach.

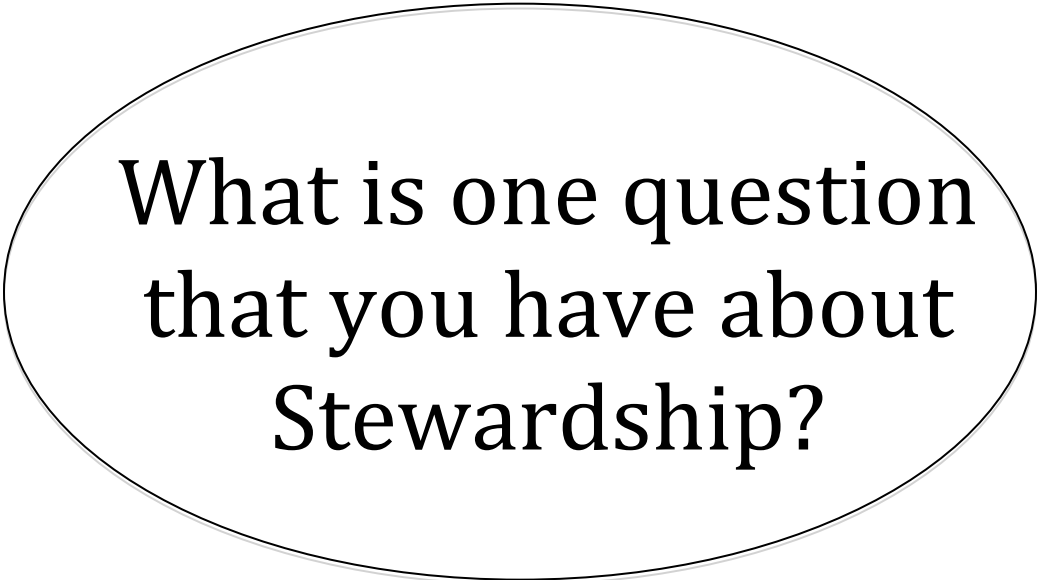
The next phase involved re-vegetation. By engaging and enlisting the help of Timberline Tree Club, they planted over 100 native plants, moved a massive 3/4 log bench to create a sitting area, and planted a 25 foot weeping willow to symbolically replace one nearby that had died. Although the project took longer than expected, it will last for decades, improving trout habitat, water quality, and creating a beautiful spot to stop along the Boise River.

**Define stewardship
and give an example**

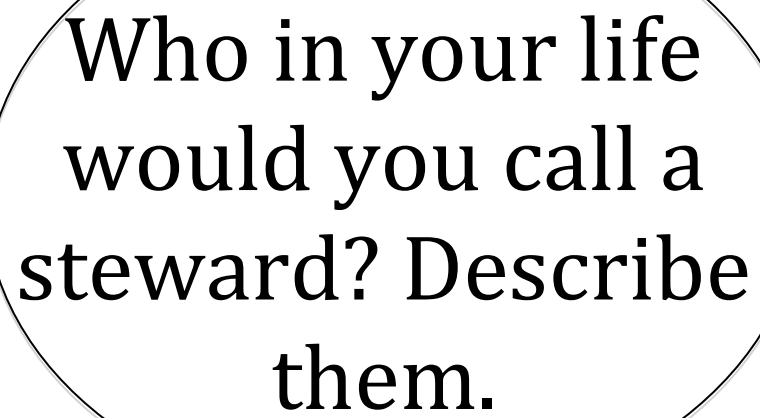
(then copy your definition into your
journal)

How does this quote connect to stewardship? “A way of life in which land does well for its inhabitants, citizens do well by their land, and both end up better by reason of partnership.”

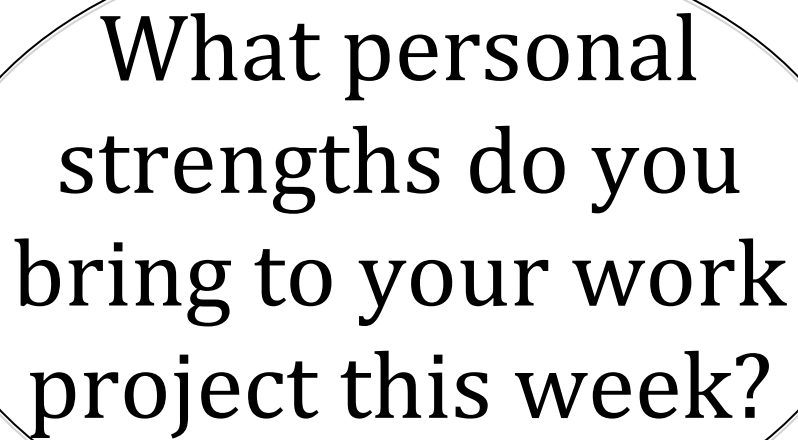
-Aldo Leopold



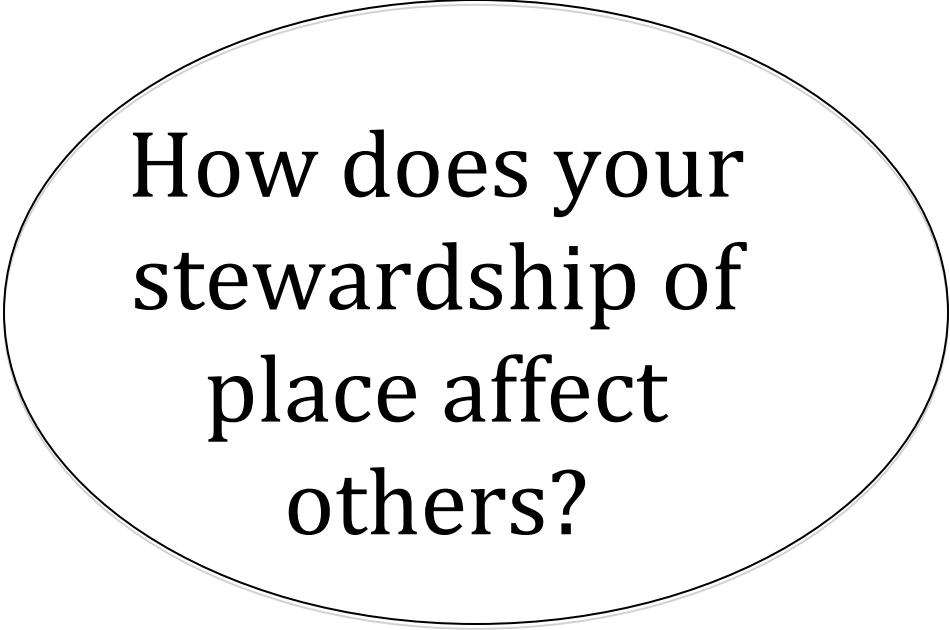
What is one question
that you have about
Stewardship?



**Who in your life
would you call a
steward? Describe
them.**



What personal
strengths do you
bring to your work
project this week?



How does your
stewardship of
place affect
others?