



Onaway Schools: Green School Certified

Recycling to reduce waste, producing alternative energy, and growing produce in their greenhouse are some of the big ideas tackled by Onaway High School Students

What happens when students are given the opportunity to work on stewardship projects as part of their normal classroom activities?

At Onaway High School, Scott Steensma has reinvented his classroom curriculum to put students in charge of their learning experience. Students are integrating the environment and their local community into the classroom through their service-learning course, where their projects are focused in five areas: animals and habitat; fisheries and water quality; plants and forestry; recycling and energy; and technology and data. Through their recycling and energy related projects students have started a school recycling program, built a green house and installed alternative energy technology; including a wind turbine and solar panel. As a byproduct of all their hard work, Onaway Community Schools is now an "Evergreen Status Green School." This is the highest honor a school can receive from the Michigan Green Schools program.

This process has empowered students and given them a sense of personal responsibility; in which they continue to translate into products and experiences they can be proud of. The school benefits, the community benefits, the environment benefits, and the students benefit. Everybody wins!

Recycling comes to Onaway

With the amount of foot traffic passing through Onaway Schools, it is no surprise how much recyclable waste is created. Noticing this, students in Scott's



Students working in the Onaway High School Greenhouse

"My students are great — I just help guide my students in their project-based learning; they do all this great work on their own initiative!"
- Scott Steensma
Onaway Community Schools Teacher

Environmental Studies class launched a school wide recycling campaign. They created new waste management systems, and instructed all grade levels on how the program would function. Students recycle about 2,000 pounds of recyclables every six weeks; with a total of 12,000 pounds recycled during the 2014-2015 school year. Through these student-led projects, Onaway Schools serves as a recycling and renewable energy demonstration site – a model of sustainability within their own community.

Students build a Greenhouse

Led by student Tiffany Krussel, Steensma's students set out on a mission to construct a greenhouse adjacent to their cafeteria. After visiting

and researching local greenhouses, Scott's students recruited the Building Trades class and collaborated with community partners to design and build their own greenhouse in the fall of 2010.

With help from the Onaway Garden Club, students cultivate and grow native wildflowers, which are planted around the school or sold to raise additional funds for their projects. Today their project has grown into students using hydroponic systems to produce lettuce for their high school cafeteria. Through their greenhouse projects students have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of plant sciences, the process from production to consumption, and the importance of including native plant species in gardens and yards.

To further highlight Onaway's greenhouse and other environmental projects, Learn and Serve Michigan awarded Scott Steensma's Environmental Studies class with the 2010 Outstanding Service Learning Award for an Innovative Program. The class was honored at a teacher's conference during which they were given the opportunity to present their accomplishments.

Student-driven Project Diversity

Scott Steensma has demonstrated that student driven projects are a powerful tool and key component for building a healthy "green" school community. With support from the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative and the Great Lakes NOAA B-WET program, Onaway High School's Environmental Studies class has become a unique and exciting alternative education example for schools throughout the region and across the state.

Project Partners



Serving their School, Community

From recycling to alternative energy, Steensma's students have contributed a tremendous resource to their school community. In times when budgets are tight, these students are looking to environmental stewardship programming as way of cutting operating costs for their school.

In addition to supporting the school, the students have been exploring opportunities to expand their projects to serve their greater community. Steensma explains, "We are proud to have worked with the Onaway Garden Club and are attempting to develop working relationships with other organizations." Scott is interested in working with Presque Isle County, and Township Commissioners to update signs at recycling drop-off points.

Working to further develop their place-based education projects, Steensma reached out to Sturgeon for Tomorrow

and Michigan Sea Grant, to incorporate Lake Sturgeon into their classroom. Students have incorporated a Great Lakes fisheries project throughout grade levels at Onaway Schools, using the project as a teaching guide for anatomy, habitat, and life cycles for elementary students. By connecting this project to younger grades, students are creating a community at

"This class rocks and I am really glad that I have had the privilege to participate in it for two years now. My favorite part is working in and outside of the classroom to make our school a better place."

- Jordan Schultz
Onaway Community Schools Student

their school and working to educate others on this threatened fish species.



Serving Northeast Michigan

Onaway students work with the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative to connect with schools throughout northeast Michigan. Their goal is to partner with schools from across northeast Michigan to collect native plant seeds and use their greenhouse to develop a nursery of local plant stock. This would allow Onaway students to continue serving not only their community, but northeast Michigan as a whole.

What is Place-Based Education?

Place-Based Education (PBE) or Community Based Education (CBE) utilizes the local, natural and built environments as a context for learning and in doing so brings students into closer contact with their communities. This method is proven to develop knowledgeable and active stewards of the environment. When schools and communities work together, everybody wins!

Why:

This education strategy protects Great Lakes ecosystems, strengthens Northeast Michigan communities and provides critical support to schools as they strive to serve the academic and developmental needs of their students.

How:

Teachers and students are supported through project mini grants, connection to resource partnerships, and high-quality Professional Development that provides essential tools and techniques for fostering a collaborative culture of place-based learning within and among schools and their communities.

Supporting Community Development and Resource Stewardship Priorities through education:

Since 2006, numerous local and regional partners have engaged in Great Lakes education, networking and planning efforts across Michigan's "sunrise side." These efforts mobilized a network of school and community partners committed to identifying needs and developing strategies for enhancing coastal access, education, and sustainable resource management. Empowered through funding support from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT), this collaboration now comprises the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, one of nine regional hubs through which GLFT furthers the principals and practices of place and community-based education as the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative.

You are invited:

If you care about Northeast Michigan and want to make a difference for the future of our region, please contact NEMI GLSI to find out how you can get involved.

Phone: (989) 356-8805 x 41 | Fax: (989) 354-0144
E-mail: northeastmichiganGLSI@gmail.com

Northeast Michigan GLSI network programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.

How can I participate in the NE Michigan GLSI Network?



Many partners are currently exploring community- or place-based education development opportunities within the NE Michigan region. For more information, visit us on the web: www.nemiglsi.org

Contact Information

Phone: (989) 356-8805 x 41 | Fax: (989) 354-0144
E-mail: northeastmichiganGLSI@gmail.com
Website: www.nemiglsi.org

LEADERSHIP FOR THE NORTHEAST MICHIGAN GREAT LAKES STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE PROVIDED IN PARTNERSHIP BY:

