

The philosophy of the classroom in one generation will be the philosophy of the government in the next generation

-Abraham Lincoln

Educating the leaders of tomorrow



"Ask them questions and see what they know, and what they believe. Let them talk and participate." Darren Davis goes one-on-one with a visiting student.



Talk about turgrass and discuss the environmental and economic benefits.

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If you think about it, this really holds true in today's world. In just 11 years, many of today's fifth graders will have graduated from college with four-year degrees and could have jobs dictating what we do. The kids we help educate today could be future EPA officials, legislators, or even members of your golf course.

So what role can golf course superintendents play in educating kids about the environment? The most important thing we can do is give them the correct information. So, how do we do this?

Go into the classroom.

Call and volunteer to be a speaker in your child's class or a school close to you. If you are uncomfortable with this, make it easier on yourself by showing slides or a video.

Either can act as your "crutch" or "prompt" to remind you of the things you want to talk about. If you have a camera, buy some slide film. It is very inexpensive to develop. If you already have great photos, they can be made into

slides for approximately \$1.

What slides do you show? Some examples would be:

- A slide depicting the "edge effect." Explain that the edge is abundant with wildlife and that smaller animals are hiding from larger ones and that they feed around the edges.
- Wildlife on the golf course. Tell them what species you have and the efforts you take to protect and enhance their habitat. Encourage them to keep a wildlife inventory at school and at home.
- Show a wetland and tell them about your efforts to enhance water quality.
- Slides of your crew working help tell about golf's effect on the economy. Example, "My club employs 30 people on a year round basis." Also let them know that golf courses in the U.S. contribute \$18 billion a year to the economy.

As for videos, the GCSAA (800-472-7878), the USGA (908-234-2300) and the ACSP (518-767-9051) all have videos on golf and the environment. Borrow

one, or better yet, purchase one and use it by showing it to golf course employees, and member/golfers.

Sign up a school

Sign up a school close to you in the ACSP for Schools. Volunteer to pay their registration fee and to help in any way you can.

Examples of things you can do would be to help them fill out their resource inventory or help with sanctuary projects such as installing nestboxes, nature trails, helping design wildlife gardens, or even providing resources they may need such as plant material or mulch.

Giving school tours

Bring the classroom to you by inviting a class out for a tour of your golf course.

Things to consider:

- What time is convenient for you? Is the golf course closed on a certain day? Is the winter or spring a busy time for you?
- How many kids do you want to invite? Consider their ages, attention span, etc.



- Consider providing drinks, and maybe stop halfway through the tour to let them rest and have time to enjoy nature.
- Ask them questions to see what they know, and what they believe. Let them talk and participate.
- Know how much time you have and take the time to plan your tour ahead of time. Where will you stop? What topics will you discuss at these places?

Suggested tour stops

Water - a lake, pond or wetland area
Tell them about things you do to conserve water (part circle heads, etc..) In wetlands, what plants and animals live there? Discuss what a wetland is and why it is important.

Turfgrass - Tell them what a good filter turfgrass is and that it helps recharge the groundwater. Discuss how it produces oxygen, and on 18 holes, enough oxygen is produced for 4 - 7,000 people to live on. Golf Courses are good green spaces and are 3 - 5 degrees cooler than a city and that they also reduce noise pollution.

Treesnags - Tell them that snags make good homes for cavity nesting birds - and that when you can, you leave them standing.

Lightning protection for trees - Why it is important to protect the trees on a golf course.

Weather station - What is it? How does it work? What information does it collect? Discuss how it converts information it receives into ET rates.

Wildlife - Explain that they need four things to survive: water, food, cover and space. Explain that they might not be seeing a lot of wildlife activity during the tour due to the fact that some animals are nocturnal, and that others may be scared away by the noise of the tour and will return later.

Giving school tours. How many kids do you want to invite? Consider their ages, attention spans, etc.

Maintenance Facility - This is a good place to discuss IPM and the programs you implement to enhance and protect the environment on and around the golf course.

Sometimes it is a challenge to hold kids' attention. I play a question-and-answer game, and the child who gives me the correct answer rides in my golf cart until the next stop.

Be totally honest with the kids.

Yes, we periodically use pesticides. When a question comes up, explain to them that pesticides are a part of daily life that includes golf courses, home lawns, or other turfgrass areas.

I have been asked several times, "if these things are so safe to be around, why do your employees wear moon suits or protective coverings?" It is easy to explain.

The best analogy I like to give is, yes, we do provide protective gear for our chemical technicians or IPM specialists, but think about it this way. When you go to the dentist, don't you wear a lead apron to protect yourself from radiation when they take x-rays?

The kids will shake their heads, yes. I ask what does the technician do before they take the x-ray? They leave the room. That's because they don't want to be exposed on a daily basis to radiation.

Radiation is considered safe in small, infrequent doses. But if you were exposed to radiation on a daily basis, it could be harmful. So, by having our IPM technicians wear protective clothing, we are protecting them from chronic exposure.

Before the kids leave the golf course, I give them a handout from the USGA titled, "Golf Courses Benefit People and Wildlife." It is written in easy-to-understand terms and everyone who reads it will know the benefits of golf courses to wildlife, people and the community.

My hope is that they take it home with

them and that their parents read it as well. You can receive copies of this brochure from the USGA.

Conclusion

Giving talks can be intimidating. However, you've got something going for you. Think back to those days of childhood when "field trips" meant you didn't have to be in school. It is definitely easier to talk to school children than to your peers.

When giving school tours, you're not only educating kids, but teachers and school administrators as well. If bringing kids out on the golf course is not an option for you, consider a tour for a local garden club, native plant society, or Audubon group.

So how do you know when you've been successful? This is one of the many thank-you letters we have received after a school tour:

When my class went to Olde Florida Golf Club we had a lot of fun. Mr. Davis took us around the course and told us many interesting facts about the golf course. He also gave us quizzes. I learned that golf courses are good places for animals because it provides homes for them. Chemicals are only used when necessary. That means that



"Show them a wetland and tell about your efforts to enhance water quality... what plants and animals live there?"

woodpeckers, alligators, deer and snakes can live there in safety. Something I will never forget is that golf courses are not harmful to people or animals.

As you know, government, and others, are making this job tougher every day and if we can't change the minds of today's government, maybe we can educate tomorrow's government!