

2009 Project WET Teacher Professional Development Workshop

RiverXchange officially kicked off on February 10 when participating New Mexico teachers attended a Project WET teacher professional development workshop to learn how to implement the curriculum, and how to create and manage their class wiki. For New Mexico teachers, all aspects of this project (including substitute teachers for the workshop day, field trip bus transportation, workshop materials and on-going technical support) were provided free of charge.



In *Blue Beads*, teachers become tributaries and a river to learn how a watershed works.

Teachers were introduced to experts from various agencies in Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties who are available to visit classrooms to teach students about their drinking water, wastewater and historic uses of the river. Teachers also met with State Park Rangers to discuss details about the field trip to the Rio Grande River/Rio Grande Nature Center.

One of the most important aspects of this project was learning how to use PBWiki, a free service which offers excellent technical support, plenty of storage space (an important consideration when uploading graphics, photos and video clips), and the option of deciding who gets access to the wiki and what level of access. In addition, a wiki enables users to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki web site. In contrast, a web log or “blog” is simply one page consisting of posts organized chronologically. Prior to the workshop date, all teachers were introduced to the RiverXchange teacher wiki. This wiki was created to serve as the chief communication tool between project coordinators and participating teachers. It contains important documents, instructions, curriculum and hands-on activity lesson plans. It saves coordinators a lot of effort (compared to emailing) because teachers are automatically notified when we make changes to the site.



New Mexico teachers are hard at work creating the class wikis.

At the workshop, New Mexico teachers were introduced to the curriculum and guest speakers. They had the opportunity to try out some of the hands-on activities in the curriculum, which come from Project WET’s *Curriculum and Activity Guide* and *Discover a Watershed: The Watershed Manager Educators’ Guide*, and from the *Rio Grande Bosque Education Guide*, published by the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and the Rio Grande Nature Center/State Parks.



Matt Cross-Guillen teaches the science behind *Macroinvertebrate Mayhem* as Amy White looks on.

At the teacher workshop, New Mexico teachers learned how to use PBWiki by creating their class wiki. We showed teachers how to organize their site, starting with a main page and adding links to pages for each activity in the curriculum, as well as a page about appropriate wiki behavior for students. Next, teachers learned how to manage access to their private wikis by creating accounts for students as writers, and adding parents and administrators as readers. By the end of the day, New Mexico teachers invited their partner teachers onto the class wiki. From that point forward, project coordinators provided technical support as needed by New Mexico and partner teachers.