



# Inland Lakes Provides Place-Based Education

Inland Lakes Schools exemplify place-based education by engaging elementary and secondary school students in service learning through school river monitoring, nature trails, and community beautification projects right outside the school walls.

**Located in Indian River, MI, this school system leads the way with a diversity of school and community projects.**

## A River Runs Through It

Their first project, formation of the Sturgeon Water Analysis Team (S.W.A.T.), displayed the school's concern for the quality of the nearby Sturgeon River. Students in 7th and 10th grade have been monitoring water quality in the river through both chemical and biological methods by testing dissolved oxygen and pH, among others, and also consider bio-indicators by examining macro-invertebrates present to identify stream quality.

Combined with data from previous years, the students analyze data from each new school year and prepare a public presentation given at the School Library each spring. This information is used to understand the environmental impact their community has on the river and allows for discussion about what changes need to be made in the community in order to maintain a healthy river.

## Nature Trail as Wildlife Habitat

Elementary students have identified a need at the school for a nature trail and want to include three special features; a vernal pond, a native plant butterfly garden, and interpretive signs.

*"I think the vernal pond will be a big help to our environment because there will be more places for animals to live and use."*

*-Makayla, Student ILS*



In this case, stewardship is revealed through land management and habitat creation being developed by elementary students. They design interpretive signs about wildlife in the area, plus install a vernal pond accessible from the trail.

The vernal pond will be a unique outdoor learning station where students study the changes of a northern Michigan ecosystem throughout the seasons. They are also following certain requirements to make the trail a certified habitat through the National Wildlife Federation.

## Community Clean-Up

To take the water quality project a step further, the 6th grade students choose to do a clean-up of the area behind the green docks, a local hangout for many Inland Lakes students. Despite being a rainy event, students collected items like wires, trash, tires, and cigarette butts; a total of seven garbage bags full! They met with a local community member, Sally Synder, who was responsible for improvements at the green docks in previous years. She congratulated the students on their efforts and spoke at the school board meeting expressing her appreciation for the students' initiative.

*"Inland Lakes Schools is blessed with a dedicated staff that is committed to doing the best for students and the community."*

*-Fred Osborn  
Superintendent ILS*

## Another Michigan Green School!

Maureen Stine, Cheboygan County coordinator of the Michigan Green Schools, gladly presented Inland Lakes Schools with the county's first Green School flag. Rebecca Heckman, a teacher and champion of green initiatives at ILS received the flag and the certificate signed by Governor Snyder. Students throughout the school are working on projects that are related to the natural environment and school sustainability.



## Project Partners



## Student Quotes

*"We are uniting the projects through the Green School initiative and have achieved official certification. It is great to be part of helping improve our school, community, and preserving our pristine Northern Michigan environment."*

**-Rebecca Heckman, ILAS Teacher**

*"We all felt great about the green docks clean-up because now it will be healthier and more fun for the community."*

**-Ashley Jean, 6th grade**

*"I really want to clean up my community because the littlest thing will help the environment, especially if we all do a little then it will make a big difference."*

**-Chase, 6th grade**

## Placing Students Into Their Community

Lead teachers inject these projects with the valuable ethic of volunteerism by venturing outside the traditional school setting. 5th and 6th grade students learned about native plant species and designed a flower garden for a local Habitat for Humanity home with plans to be involved in the planting of this garden at the home in Northern Michigan. On another level, 7th graders learn about energy efficient homes and what it takes to be LEED

certified. They model their ideal home construction and aim to visit the current Habitat for Humanity home as it is being built. Time is also reserved to give students the ability to volunteer some personal time at the house as well.

## Sustaining Efforts

Inland Lakes has been awarded a sustaining grant through NE MI GLSI and it precisely for quality projects as mentioned above and to support groups



in existence like S.C.A.T.E. (Students Caring About The Environment). Their student written mission statement is as follows: *S.C.A.T.E. is a group of students, community leaders, and neighbors who believe that by working together we will make a cleaner, healthier environment for ourselves and our families. We are dedicated to protecting and restoring the habitats around our community and to the belief that everyone can make a difference.*

### What is Place-Based Education?

Place-Based Education (PBE) or Community Based Education (CBE) utilizes the physical landscape 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!

### Who:

The Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NE MI GLSI) is a regional network of schools and community partners working to promote high quality place and community-based learning experiences.

### What:

NE MI GLSI brings students into closer contact with their communities by facilitating youth-led stewardship projects designed to enhance the quality and integrity of northeast Michigan communities and the natural environment on which they depend.

### 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:

The NE MI GLSI leadership team facilitates Community-School Partnerships resulting in projects that serve the unique needs of Northeast Michigan communities.

Teachers and students are supported through Project Grants 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.

### When:

Each spring, NE MI GLSI (via the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan) provides project grants to teacher teams in Cheboygan, Otsego, Presque Isle, Alpena, Montmorency and Alcona Counties. These grants directly support place-based education programming and specialized learning experiences for teachers and their students. Application information is available online from [www.nemiglsi.org](http://www.nemiglsi.org).

### 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.

### 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 the "sunrise side" counties of Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Otsego, Presque Isle and Montmorency. 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 several regional hubs through which GLFT furthers the principles and practices of place and community-based education.

### Who is Involved?

NE MI GLSI supports over twenty-five school-community projects linking in-school educators with: local, state and federal agencies; universities; non-profit conservation and community organizations; non-formal education programs; and, representatives from area businesses and industries.

### 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](http://www.nemiglsi.org)

### Who Can I Contact?

**Daniel Moffatt**, NE MI GLSI Coordinator, [daniel.moffatt@noaa.gov](mailto:daniel.moffatt@noaa.gov)  
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