NEW YOUTH CONSERVATION PROJECT LAUNCHES IN DAVENPORT
Davenport North High chosen to serve as pilot school for Iowa State University project

Davenport, Iowa: Award-winning Davenport North High School science teacher Laura McCreery will embark on a new challenge in the upcoming academic year: implementing a brand-new program called “The Watershed Project.” Iowa educators developed this flexible framework to engage youth in three-dimensional learning while meeting Next Generation Science Standards.

The Watershed Project framework is based on a successful “school within a school” concept conducted at Ames High School in Ames, Iowa from 2014-2016. Three teachers representing English, science, government, economics, and sociology guided 60 high school seniors through a unique project-based learning seminar focused on water issues in Iowa. Through funding provided by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Ames High School faculty Mike Todd, Joe Brekke, and Chad Zmolek are working with a project team to develop tools and resources to allow any school in the state to adopt the project for their community.

“The Watershed Project reconnects our kids with nature by extending the classroom to include the ponds, streams, and rivers that compose their local watershed,” said Brekke. “This project immerses students in place-based studies of real issues and invites them to design solutions to Iowa’s water challenges with community members who have the capacity to take action.”

The project team selected Davenport as the inaugural recipient of a $5,000 implementation grant because of a demonstrated commitment to the innovative delivery of science education by the school district and city. McCreery, along with City of Davenport employee Robbin Dunn, will travel to PBL World at the Buck Institute for Education in June in Napa, California. PBL World is a three-day, intensive seminar where they will design their version of The Watershed Project for McCreery’s Davenport North High School classroom. Students will engage the community through inquiry-based discovery and present their findings through multimedia art projects next spring.

McCreery will also play a role in shaping the framework for future delivery by providing continuous feedback and evaluation to the project team. The Iowa Water Center, a statewide center located on the Iowa State University campus, maintains a program website available at https://www.thewatershedprojectiowa.org/. The website will eventually host examples of project implementation and resources for teachers.

About The Watershed Project: The Watershed Project is part of a three-year grant entitled “Building Youth Conservation Leadership Capacity through Project-Based Learning,” funded through the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. The Iowa Water Center, a statewide center located on the Iowa State University campus, oversees project development. The Iowa Stormwater Education Partnership provides consultation on framework development so that it meets educational requirements of those cities with Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems.