

LCMR Final Report

I. Urban P.L.A.C.E. Program

Program Manager: Larry Nelson, Program Manager
 Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
 310 Fourth Avenue South
 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415

A. M.L. 91 Ch. 254 Art. 1 Sec. 14 Subd. 5 (h)
 Appropriation \$100,000
 Balance \$ 0

This appropriation is to the Commissioner of Education for a grant to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to develop an urban environmental curriculum for elementary students and families conducted at 44 city recreation centers.

B. NA

C. Match (no requirement)

1.c. Although a match is not a condition of this grant, a half-time professional equivalent of Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will be available, as well as extensive use of resource staff at the State Department of Education, DNR, and Minneapolis Public Schools, among others.

II. Narrative

A. Statement of Problem

With 17% of city land containing all of Minneapolis' natural resources, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has lacked funding for interpretive programs relative to these resources and urban ecology.

Many, if not most city youth and residents, have no access to environmental programs outside of the city.

B. Importance

Lifestyles and behaviors of urban residents have great impact on regional ecology, and are most affected by negative aspects of urbanization such as pollution. Yet adults and children in the city have fewer opportunities to comprehend the ecological issues in their daily lives and environment than rural and suburban counterparts.

C. Extent of Problem

Barriers to environmental and ecological awareness among city residents include:

Greatest concentration in State of:

poor	non-English speaking people
disadvantaged	elderly
single parent families (35%)	developmentally disabled
minorities	

Barriers:

- a. Transportation: MTC doesn't serve state and regional parks
- b. 33% of children in Minneapolis Public Schools are from families receiving Public Assistance.
- c. Cultural and language barriers
- d. Isolation, fear of injury and crime

The city has only limited capability to address the natural resource program of its residents.

III. Objectives:

A. Develop an urban environmental curriculum for K-6th graders.

1. Narrative

A program will be developed to provide access to and interpretation of the natural resources and urban ecology of Minneapolis, appropriate for presentation to elementary children in the city's neighborhood parks.

2. Procedures

Qualified staff will be hired to: a) research existing information, b) coordinate resources with the other public and private agencies, and c) develop hands-on curriculum and materials for K-6th graders appropriate for presentation at the Minneapolis recreation centers.

3. Budget - LCMR Funds

- a) Amount budgeted - \$50,000
- b) Balance - \$-0-

4. Timeline 1991 _____ 1992 _____ 1993 _____

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Hire Staff						X																		
Assemble data					X	-----																		X
Design program/materials					X	-----																		X
Recruit/train leaders					X	---X																		X--X
Promotion/registration					X	---X																		X-----X

5. Status - Our initial programming efforts highlighted the need to significantly tailor each program to the specific neighborhood and the recreation center that served those citizens. As a result the following objectives were established for the program.

- 1. Honor the essence of the child and their innate wisdom and understanding.
- 2. Foster an atmosphere of safety, respect and positive reinforcement for each program participant.
- 3. Develop interpersonal skills with other members of the group.

1991 EDUCATION PROJECT ABSTRACT
FOR THE PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 1993

This project was supported by Minnesota Future Resources Fund (M.Sxxx.xx)

TITLE: Urban P.L.A.C.E. Program
PROGRAM MANAGER: Larry Nelson
ORGANIZATION: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 91, Ch. 254, Art. 1, Sec. 14, Subd. 5(h)
APPROP. AMOUNT: \$100,000

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES: To review existing and newly developing urban environmental education programs in the United States, inventory a comprehensive list of resources found in Minneapolis neighborhoods, and use this information to develop an environmentally oriented program for children ages five to eleven years.

OVERALL PROJECT RESULTS: Initial research indicated relatively few environmentally oriented programs which integrated the environment in a community context and delivered it in a recreational setting. In this respect Urban P.L.A.C.E. (People Learning About Community and Environment) continues to be nationally unique. Pilot programs were conducted at ten recreation centers located throughout Minneapolis during the summer of 1992. Although a single curriculum and format was developed for the ten parks, it became very apparent that each site presented very significant differences. These variables, which included the number and type of neighborhood resources, demographics, conflicts with other recreational programming and center staff support, resulted in ten very different programs in which a total of 395 children participated at no cost.

Based upon follow-up evaluations by participants, parents and staff, the program was highly regarded, but required refinements in format and scheduling. These changes were incorporated and the directors of 32 recreation centers chose Urban P.L.A.C.E. as a portion of their program offerings for the summer of 1993. Each program is four days in length from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each day. The basic cost is \$20.00 with full and partial fee waivers available. The first set of parks began June 21, and will be completed on August 20, 1993.

A data base and maps of potential neighborhood resources was completed for the new program sites which means this data base now exists for over half of the City of Minneapolis. Through these initial contacts and subsequent field trips by the participants, a wide variety of businesses, community organizations and institutions have become familiar and are supportive of the program.

The diversity of neighborhoods proved to be the most interesting and challenging aspect of this project. Since this was a new program concept for the park system and the community, more time and energy was expended on organizational aspects than originally conceived. However these efforts have created a strong foundation that has now become institutionalized within the Minneapolis Park System. Perhaps more important than creating an ongoing staff position to continue coordinating and developing Urban P.L.A.C.E. and other environmental programs, a new position of Environmental Planner was created which will have a positive, system-wide impact.

PROJECT RESULT USE AND DISSEMINATION: The "Community as the Classroom" concept of Urban P.L.A.C.E. is being introduced and promoted in several elementary schools in the Minneapolis Public School System. A citywide after-school program component for middle school students will be modeled after Urban P.L.A.C.E. Major presentations have been made at the 1992 State Environmental Education Conference in Brainerd, The Minnesota Parks and Recreation Conference in Rochester, (where it received an award for innovation) and the Eco-ed Conference in Toronto, Canada. Information has been requested and sent to non-profit organizations, schools and recreation departments located in several large cities throughout the country. A five minute video is being produced to describe the program and will be available in early July.