

EMECS 7: Proposed oral presentation which is suitable for Special Session II: Students and Schools Partnership

Abstract

The 'Citizenship Day' as a means of empowering young people to contribute to coastal management processes.

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The objective of this project, which is part of the programme *The North Sea: A Sustainable Future*, is to improve schoolchildren's knowledge of the environment and empower them to contribute their own ideas to environmental planning and management processes. Two kinds of Citizenship Day have been developed for use in schools. First, in the 'Environment Citizenship Day' the students are given information about a local habitat of conservation interest, such as a nature reserve. This includes information about the wildlife, historical and industrial use and features of special interest. The students then visit the site and carry out their own brief surveys of it. Finally, they discuss the value of the site and make their own recommendations for its management. Second, in the 'Courtroom Citizenship Day' the class addresses an environmental issue of local concern, such as pollution of a valuable habitat. Prior information is given about the issue. On the day itself, the classroom becomes a court, in which adult members of the local community are invited to play different roles. One acts as the judge and the others act as defendants (industrialist, fisherman, fish farmer etc.), who will be tried by the court because of the potential threats that they pose to the environment. The children act as: (i) prosecutors, who cross examine the defendants; (ii) members of the jury who decide on the verdict of 'guilty' or 'not guilty' and make recommendations to the judge; and (iii) representatives of the media who play the roles of television reporters describing the proceedings to the outside world. Finally, the judge sums up the day's findings concentrating especially on any management recommendations that have arisen. We have found that industry and local authorities are keen to support Citizenship Day projects and have sponsored a number of initiatives arising from them.