

Heights School's Multi-Faceted Reservoir Project Wins Environmental-Learning Competition | The Jersey City Independent

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PS #28 has been crowned the New Jersey winner of the Disney Planet Challenge, a project-based learning environmental competition for classrooms across the United States that teaches kids about science, conservation and environmental advocacy.

Students from the Hancock Avenue school, also known as the Christa McAuliffe School, partnered with the Jersey City Reservoir Preservation Alliance to raise awareness of Reservoir #3 and create activities for schools and community groups who use the reservoir as a field trip site.

A group of fourth and sixth graders visited the reservoir in October, learning about the history of the site and researching the species of plants, trees and shrubs found there.

Armed with that information, students created a replica of the reservoir in their school's hallways, a brochure to promote the reservoir and a scavenger hunt to test visitors' knowledge of its flora and fauna.

"I had a really good time visiting the reservoir and learning about the plants that grow there," says fourth grader Darien Minyetty. "It was fun to make the reservoir in our school, and to inform all the people of Jersey City about what a great hidden treasure the reservoir is."

The students also created [a website](#) filled with links to their research, with audio recordings and even a wiki. The project will continue throughout the spring, and be expanded next year, with hopes that other schools may pick up the idea of using the reservoir as a learning lab.

"Using scientific research, writing, art, and internet technology, students have connected with Jersey City history and nature," Reservoir Alliance president Steven Latham says. "This groundbreaking project will be a template for creating programs with other local schools, an important alliance goal."

School #28 principal Dr. Janet Elder says the school is even pitching in to raise money for the environmental treasure.

"We have embarked on a fundraising campaign to purchase signage for the reservoir; both at the entrance to proudly proclaim its existence, and at each of the plants we have identified and researched," she says.

"Our goal is increase awareness of this unique natural resource among the people of Jersey City, develop curriculum and activities that can be used by schools throughout the city and county for on-site field trips, and assist the Jersey City Reservoir Preservation Alliance with developing the reservoir as a haven for city residents," Elder adds. "With this project, we're well on our way."

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