

Stakeholder Role Play/Debate: Virginia Key Beach (Miami, FL)

Purpose

To integrate all the knowledge from the Audubon-AMBIENT Environmental Justice Module by creating a presentation taking a particular ethical stance or point of view which is researched and substantiated.

Overview

This is the culminating experience of the Audubon-AMBIENT Environmental Justice Module. Students will be asked to work in teams to develop a presentation and handout representing a particular point of view in the Environmental Justice Role Play/Debate. This experience will require the students to synthesize their varied knowledge of Environmental Justice issues, environmental health issues, and issues specific to Key Virginia (Miami, FL), organize this knowledge, and present it persuasively to their peers.

Of note, this Role Play/Debate on Environmental Justice can be enriched by performing the Audubon-AMBIENT Creative Writing, Audubon-AMBIENT Critical Reading, and the AMBIENT Ethics Module Key Concepts activity on Virginia Key, Environmental Justice and other important issues first, since this activity uses complimentary readings and requires the students to critically evaluate and research this issue.

Time

3-5 two hour block class periods with team homework in between; the session is to start the students, the second is to evaluate their progress, and the third is for them to present their Role Play/Debate. This experience should involve time in and out of the classroom to collect, organize, and create the Team Presentations.

Key Concepts

There are many different points of view in the Environmental Justice Role Play/Debate, ranging from health and social to economic. There are limited public resources available to solve current environmental problems, let alone prevent environmental problems in the future.

Skills

Students will work in teams to synthesize their Environmental Justice, environmental health, and Virginia Key specific knowledge, as well as additional research to represent a particular point of view persuasively. They will create a handout and presentation materials to help communicate this knowledge and point of view. Finally, using these materials, they will practice persuasive public speaking to present their work and particular point of view.

Materials

Computer access to presentation software such as PowerPoint would be useful, but not essential since transparencies could be used to illustrate the speaking points. Although software (such as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint) would facilitate the creation a brochure, rap/song or poem or poster, these could be done purely on hardcopy incorporating pictures and text. Creation of a video would require video camera equipment.

A transparency projector or slide or LCD projector for presentation of transparencies, slides or computerized PowerPoint presentation would be useful if available.

Facilitator Preparation

You will need to divide the students into groups or teams representing different sides of the Role Play/Debate questions or as individuals/teams representing different roles. Knowledge of and facilitating access to the computerized software with training will optimize this session. Prior knowledge of the Environmental Justice Primer and other Audubon AMBIENT activities, as well as Ethics Module, will prepare you for the range of issues addressed in this section.

It is recommended that Facilitators initially organize the students into groups representing a particular Role Play/Debate point of view. The facilitators should meet with each group to evaluate their progress in deciding the type of handout, the medium, and the different parts in the presentation. Facilitators should encourage the groups to practice their presentations before and keep to the time limits.

Background

What are the various issues raised by Environmental Justice as a concept and its relevance to the issue of Key Virginia Beach and surrounding area? What are the human health, economic, and ecological ramifications of opening the Key Virginia Beach and surrounding areas? As a political, historical and ethical issue? What is the role and responsibility of the individual when faced with Environmental Justice and environmental health issues in general?

What is your response as an individual, a citizen, a scientist, a policy maker, a historian, a marine biologist, a poor person, a person of color, an environmentalist? How much money and resources should be devoted to the issue of Virginia Key Beach? How much money and resources should be devoted to the issue of Environmental Justice?

Other aspects are teamwork of the students in synthesizing, creating and presenting data and a particular point of view. If available, the use of various software packages can be incorporated to enhance presentations. Effective communication is one of the objectives of this section.

Procedure

Read the Critical Readings as well as the Environmental Justice and Virginia Key Readings representing different points of view on Environmental Justice as well as review their research on the environmental health issues and history of Virginia Key Beach. Students should be encouraged to seek out other sources of information on Environmental Justice.

1. Organize an **Environmental Justice Role Play/Debate**, taking different points of view as starting points to discuss the different issues raised by the current and possible future issues of the possible re-opening of the Key Virginia Beach and surrounding areas. Have each group develop a **Power Point (or similar software) Presentation** as part of the Role Play/Debate to organize and illustrate while they talk. Have the rest of the students participate as an audience representing US Citizens, Politicians, Scientists, or any of the roles suggested below.

In opposing groups, **Possible Role Play/Debate Issues** include:

- **Key Virginia Beach and surrounding areas should be re-opened for public use?: For and Against**
- **Environmental Justice situations have major implications for environmental health: For and Against**

2. Have each group in the Role Play/Debate develop a **Brochure** briefly describing the health effects and differing issues from their Role Play/Debate point of view. Alternative work products could include: making a **Video**, creating a **Webpage**, making a **Rap/Song** or **Poem** or a **Play**, or creating a **Poster** to communicate their position on these issues.

3. The Role Play/Debate could also involve **Role Playing** using some of the following roles to illustrate different views in the Environmental Justice Role Play/Debate.

- Scientist working for one of the industries possibly involved in the current Brownfield situation
- Environmental Engineer working for the Sewage Treatment Plant
- Environmental health specialist involved in Environmental Justice
- Reporter of local newspaper
- Small Business owner of a food concession at Virginia Key Beach
- Subsistence fisher
- Lifeguard
- Red Cross representative
- Parent with small children
- Owner of hotel on the beach
- Local Politician with limited monies and resources for public and environmental health
- Lawyer representing the NAACP
- Lawyer representing the US Government on the designation of Key Virginia Beach as a National Park
- Member of the Key Virginia Beach Coalition
- Director of the Health Department

The use of simple props can enrich the role playing experience of the students and should be encouraged.

4. Students from other classes can be invited to participate as the audience and/or the Role Play/Debate can be made in front of Panel of scientists and/or teachers.

Additional Activities

- If they have not done so already in the Ethics Module Key Concepts and the Environmental Justice Critical Reading, have the students read the responses, and first identify the facts and then identify the opinions by underlining or highlighting in different colors; then summarize in a paragraph the facts concerning Environmental Justice and/or discuss their conclusions in class.
- Questions to ask about the Readings: With regards to evaluating different opinions on Environmental Justice, does it matter who gives the opinion? How do you know from what point of view person is going to speak? Does it matter to you if the person has a conflict of interest? What is a conflict of interest?
- Some interesting websites on this subject include:

- http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/ej_bib.html
- <http://www.ecojustice.net/bib/>
- <http://www.nyu.edu/pages/elc/ej/>
- <http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/Tox/environmentaljustice.html>

Follow up Activities

Students can use their handouts and presentation to discuss Environmental Justice as an environmental health issue for other students, families and neighborhood organizations.

What would the student(s) do about a local Environmental issue? What can a group of people do? How can this situation be prevented, modified or made better for Environmental Justices and for similar environmental issues?

Students can visit or have presentations by a local grassroots Environmental Justice coalition member.

Student Assessment

Give the following presentation design components to each student team as a guide to their group presentations:

- ❖ Decide what facts are important to include to support their particular view point on Virginia Key and on Environmental Justices issues
- ❖ Design a Handout that summarizes this information and their point of view (i.e. Brochure, Video, Webpage, Rap/Song, Poem, Play, Poster)
- ❖ Practice and keep their presentation within the time allotted
- ❖ Each group member should take part in the Presentation, even if it is just to read or explain one piece of the presentation
- ❖ Each group member should answer at least one question from the audience at the end of their Group presentation.

Assign points for the following components of the Team Presentation:

- ❖ Were the handout and presentation easy to read/effective at communicating the facts and the particular point of view?
- ❖ Were pictures/maps/illustrations used?
- ❖ Were proper science terms used?
- ❖ Was each group member actively involved in the presentation?
- ❖ Did the group report their sources?
- ❖ Could the group members answer questions from the audience about the facts and defend their point of view?

Students should have reviewed each article used in the Critical Reading:

- ❖ **“Saving Our Backyard: Toxic Waste in a Small Louisiana Town”** by Ziba Kashef, Essence, Sept. 1999
- ❖ **“The Environmental Racism Hoax”** by David Friedman, American Enterprise Nov.-Dec. 1998

In addition, the Environmental Justice excerpts from the Websites of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may be helpful, as well as the following article on Key Virginia, Saviors of Virginia Key by Jim Mullins (April 1, 1999) <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/issues/1999-04-01/columns.html>.