



EXTENSION IMPACT

Environmental Science Storytelling

Empowering youth to be environmental change-agents and advocates in Wisconsin communities requires development of critical thinking skills, data literacy, and science communication abilities. In addition, providing inquiry-based research experiences to underrepresented youth in STEM helps them to succeed in competitive modern labor markets and is a step toward closing representation gaps in professional fields.

In response to the need to develop science skills in Wisconsin youth, Extension provides youth with hands-on, field-based, environmental education experiences. Through programs like Extension's Research Accelerators, youth develop socioemotional and science skills, which lead to enhanced science education and increased science literacy. This increases the likelihood that students will pursue STEM careers.

Through Research Accelerators, Extension delivers engaging and enriching environmental education programming that promotes science communication skills and data literacy, while elevating youth voice during science investigations.

In the Research Accelerators program, Extension staff build relationships with students over the course of multiple class visits supporting interpersonal development of science confidence, skills, and identity. In addition to these class visits, students participate in a field experience at our field station, participate in a research summit, and present at an all-ages, community science fair in Milwaukee that is led by Extension's Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center.

Most of our work in K-12 schools originates from intentional partnerships with educators in Milwaukee to help address the STEM achievement gap and elevate the voices of students that are underrepresented in STEM education. We also work in rurally oriented classrooms to support STEM education and the development of broadly implementable environmental education programming. We intentionally use technology and storytelling to support youth-led exploration of the scientific process using the environment as the context through which to study science. Sessions take a variety of formats; they feature data collection, observations, or some other science skill, or direct consulting with students who have already developed projects.

In response to the pandemic, Extension educators at Upham Woods began remote and virtual programming in Spring 2020 to iteratively improve the approach and identify viable strategies for remote implementation. Extension hosted webinars and professional development to familiarize educators with the Research Accelerator process and our virtual approach.

The Research Accelerators program is part of Extension's Natural Resources Institute. Learn more by visiting go.wisc.edu/researchaccelerators.

in 2020



75

Research Accelerator sessions



31

educators supported through Research Accelerators



600+

students reached



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements.