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4-H 404 Water Riches for Youth: Reporter Workbook

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Water Riches
for YOUth

Reporter Workbook

4-H Youth Development
Cooperative Extension, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Date

Editor's name, Your title

Media

Business address

City State ZIP

Dear Editor's name:

As you probably are aware, our city's current landfill has been condemned and the city must build a new one and have it operational in 24 months. Because of this immediate problem, I am in the process of putting together a task force to help locate a new landfill.

Some of the groundwork has already been laid for this task force. My office has narrowed the number of possible sites down to five. Once the task force has met and discussed all five sites, your committee will narrow the field to three, then two, and finally, to its final recommended site.

I feel it will be very beneficial to bring together a cross-section of professionals and citizens to help make this important decision. We invite you to participate in these task force meetings and report their activities to the public.

The first meeting of this task force will be Day, Date, Time, Location.

If you have any questions, feel free to call my office at Your mayor's office phone number.

We look forward to meeting you at the first meeting.

Sincerely,

Mayor
As you learn about news reporting, you will learn to appreciate the 5 Ws and the H:

• who
• what
• when
• where
• why and
• how

Role of Reporter/Recorder

This situation involves locating a new landfill in your community from among five sites. Careful consideration must be given to this issue. Your team must consider a variety of social, economic, political and environmental issues when determining which site to recommend.

On this team, you are the news REPORTER. Good communication is vitally important to any successful decision-making process. You will play a key role in getting information gathered and distributed throughout your team, your school, and perhaps even your community.

By the time you complete this project, you will understand:
• how water behaves,
• the media’s role in our society,
• how to write accurate news articles,
• how to report on a public meeting, and
• how to record notes during a meeting.

Because you will be taking notes during each round for your team, other team members, the team leader, and even your teacher may come to you for information about what was said or decided at previous meetings.

Overview

Welcome to Water Riches for YOUth! You’re going to find this a different kind of learning activity, so pay close attention.

This situation involves locating a new landfill in your community from among five sites. Careful consideration must be given to this issue. Your team must consider a variety of social, economic, political and environmental issues when determining which site to recommend.

You will be covering a community task force as a media reporter. The mayor’s letter identified a serious problem with the landfill and a solution must be found.

While covering the activity of this task force or team, you will also take the role of a community resident with particular views and perspectives of the problem. The different ideas from the team members will help reach the best decision.

If you don’t understand how this activity works, you’re going to have trouble as a team, so please:

• READ this workbook carefully,
• THINK about your responsibility to your group, and
• PERFORM your role so your group can work effectively.

This workbook will guide you through interesting team problem-solving activity.

NOTE: You are the ONLY member of your team receiving the information contained in this workbook. To be a good reporter, you must understand your role and the information in this workbook.

Remember, a team is only as good as its weakest member. Do the best job you can — that’s all your team asks.
Here's How This Activity Works:

♦ Study the Sites

Your teacher will provide site sheets with basic data and maps:
Study the information provided. Ask questions. Search for other additional information that will help to make a decision. Look for long term and short term impacts of different decisions. Talk to experts in your community to help you gather information. You may have to make assumptions or guess about how the sites might be used and the environmental threats at the sites.

♦ Group Meetings

Your group will alternate between GROUP MEETINGS and INDIVIDUAL WORK SESSIONS. Your teacher will help you get the first group meeting underway, and may call additional meetings from time to time when necessary.
During the group sessions, you will discuss which landfill site to select. When your team seems ready (has discussed the issues, looked at options, weighed the trade-offs of each site), you may call for a vote to determine the end of one round and the beginning of the next round. At the end of each meeting you'll need to complete the questions at the end of your workbook and discuss how your team is working.

♦ Rounds

During Round 1, all five sites will be discussed, and a vote will be taken to decide which three sites to continue discussing.
During Round 2, three sites will be discussed, and a vote will be taken to decide which two sites to continue discussing.
During Round 3, two sites will be discussed and a final vote will be taken to decide which site the group supports.

♦ Individual Work Sessions

During the individual work sessions, each team member will work from his/her workbook, will work to find answers to questions that arose during the previous group session, and will work on the laboratory experiences and special activities the teacher may assign.

♦ Your Unique Role

Each person has a specific role, different from the other team members. Study the information in the workbook. Read about the group problem. Talk with your parents and others in the community for ideas. Participate in the meetings as you think someone in your role would act. Your teacher will evaluate the productivity of the entire group as well as your contribution.
Moving Through the Rounds

Be Prepared!

One of the best ways to approach a problem-solving activity is to come to the meetings prepared. By writing down what you want to accomplish, when, how and who should be involved, you will help the group find workable alternatives and solutions.

Use the worksheets provided. They will help you organize the presentations you bring before your team.

This group problem-solving activity will take place in three rounds. Round 1 will begin when the Team Leader and the teacher believe you are prepared. Rounds Two and Three will be called in that same manner.

If team members need more time to gather information or ask more questions — either individually or in group discussion — the round continues. A ROUND ENDS ONLY AFTER A VOTE IS TAKEN!

ROUND 1:
• The group will meet to discuss the features, advantages and disadvantages of each of the five possible sites for the landfill.
• Before closing Round 1, the group will VOTE to continue studying THREE sites.

ROUND 2:
• Discuss the advantages, disadvantages, alternatives to and consequences of the three sites still being considered.
• Vote on the three sites to narrow the field to two.

ROUND 3:
• Discuss the two sites, as above.
• Vote on which site group prefers.
• Prepare for final presentation, as teacher directs.

This workbook has a series of activities that you will complete during this project. Your teacher may provide additional activities and resources for you to use.
Duties of a Reporter

As a reporter, you may work for a local newspaper. Television and radio stations also have reporters and these three information sources are often referred to as "the media." The media's primary purpose is to inform its public about things that are happening in the local community, statewide and at the national level.

Depending on the size of your community, your local paper, TV or radio station may devote a considerable amount of space or air time to local news and leave the state and national news to other publications.

If you live in a small community, your paper may be distributed once or twice a week, rather than every day, and your local news broadcast may be short.

But no matter what its primary role, the media plays a vital role in any community. It keeps people informed.

Your job is to see that the information your community receives is accurate and truthful. You must be careful about letting your own opinions ("biases") sneak into your reporting. You must be certain that all sides of every issue get attention.

This isn't always easy. Whenever you get better-informed about anything, you naturally form opinions.

But when serving as a news reporter, be careful that you treat the issues fairly so your readers — the public — can make informed decisions for themselves.

As a reporter, you must ask questions of people to find out, not only what is being said, but why certain things are being said.

This workbook will give you some guidelines for good writing, interviewing and how and where to distribute the information.

It will be up to you to look for questions to ask, pursue the answers and follow up on your findings.

Sometimes in meetings or interviews, a reporter is asked to listen to information "off-the-record." That means a source will tell the reporter something only if they promise not to use the information in a news story. You will have to decide for yourself whether or not you will go "off-the-record."

A good reporter asks a lot of questions. As you hear people's arguments for and against any issue, always ask yourself, "Why is this person in favor of (or opposed to) this point of view?"

If you cannot answer the question, "Why?" then maybe you need to do some investigating.

If you can answer the question, then ask yourself, "Would my readers be better informed if they knew the reasons?"
Community media inventory

What are the names of your community's newspaper(s), radio and television stations? Next to each, indicate whether it is (they are) weekly, bi-weekly or daily and indicate its circulation (number of copies sold per issue), next to each radio and television indicate viewership or listening audience.

Who owns the major newspaper in your community?

Who owns the radio station? Television station?

Review the last edition of your community newspaper. What were some of the community issues you read about?

How else do people in your community keep informed about local issues?
Writing Right for News

A good news story tries to answer the questions, *who, what, when, where, why and how* within the first two paragraphs. All other information follows according to its importance. That way, if a story must be shortened important information is not lost in the reduction.

This style of writing is called the *inverted pyramid*. That is, it requires that you put the most important information at the very beginning of the story. Progressively less-important information is added as the story continues.

Newswriting is slightly different than some kinds of writing you are asked to do in school, because newswriting is very concise. It requires short sentences, short paragraphs, few prepositions and no contractions.

News reporters are anonymous within the story. That is, if the story does not have a "by-line," (a line at the beginning or ending of the article identifying who wrote it), no one can tell one reporter's work from another. Reporters write in third-person only, identifying who said what, and not referring to "I," "me," or "this reporter."

A news reporter writes only news about people or events, quoting people's statements, thoughts and opinions and covering community events from the perspective of, "What does the public need to know about this in order to be informed?"

Good reporters use the English language correctly and effectively to tell stories that are easily readable by the general public. They use action verbs, few prepositions, short sentences containing a single thought, no contractions and proper grammar to tell their stories effectively.

**News Story Information Gathering**

Using the techniques and the notekeeping sheets on pages 9, gather information for a news story. Remember you will want to give your readers background information about the committee, and tell them what the members said and what action was taken. Use the 5 W's and the H in your notetaking and pay attention to detail. Don't be afraid to question committee members about facts and opinions. All reporters ask questions to help them understand an issue.
Writing a News Story

Now that you've practiced gathering information, use your notes from round two to write a news story. Keep the important information near the top of the story. (Remember the inverted pyramid?) Be accurate if you quote a committee member. Don't forget to check your spelling and other grammar. Ask your teacher to act as your "editor" to "proof" or check your story. Then you might make copies of your story to share with other groups, classes or even your local newspaper.
**Keeping Notes for Round 1, 2, 3**

Make additional copies as needed. One page per site may be useful. Use these pages to keep notes during your group discussions. Be sure you date each sheet for future reference.

<table>
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<th>Round</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Meeting #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Comments on this site</th>
<th>Consensus to continue studying in this site</th>
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<td>Technical Expert</td>
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Questions I need to follow up on:

Questions I need to ask next time:

Sites to continue on to next Round? (Y/N)
Evaluating Our Progress after Round 1

Rate yourself on the following items with 5 being the best.

I was prepared for our meeting 5 4 3 2 1
I shared information that helped us evaluate the sites 5 4 3 2 1
I listened carefully to what others had to share 5 4 3 2 1
I asked questions to gain more information 5 4 3 2 1
When I didn't agree with someone, I did so in a friendly manner 5 4 3 2 1

What is one thing you can do next time to help the group function better?

Answer the following questions as a group.

As a group, what are some things you all need to work on next time?

What is the most important thing you accomplished in this round?

What would you like to accomplish in the next round?

Evaluating Our Progress after Round 2

Rate yourself on the following items with 5 being the best.

I was prepared for our meeting 5 4 3 2 1
I shared information that helped us evaluate the sites 5 4 3 2 1
I listened carefully to what others had to share 5 4 3 2 1
I asked questions to gain more information 5 4 3 2 1
When I didn't agree with someone, I did so in a friendly manner 5 4 3 2 1

(continued on page 11)
What is one thing you can do next time to help the group function better?

Answer the following questions as a group.

What are some things you all need to work on next time?

What is the most important thing you accomplished in this round?

What would you like to accomplish in the next round?

Evaluating Our Progress after Round 3

Rate yourself on the following items with 5 being the best.

I was prepared for our meeting 5 4 3 2 1
I shared information that helped us evaluate the sites 5 4 3 2 1
I listened carefully to what others had to share 5 4 3 2 1
I asked questions to gain more information 5 4 3 2 1
When I didn’t agree with someone, I did so in a friendly manner 5 4 3 2 1

Answer the following questions as a group.

What is the most important thing you accomplished in this round?

What do you feel the strengths of your group were?

What do you feel the weakness of your group were?

What other type of problems may you solve in the future using this same technique?