

# Final Report

## Splash! 2010 Environmental Science & Media Outreach Project

### [C10-028]

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Splash! 2010 Environmental Science & Media Outreach Project was a partnership between Ijo Arts Media Group and Asa Mercer Middle School/Seattle Public Schools. The project represented a significant re-imagining of environmental summer camps hosted at Asa Mercer Middle School in previous years. The ongoing mission of the environmental summer camp program is to introduce youth to science in ways that are fun, engaging and relevant to their daily lives. In past years the camp has incorporated art and media in its curriculum in various ways. Some years the focus was on performing and visual arts as an accent to the science curriculum, in other years the emphasis was on creating art and media as an integrated way of processing the science learning.

The Splash! 2010 project was designed in response to the EJNA RFP for media outreach projects. The goals of the RFP were in line with the work we were already doing and we recognized it as an opportunity to advance the mission of integrating science and creative learning. As applicants/recipients of the EJNA grant we wanted to enhance our existing program with much need equipment and financial resources for our art and media components.

In previous years the art and media learning was relegated to simple videos and slideshows that the youth could create with the standard art supplies, computers and software available at the school. Ijo Arts Media Group (IAMG), as a partner, would make equipment available when possible, but there was never enough equipment or available funds to make sure every interested student had the chance to create something on par with their imagination. Nevertheless the partnership between the summer camp program and IAMG represented a prime opportunity to do a lot more with our youth, we simply needed the resources to make that leap.

We were excited about applying for and receiving the grant. The outreach requirement of the EJNA program was a logical extension of the work we were already doing. In re-imagining our existing project our goal was to create a project that seamlessly integrated our learning and youth development objectives with EJNA's outreach and

public information goals. We in the end we created what we consider to be a successful pilot project that met the goals of SPU/EJNA, Seattle Public Schools and Ijo Arts Media Group.

With a focus on local water quality and conservation issues, the Spash! 2010 project was designed to immerse the students in an intensive classroom lab and field learning science curriculum while give them the room to process and express what they learned creatively. The primary creative tools made available to them were video production and graphic design for print. Throughout the camp they engaged in regular creative brainstorming sessions that allowed them to bond with one another and enhance their creative relationships. As they gelled as creative teams we began to guide them towards creating media projects that presented specific messages and could be shared with their community.

In response to the EJNA goals for community outreach our environmental and conservation issues, we create a team junior counselors. Their primary function was to serve as youth leaders in the project. This included being role models for the younger students and acting as project liaisons to the community. While the collected students participating in the project would create the media outreach tools, the junior counselors would do the actual outreach work.

As can be expected with any new project model we encountered obstacles and roadblocks along the way. We were challenged by the amount of time we had to design and implement our project, there are efficiencies in curriculum implementation that we will enact should we mount the project again, we faced some issues with student retention and there were unforeseen challenges with access to facilities on campus. Despite these challenges the students created some impressive work and the students doing the outreach made a positive impact in the community.

We measure the success of every project not only by its tangible products, but also by the way it impacts the youth. We know we have done our work well when youth are eager to know what is next. This is definitely the case with the Splash! 2010 project. Several students got a chance to see what it takes to create advanced video projects and they are eager to do more. Students who found it challenging to stay engaged in daily schoolwork seem to have 'found their voice' as outreach presenters and want to continue the work. Based on word of mouth there are student who want to know if they can join the project in the summer of 2011. From the community the response has been consistently positive. Adults are impressed by the youths' breadth and depth of knowledge about local water conservation and quality issues.

In short the Splash! 2010 project was an ambitious undertaking; we faced some challenges and had some major successes. Our hope is that we will have the opportunity to continue the work.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**a) Give a description of your organization and why you applied for funding.**

Ijo Arts Media Group specializes in film and video production, photography and media arts education. We serve private sector, governmental, non-profit and educational organizations. In addition to our commercial work we continually give back to the community through our media arts programming for youth. Our mission is to create media that advances the agenda of social justice. Our mission influences the kinds of projects and clients we take on and shapes the way we approach everything we create.

For the past 12 years we have been working with youth to discover their own voice using the tools of media production. Our projects are usually topic driven and are designed to encourage youth to explore how they can use media and what they learn to create change in their communities. Because we are a private sector entity funding for our youth media programming is typically tight. We rely heavily on our partnerships with schools and non-profit organizations to fill in the resource gaps. Even with partnerships our projects often face limitations.

The goals of the EJNA Arts & Multimedia Outreach Project mirror our organizational values and goals perfectly. We applied for funding because we saw an opportunity to meet some of our resource challenges while working with a funding organization whose goals resonate perfectly with ours.

**b) Give a basic overview of your project in one paragraph (what did you do)?**

Splash! What's Up With Our Water was an environmental science and media project based at Asa Mercer Middle School. The project unfolded in three phases over the course of six months. It began with a five-week environmental summer camp during the month of June and July during which students learned about our local water system through a series of field trips and classroom based lab science sessions. Students creating outreach media worked on their projects during afterschool classes from September to November. Students presenting the projects at community outreach events practiced their presentations at afterschool sessions from September to November. And finally, students made community presentations about water quality and conservation issues using video and posters created during the course of the project.

## **TRAINING**

**a) How many people were trained to conduct outreach to others?**

Twelve Students were trained to conduct outreach:  
Six students were trained to conduct outreach presentations to the community.  
Six students were trained as media producers (camera operators, editors, studio production assistants) to help create the outreach tools.

## **b) What were they trained to do?**

**Outreach Presenters:** These students were trained to work in pairs as community presenters. Their outreach training focused on public speaking and interacting with individuals and groups in a question and answer format. As outreach presenters they had three main goals; to communicate specific messages about saving water through conservation techniques and proper home waste disposal practices, to present the outreach media as a teaching/learning tool and to describe the project and the students involved.

**Media Producers:** They were trained as camera operators, editors and production assistants. Their task was to work with the creative teams to help make their projects possible. Camera operators learned basic photography and videography techniques and were guided through the process of shooting various kinds of footage in the studio and on location. Editors learned basic video editing techniques and were guided through the process of editing the video projects. Production Assistants worked on the various tasks that needed to be done to make the projects possible such as setting up lighting and studio equipment and assisting the camera operators.

## **c) What methods/strategies were used to train them?**

The presenters participated in the afterschool outreach development classes where they prepared for their community presentations. The main preparation techniques consisted of:

### **Group Discussions**

**Learning Review:** The students reviewed what they learned during the environmental summer camp. This consisted of open discussion of the science trips and how they illustrated how our regional water system works.

**Media Project Discussion:** Looking at the main messages in the media projects created by the other students, connecting these messages to their own experiences and deciding how they would introduce the media orally.

**Personal Perspective:** Discussion about how and why each of them got involved in the project and what they learned.

### **Presentation Prep**

- Preparing what they want to say during their presentations
- Practicing with their presentations with their partners
- Practicing their presentations in front of a small audience of students and teachers.
- Reviewing the experience of presenting to the community after and outreach event.

**d) What were the successes and challenges of the training?**

The outreach training went well in that students who had no experience with public speaking and presentations not only successfully completed their community outreach, they grew more confident, articulate and enthusiastic about presenting as they went along. In their presentation review some of the things the students talked about experiencing were:

- Participating in the summer camp field trips made what they were talking about more tangible.
- Being glad they had ample time to practice before presenting to the public
- Presenting with a partner that they practiced with made them more comfortable
- Being nervous at first but feeling supported by family, friends and community members at the presentations.
- Being encouraged by feedback from audience members who came up to speak with them after the presentations
- Impressing adults with their knowledge of water issues was a huge confidence booster.
- Positive audience response to the media projects made them feel better about interacting with the community, especially strangers.
- Having projects that they had a hand in creating and were proud to show was important.
- Being supported by project staff throughout the process and even during the presentations helped them get over their initial fears of presenting in public.
- The stipend for outreach presenters was a big motivator.

There were some challenges with the outreach training, mainly around scheduling and student attrition. We set our project up to have six students who would receive a stipend for taking on a leadership role as junior counselors during the camp and presenters at our outreach events. All of these students were eighth graders graduating in the spring of 2010.

As junior counselors they served as youth leaders in the camp. This included helping camp teachers set up science experiments and activities, serving as group leaders in lab science experiments and generally being role models for conduct and participation.

These students were also responsible for heading up the creation of media projects and presenting the projects at the outreach events.

All of the students successfully completed their duties as student counselor during the summer camp. However, because they were all graduating eighth graders, we experienced some attrition when the school year began due to scheduling conflicts and a loss of interest on the part of some. In all we lost three of our six junior counselors as the school year progressed.

We addressed these challenges by accommodating the students' situations where we could and created alternate plans where we couldn't. Some students has activity conflicts during the week, so we scheduled space as Jefferson Community Center on Saturday mornings for them to meet and work on their media projects. Other students couldn't make it consistently because of the increased demands of high school homework, we did our best to stay in contact with them via text message, email and phone calls to inform them of what they missed. Other students just stopped attending and could not be reached via phone, email or text.

In retrospect these challenges were, in part, built into the design of this year's project. As planners we failed to fully anticipate the challenge of keeping all of the junior counselors fully engaged throughout the second and third phase of the project. While some of the older students were unable or unwilling to complete the project, there were plenty of the younger students attending Mercer excited and willing to fill in. We recruited some of these students and offered them the remaining portion of the stipends allotted for outreach activities.

In assessing this aspect of the project we came to the conclusion that there was a definite benefit in having junior counselors. Having eighth grade junior counselors worked well in the summer session but presented insurmountable challenges when school was in session. In the future we would consider alternative ways of creating youth leadership that focus on students who will be attending Mercer when the fall semester starts.

## **PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

- a) Provide the following information regarding each product that was developed and or distributed for this project:**

For the Splash! 2010 project the students created two main outreach products, a set of posters videos that provide tips saving water and decreasing pollution.

### **The Posters**

The students created two posters each measuring 20x30 and available in digital format for electronic distribution or printing in a variety of sizes. The students were attracted to the idea of making posters, as it is a familiar format. They are accustomed to making visual presentations for school and they were excited about the possibility of using new

design tools.

The posters are entitled:

1. “Three Ways To Save” – Provides three tips for saving water at work, school and in the home.
2. “Three Ways to Conserve” – Provides three tips for decreasing wastewater pollution in the home.

The Videos

The students developed two public service announcement video shorts. Video is another format that they are familiar with. Most of them had only created basic home videos but were well versed in the visual language of videos and were excited about creating something using some of the techniques they see on television and online.

The two videos they developed are:

1. “Conserve Water” - Dramatically illustrates how we absent-mindedly waste water everyday and provides tips for saving water at work, school and the home.
2. “Angel vs. Devil” – Dramatically illustrates how everyday actions like littering have a big impact on water pollution and provides simple tips to avoid this. (this video is currently incomplete. They discovered that the first round of footage that they shot was unusable in the edit. They began reshooting it but ran out of time).

The students, based on what they learned during the environmental summer camp, selected the topics. During the camp they worked in teams to think creatively about what they were learning. During the camp they met in these teams once a week on Fridays to review the activities and lessons of the past few days and begin brainstorming about their projects.

At the start of the school year the students began meeting again with the specific goal of finalizing their project ideas and creating their outreach media. The subject and media for their projects were decided during these sessions. As facilitators we guided the students through the process of narrowing their messages down to a presentable size and worked with them as they wrote and edited the content for the posters and the videos.

The students were organized to produce the projects according to their areas of creative interest. Specifically there were students interested in performing, writing, camera work (still and video), video editing and graphic design. Students collaborated in the creation of the project based on these areas of interest and were involved on varying levels at each stage of the creative process.

**b) What were the successes and challenges of the development of the outreach tool?**

For the most part the creation of the posters and videos was a successful process and proceeded pretty much as anticipated. In the case of the second video (Angel or Devil) we experienced some challenges with completion because the students heading up that creative effort were also junior counselors who couldn't make to the after school sessions at Mercer on a regular basis.

Because our project was created and conducted in partnership with Seattle Public Schools there were a number of educational objectives that had to be fulfilled. The bulk of these were science related and were fulfilled by the camp curriculum. There were also reading and literacy requirements that we had to be mindful of. In creating our posters and videos we had to make sure that we were not only encouraging the students to be creative, but that we were also challenging them academically as well.

As creators of the Splash! 2010 project our goal was to challenge the students to create thoughtful and quality media that would be persuasive in communicating their ideas. Most youth today have some experience creating media for mass consumption, even if it is just cell phone photography or video that is posted online. Given this familiarity we wanted to demonstrate how they could use similar technologies, with a bit of thought and creativity, to create a stronger message. We also wanted to demonstrate how accessible the techniques are for creating effects commonly seen on television, in the movies and in print media.

The students really responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to learn new creative skills and techniques. Having equipment on hand that allowed them to explore new things and express themselves in different ways was a huge factor in the success of the projects. As facilitators we were also surprised by some of the students and their natural acuity in applying the technology to their vision. We discovered natural born camera operators, editors, performers and visual artists.

All of these things worked well together to encourage the students to push themselves and create projects they were proud of sharing. As students previewed their in-progress projects with one another it created excitement and students began to put more effort into what they were making. This excitement extended into the outreach training and the outreach events as well.

In the way of challenges, the second video is only half complete because of reasons cited earlier. Although the project has officially ended there are students who are still excited about completing the video and sharing it with their peers at school. Even though we were not able to complete everything in the allotted time, there is still an opportunity to have some success from the effort.

## **OUTREACH & EDUCATION**

a) How many total people did your project educate about your chosen topics?

Over the course of three community presentations we did outreach to approximately 300 people. This includes:

250 people at Filipino Family Night at Asa Mercer Middle School  
30 people at Latino Family Support Day at Asa Mercer Middle School  
30 people at the White Center Community Summit

Including our project participants  
25 Youth  
5 Teachers and Staff

The total number of people educated about our subject is estimated at 340 – 350.

**b) Who were the primary audiences for your education and outreach activities (i.e. youth, elderly, low-income, Hispanic, Somali, Chinese, etc.)?**

Our project did outreach to a combination of youth and adults. Two of our events took place at Asa Mercer Middle School Community Learning Center family and community building events. These cross-generational events provided an opportunity for our student to reach their peers and adult. Youth and adults attended the White Center Community Development Summit, but our students interacted with mostly adults at that event.

Our primary audiences for our outreach presentations were families from the Latino and Filipino communities. To a lesser degree we did outreach to the Somali, African American, Pacific Islander and White communities via our work at the White Center Community Development Summit.

**c) Provide the following information for each outreach activity you conducted to educate people about your chosen topics.**

**Filipino Family Night**

**Event Type:** Family Engagement / Community Building

**Event Content:** Youth performances and presentations / Informational presentations / Food

**Our Presentation:** Oral Presentation with large posters and a table for Q&A, feedback, and give-away bags

**Number of People Educated:** 250

**Location:** Asa Mercer Middle School

**Recruitment:** Invitations sent out by School and Seattle Parks Community Learning Center Staff

**Staff Activities/Duties:** Assist our students in setting up their table, introducing them to the audience prior to their presentation.

### **Latino Family Support Day**

**Event Type:** Family Academic Support Workshops

**Event Content:** Presentations / Workshops

**Our Presentation:** Oral Presentation with large posters, video and a table for Q&A, feedback, and give-away bags

**Number of People Educated:** 30

**Location:** Asa Mercer Middle School

**Recruitment:** Invitations sent out by School and Seattle Parks Community Learning Center Staff

**Staff Activities/Duties:** Assist our students in setting up their table, introducing them to the audience prior to their presentation.

### **White Center Community Development Summit**

**Event Type:** Community Summit

**Event Content:** Youth performances and presentations / Informational presentations / breakout workshops / informational booth area / food

**Our Presentation:** Oral Presentation at informational table with large posters, video, Q&A, feedback, and give-away bags

**Number of People Educated:** 30 – 40 approximately

**Location:** Cascades Heights Elementary School in White Center

**Recruitment:** Promotions and Invitations sent out by White Center Community Development Summit

**Staff Activities/Duties:** Assist our students in setting up their table

#### **a) What was your outreach method? / What were the successes and challenges of the methods?**

Our outreach method focused on our students presenting themselves as experts on the subject of water quality and conservation through the media they created, public speaking and interpersonal interaction. The students created the media and practiced their public speaking so that they could present the media to the public and speak authoritatively as well. They were front and center in all three presentational modes and thus garnered a lot of respect and attention from their audiences. Their feedback about their knowledge of the subject and ability to communicate it was overwhelmingly positive. The quality of their media presentations was also cited as promoting their message well.

We found that this mode of presentation works best when the students can present in a more intimate context. Although we had the opportunity to present to more than 250 people at Filipino Family Night, we found that the quality of the presentation and response was not as strong overall as the other presentations. Presenting to a smaller group at Latino Family Support Day allowed the students to really make contact with the audience. Not only because of the smaller setting, but because the students were able to

present in both English and Spanish. We the audience responded well to having a bi-lingual presentation.

At the White Center Community Development Summit (WCCDS) we didn't have a forum to address the entire audience at once, but our table was made prominent and attractive by the students' posters and once people approached the table they had multiple media to interact with and learn about water quality and conservation. The student presenters interacted with each person that approached individually explaining the content of the posters, inviting them to watch the video, offering them Seattle Public Utilities literature about waste disposal and encouraging them to qualify for a SPU give-away bag by filling out a feedback form.

Overall the quality of the interaction at the WCCDS was higher than the previous two events. This is in part because the event was geared towards providing solutions to everyday issues and that the students were well rehearsed by then and very relaxed in their roles and water quality and conservation authorities.

There were two main issues with the Filipino Family Night. First the event was geared more towards entertainment and socializing than learning and second the size of the audience made it hard to gauge the quality of audience attentiveness.

**b) What would you change or do differently (if anything) regarding outreach?**

In the future I would focus on having the students present at events where they can have more intimate contact with their audience. One on one interaction seems to be really effective with youth communicating with adults. I would look for more opportunities to have students present in this context and I would focus on recruiting students fluent in other languages so that there can be bi-lingual presentations to diverse communities.

If we were to do more events like the WCCDS then I would prepare more students to participate by floating around the venue and steering people to our outreach table to watch our videos and engage with our youth presenters. This would help increase the volume of contact without sacrificing the quality of interaction.

We were also in midst of planning a presentation format geared specifically for middle and high school classrooms. Based on our experience with presenting to smaller groups and the positive response to the students' media projects we believe having youth present to other youth in this context would be extremely effective.

**BUDGET**

- a) Provide an estimate of the total time and money you spent on your project. Include all expenses reported for the project. Provide any insight you have regarding how you achieved project success and what additional funding would be needed for potential expansion of the project in the future.

This information will be used to help others who want to implement similar projects better understand the true costs and time commitment.

Type of Expense	Description of Expenses	Total Number of Hours	Total Dollar Value
Paid Labor:	Inye Wokoma - Project Coordinator / Media Instructor Laughing Crow Curriculum Trainer Junior Counselors	<u>431.6</u> Hrs	\$19200.18
Volunteer Time (valued at \$20/hr):		<u>0</u> Hrs	\$0
Non-Labor Expenses:	Curriculum Usage License & Binders	N/A	\$4575.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b><u>431.6</u> Hrs</b>	<b>\$23775.18</b>

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & BENEFIT

- a) If you had PARTNERS helping you with the project, provide the following information.

Asa Mercer Middle School/Seattle Public Schools

We partnered with the staff at Asa Mercer Middle School to make the Splash! 2010 project possible. The school provided:

- a) facilities
- b) camp teachers and facilitators
- c) science supplies
- d) transportation for the field trips
- e) funds for field trips
- f) food for the students
- g) transportation for students to and from campus when necessary
- h) coordination of daily activities during summer camp

Their primary role was to oversee the educational component of the project. We outlined the educational activities together and Mercer staff took the lead in coordinating the most of the daily activities.

Estimated hours contributed to the project by Asa Mercer Middle School:

Camp Teachers: 3 teacher @ approx 150 hours each = 450 hours

Camp Coordinator: 200 hours

Total Estimated Contributed Hours: 650 hours

We had no volunteers on this project.

- b) If you had VOLUNTEERS helping you with the project, provide the following information.**

We had no volunteers on this project.

- c) Describe how the community benefited from your project (i.e. access to resources, youth leadership development, job skills, community building, public health, etc.)**

In addition to spreading the word about an important subject, our biggest contribution to the community is in the area of youth leadership development. The junior counselors in our project were tasked with taking a leadership role in every phase of our project. Some of the youth were selected by Mercer's truancy counselor to participate in Splash! 2010. These students faced issues in their home and personal life that caused them to be late to school or absent frequently. The school's truancy counselor felt the opportunity for them take on additional responsibility with the promise of reward would help them focus and develop better time management habits.

We had varying degrees of success with this approach. All of the students responded positively to the opportunity. Over the course of the project some fell back into their previous habits while others exceeded our expectations as junior counselors and outreach presenters. Supporting these students in a project where they had the opportunity to do something new, different and important for their community gave them the chance to share new parts of themselves with the community.

We feel that our engagement with youth on this level is one our most important contributions to the community. The youth gain a sense of self-confidence, become more focused and disciplined and gain knowledge about a subject that they can share with the community. Community members, and the families of the participating youth in particular, have the opportunity to see their youth excel in new ways and get a sense of their potential.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- a) Do you consider the results of your project successful? Why or why not? Describe the impact on the community and any outgrowth of activities or inspiration, if any, as a result of it.**

We faced many challenges and had to make adjustments throughout the course of our project. The biggest issue was with student participation and retention as discussed earlier. Some other challenges including having to make adjustments to our outreach schedule due the to pace of production of the outreach media.

Mercer also experienced a sharp increase in student population due to school closures. We weren't aware of this until just before the start of school in early September. In

previous years we had the choice of several rooms to set up and use as our project space, this year we had not consistent space that we could use and had to negotiate for available space on a regular basis. Depending on what we had to accomplish (shooting, editing, presentation practice, etc) this presented varying degrees of challenge and delay.

Despite our challenges we feel that our project has been a success. The students, their families, Mercer faculty and staff and community members are all very pleased with the quality of work the students created. The students that presented to the community did so with enthusiasm and are eager to continue the work. Students that didn't have the opportunity to finish their media projects are eager to do so. The youth that presented at our outreach events had the chance to experience sharing something of value with their peers and adults and receive recognition for their efforts. Community members have expressed an interest in sharing what our students created with youth in their organizations.

**b) What strategies were essential to the success of your project and why were they effective?**

The most effective strategy in our project was giving the youth the opportunity and responsibility to create something of value for their communities and providing consistent creative, technical, educational and emotional support as they went through the process. Youth at this age are in the midst of developing new levels of independence, yet they still need and desire support and guidance from adults as they try new things. Creating a space where they can experience a healthy balance of self-exploration and guidance is crucial for their growth. When they are successful and happy with their efforts the effects ripple outward, impacting family, friends and community.

Projects that engage youth over an extended period of time and allow for the creation of healthy relationships are always more effective.

**c) Describe any barriers or challenges you encountered during the project. Explain how you addressed them and how these might be avoided in the future.**

Most of the challenges we face and our responses to them have been addressed earlier in this report. To summarize we have determined that our biggest challenge was associated with timing.

Although this year's project was a continuation of an ongoing environmental summer camp series, we made significant changes in scope and design based on the opportunity presented by the EJNA grant. Prior to hearing about the EJNA grant we didn't have specific plans to run the program in the summer of 2010. Thus we mounted this project on an extremely compressed timeline. In retrospect this expedited process affected the flow of the entire project.

Normally we begin planning for projects several months in advance, as early as January in some cases. This gives us a chance to work through any possible glitches in the project design, identify, establish relationships with and begin recruiting students we think will benefit best from the project, work out funding issues and make sure all of our staffing, facilities and resource needs are in place.

Because we took on mounting the project late in the year, we went about the redesign making some assumptions based on prior experience; assumptions that turned out to work against us in the long run. There wasn't time before project began for all of the executive staff at Mercer to perform a detailed vetting of the project and identify any potential programmatic, funding and facilities issues.

In the future we would not attempt such a radical redesign of an existing program in such order. We would allow for more time to work through all of the project components to make sure they made sense and were attainable with the available resources. However, now that we are working with the benefit of hindsight and having laid the foundation for an enhanced project model, we would do some of the following things differently:

- Be more selective about the camp activities. This includes eliminating some field trips that were less effective and scaling back on the classroom lab work. In retrospect we could have shaved 3-5 days off of our science work without sacrificing the quality of learning. Creating efficiencies in the science curriculum will provide more time for creative work and emotional bonding between students and project staff.
- Identify youth leaders who will continue on at Mercer throughout the fall. Having students who are slightly older serve in a leadership capacity is conventional wisdom. In this case the challenges of keeping students who are adjusting to high school engaged in a project at their former middle school provide to offset the benefits.
- Be more proactive about securing our facilities needs. The student population/space availability changes at Mercer created a significant stumbling block. In order for our project to work smoothly we needed a class where we could set up our production equipment and safely leave it for the duration of the semester. We made assumptions about facilities based on previous years and didn't begin working on this issue until it was almost too late. We will not make this mistake again.

**d) Describe any project success stories or anecdotes you would like to share.**

As described earlier in our report some of the students that served as junior counselors were selected by the truancy counselor at Asa Mercer. The hope was that the experience would give them the opportunity to do something positive and be rewarded for their

efforts. Some students rose to the occasion while others fell back into their old patterns. One such student who rose to the occasion is Italia Juarez.

Italia started working in the Splash! 2010 project in the fall, after the new school year began. She was recruited to replace a student who stopped participating. At the time that Italia started with us her attendance record showed more late arrivals and absences than not. In addition she had on-going contentious interactions with members of the school's faculty, counseling and administrative staff. She had a good relationship with the truancy counselor and Splash! project partner, Tonja Davis, who suggested she get involved in what we were doing.

We brought Italia into the project and paired her up with Izet Mendez to train for outreach presentations. Izet had been working with Anakaren Mendoza and Teniyah Felder on their poster project and outreach presentation. Both Anakaren and Teniyah dropped out of the program as the posters were being completed and Italia was recruited to fill in.

It was an ideal match. Italia and Izet had an immediate chemistry. Izet, despite being at Cleveland High School and struggling to adjust to the new academic demands, remained committed to the project. Italia seemed line up with the example that Izet was setting and synced with Izet's enthusiasm and commitment.

One of Italia's biggest challenges was a general lack of support in the home for her education and life at school. Mercer staff had faced numerous challenges getting the necessary support from Italia's parents regarding her attendance issues; the precluded making any real headway with her academic performance. She has older siblings who are involved in gangs and, while not openly dismissive of her schooling, make extra effort to see that she succeeds.

All of this would seem to make Italia a long shot for success in a project like ours. On the contrary she seemed to make an immediate transformation once she joined. Mrs. Davis made her attendance a pre-requisite for her participation in Splash! and offered additional support and options for making sure she got to school on time. In short she put the ball in Italia's court with the understanding that we not only believed in her, but that we fully expected her to succeed.

When Italia started she didn't know anything about the Splash! project or what the students learned during the environmental science summer camp. She worked hard with Izet, myself (Mr. Wokoma) and Mrs. Davis to learn what she needed to know to be a good presentation partner for Izet. She was nervous during her first presentation but soon became relaxed and confident. When she went out on her second presentation at the White Center Community Development Summit she was fully versed on the three water saving tips, the three water conservation tips, where our water comes from and what happens to it after we use it. She could explain what all the items were in our Seattle Public Utilities give-away bags was more than eager to answer any questions that came her way. More than one adult remarked about how impressed they were with her confidence, respectfulness and knowledge of the subject.

Students like Italia illustrate why believe so much in what we do. They also serve and great examples of way youth can be engaged to bring valuable information into the community. Youth like Italia have a way of being very persuasive. Their peers and adults are receptive to what they have to say.

**e) What advice would you give for groups who would like to implement similar projects?**

Our project had several components that had to work together smoothly to create the desired outcome. For groups considering a project like this we have the following recommendations:

Committed, Experienced Partners – Work with partners you are familiar with and who have the same level of commitment and experience doing the work. These projects thrive off of healthy, dynamic partnerships. I would not suggest trying a project like this with new partnerships. It is likely you will face many challenges and having a solid and intuitive working relationship helps when issues need to be addressed quickly and things have to change on short notice.

In our case partnerships are multifaceted:

- Organization to Organization
- Youth to Organization
- Organization to Family
- Organization to Community
- Adult to Youth (interpersonal)

Prior Planning – This sound obvious but enough emphasis cannot be placed on the value of designing a project, critiquing it, completing its design and then going back through and re-analyzing it.

Commitment to Youth & Community Relationships – In the end our project thrived because we kept our commitment to the youth, their families and their communities at the heart of our value system. How youth perform is directly related to the level of support and belief placed in them by their elders. We place an emphasis on healthy relationships with the youth and their families as a way of giving the space and encouragement to try new things. Having healthy relationships with the youth helped us adjust midstream and most of all stay optimistic and enthusiastic when we faced challenges.

Remain Flexible – Having a solid project design is crucial, but knowing your project and subject well enough to make changes mid-stream is even more important. No project like this ever goes exactly as planned.

Stay Committed – The true benefits of a project like this mature over time. While we have had significant immediate success with our efforts, there are students who were

not involved in our project who have expressed an interest in participating next summer. This is purely through peer network word-of-mouth. Staying committed to the work and giving a project like this the chance to build on its foundation is key.