Blue School Grant
Water Education

Application Information

Purpose:

The mission of the Blue School Grant is for students to develop an appreciation for Florida's water, an understanding of water as a limited resource, and a water ethic that they can foster throughout their lifetime.

Provided by: St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD)

Grant Amount: Up to $3,000 per teacher/school, if multiple teachers apply. A total of up to $60,000 is expected to be awarded for the school year. Funds will be available by the beginning of January.

Application Deadline: **Sept. 30, 2024, 5 p.m.**

Eligible Applicants:

- Educators working with grades K–12 in public and charter schools.
- Schools must be within the boundaries of the St. Johns River Water Management District (Not sure what water management district you are in? Check here).
- Projects may be for individual classes, teaching teams, or a grade level.

General Proposal:

- To be considered for funding, submit a brief description of your proposed project, including the goal and key concepts addressed. See page 3 for more information on key concepts and project examples. All projects must include the following:
  - A classroom activity that integrates STEAM-related teaching strategies and Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS).
  - Outreach to the school community. A take-home element is also strongly encouraged. Reach is considered in the selection process.
  - A budget outlining expenses. See page 4 for information on budget constraints.
- Grant selection is competitive, and projects will be ranked using a rubric.

- **Key Dates:**

  August 1, 2024: Application period open.
  September 30, 2024, 5 pm: Application deadline.
  End of October 2024: Grantees notified.
  Early January : Funds awarded.
  January 2025–June 1, 2025: Project activity period.

June 1, 2025: Final report and documentation are due to SJRWMD. See the reporting form on the Blue School Grant Program webpage.

Award considerations:

- Once the grantee has been selected, SJRWMD will provide funds for the project to the school district. It is the responsibility of the teacher/school to coordinate with the school district to have the funds transferred.
- All funded projects must be completed in accordance with SJRWMD and state rules, regulations, and procedures. SJRWMD reserves the right to audit the use of the funds to ensure they meet the public purpose.

Expectations of Grant Recipients:

- **Learning assessment**: A pre/post-test is mandatory. The tests should be identical. Your final report will include a copy of the pre/post-test as well as average scores.
- **Participation hours:** Record all direct student participation hours related to the grant for your final report.
- **SJRWMD resources:** SJRWMD encourages classroom use of SJRWMD publications and web resources. Please refer to *www.sjrwmd.com/education* for ideas.
- **Photos and promotion:** SJRWMD, as a public funding source, reserves the right to share all projects, concepts, artwork, photos, videos, and other products submitted as part of the final report. Each grant recipient should maintain school and/or district photo/video release forms for students included in submitted work products. SJRWMD may visit schools/project sites during the production period to document projects for public dissemination (web, social media, news release, video, etc.). Please anticipate the possibility that SJRWMD may request quotes from the principal, other teachers, and students for use in a District news release or other outreach messages.
- **Making changes:** During the grant period, activity, or budget items may need to be modified. If modifications are needed, seek permission from the Office of Strategic Communications and Engagement at apressel@sjrwmd.com. All changes must be requested in writing and changes should not be made until approval is given.
- **Final Documentation and Report:** All materials are due from all grantees **before June 1, 2025**. Failure to submit this final report by June 1, jeopardizes future funding opportunities for you and your school. You are welcome to submit application materials early.

Key Concepts

Projects considered for funding must address a subset of the following key concepts:

Watershed/Ecosystem Understanding
- A watershed is an area of land that water flows across as it moves toward a common body of water, such as a stream, river, lake, or the coast.
- An ecosystem is a community of microbes, plants, and animals (including humans) that interact with one another and with the physical environment in which they live. Water connects all types of ecosystems.
- Plants need water and adequate sunlight to grow.

- o   Hydrology and soils determine the kinds of plants that grow in specific locations.
- o   Groundwater is replenished by rainfall as water circulates through the water cycle.

Water Quality
- o   We all live in a watershed and everything we do can affect the quality of our water.
- o   Scientists use different types of equipment and tests to measure water quality.
- o   Pollution comes from many sources, and pollution on the land's surface can end up in our lakes, rivers, springs and aquifer.

Human Use (supply and conservation)
- o   Florida's future depends on a continued supply of freshwater for human consumption and natural systems; conserving water is vital.
- o   Different irrigation methods use various amounts of water.
- o   Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ practices require less water and can protect water supply and quality.
- o   Most of the water used in Florida's homes and schools comes from the aquifer or groundwater.
- o   We all play a role in conserving water. Identify actions to conserve water in your day-to-day routine by completing the "home water survey" at *www.sjrwmd.com/water-conservation*.

Examples of Activities and Projects: The following projects/activities are provided as examples; please feel free to submit proposals for other projects, so long as they address a subset of the key concepts listed above and include classroom learning as well as an outreach component that incorporates the school and/or neighboring community.

Regional Freshwater/Estuarine Resources Field Study: Students can test water quality and identify native or freshwater aquatic plants and invertebrates during a visit to a wetland area or multiple wetland sites near the school. The field study location(s) should be located within an hour's drive from the school, preferably in the same or neighboring county. Students should do a research project or learning journal on current issues relating to freshwater resources and contamination and share the project with classmates. Include a summary of the field study and follow-up project on the application.

Optional add-ons:
- o   Conduct a habitat restoration, cleanup, or another service-learning project as part of the field program.
- o   Visit a spring, cave, or sinkhole to examine karst topography.

Watershed and Aquifer Stewardship: Through classroom activities, students study the water cycle and sources of freshwater, learn that rain provides freshwater to the Floridan aquifer system (the region's primary source of drinking water), build an awareness of the connection between land and water, and discover ways to reduce human impacts on our water supply. Most importantly, students will discover how their families or communities can reduce water use and

will launch a community awareness campaign. Find ideas at
www.sjrwmd.com/education/teachers/index.html.

> **Optional add-ons:**
> - o Visit a local water treatment facility to learn where your water comes from and all that goes into ensuring it is clean, safe, and always available.
> - o Visit a spring to learn about the connection of water use and our aquifer.

Education Partner Excursions: Students will visit an approved field study facility that offers hands-on environmental education for freshwater or estuarine studies. In place of an off-site field trip, some organizations are equipped to bring an outreach program to the school. Classroom activities should be conducted before and after the field trip or outreach program to reinforce key concepts.

Be sure to select an educational program provided at the site. Admission only will not be approved. Additionally, please note the approved counties in parenthesizes next to each program. Do not apply for a location if your county is not listed in parenthesizes beside it. A travel time of less than one hour each way is preferred. If you have a location or program in mind that is not listed, please email a description of it to apressel@sjrwmd.com for approval.

Water Conservation: Students learn the importance of implementing best management practices, like Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ and Florida Water Star and the positive impacts they can have on water quality and quantity, positive impacts they can have on water quality and quantity.

Activities might include:
- Conducting a school water use evaluation
- Building an aquifer model
- Researching water conservation incentives offered by the local utility
- Working with school maintenance staff to implement water conservation measures and improve irrigation systems

Challenges such as reducing runoff containing fertilizers and pesticides can be addressed by projects or presentations. Students could compare traditional irrigation methods to water-conserving irrigation methods, participate in water quality labs, and make informational pamphlets or public service announcements to share with families and others.

> **Optional add-on:** Visit a local commercial farm or nursery to learn about the water-conserving best management practices implemented there. In your application, include the location and a summary of the field study.

Budget: Prepare your budget based upon the list of approved budget items. Provide the quantity and estimated costs per item and if applicable, include shipping in the cost of each item. It is your responsibility to find the lowest cost for each item requested. It is also your responsibility to contact the locations on the pre-approved field trip list for pricing.

Examples of qualifying budget items:	Non-qualifying budget items:
• Transportation • Substitute teachers • Water test kits and supplies • Soil test kits • Probeware • Kayak, canoe or boat rental (life jackets, paddles, waders, etc.) • Dip nets • Microscopes (up to $150 each) • Microscope slides • Field notebooks and study guides • Watershed model (e.g., Enviroscape®) • Groundwater model • Freshwater resources books, DVDs, software, and activity kits • Project-specific consumable supplies and materials (printing, postage, paper, poster board, art supplies, etc.) • Rain barrels and coordinating supplies • Micro irrigation supplies • Weather station • Rain gauge • Educational signage	• Infrastructure (pavers, boardwalks, fences, benches, cisterns, gutters, construction projects, etc.) • Storage sheds, carts or display cases • Capital expenditures • Computer hardware (e.g., thumb drives, computers, iPads) • Computer software not exclusively related to water resources education • Food or beverages • Cameras or GPS equipment • Graphic design/artwork • Salaries • T-shirts • Video or audio equipment • Website development • Items not related to water resources education • Water refill stations • Club activities