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INTRODUCTION

A Message to Teachers
This Student Ambassadors' Guide is a set of guidelines designed to support educators as they establish Everglades Student Ambassadors at their school. The guidelines can be referenced both by teachers and students.

The Everglades Foundation
The Everglades Foundation is an environmental non-profit organization that works to protect and restore America's Everglades through science, advocacy, and education.

Why is the Everglades Important?
The Everglades is a natural region in Florida containing many different types of habitats, plants, and animals. The Everglades is home to thousands of different plant and animal species and provides freshwater to over 8.7 million people. This freshwater is not only used for drinking, but for industries such as tourism, real estate, agriculture, and more.
The 7 Fundamental Concepts of the Everglades

There is only one Everglades in the world and it is our backyard. The Everglades Literacy Conceptual Framework lists the 7 concepts that explain the importance of the Everglades:

- **Concept 1:** The Everglades is Unique and Valuable
- **Concept 2:** The Everglades is Defined and Connected by Water
- **Concept 3:** The Everglades is Shaped by Southern Florida's Geology and Geography
- **Concept 4:** The Everglades Influences and Is Influenced by Weather and Climate
- **Concept 5:** The Everglades Supports and Is Connected by a Great Diversity of Life and Ecosystems
- **Concept 6:** The Everglades Has Experienced Many Changes Over Time and Is Endangered
- **Concept 7:** The Everglades and People Are Inextricably Interconnected

By learning about the Everglades, there are opportunities to educate others and make the best decisions to help protect and restore the environment. You will have opportunities to learn more about each of these concepts through teamwork, project planning, and communicating with others.

What is an Everglades Champion School?

The Everglades Champion Schools Program is designed to showcase and recognize schools in Florida that demonstrate exceptional Everglades literacy efforts and initiatives in our schools. The goal of the program is to engage and empower a school's community to become stewards of the River of Grass. The program includes participation from teachers, students, administrators, community partners, parents, and others.

An Everglades Champion School is filled with individuals who are passionate about learning about the Everglades and conserving it. Your school can become an Everglades Champion School by completing an application and documenting how your school addresses different categories and indicators from the Champion Schools Evaluation Criteria. You may earn points by integrating Everglades education into the classroom through lesson plans, projects, and field experiences, and developing a culture of Everglades stewardship within the community.
EVERGLADES STUDENT AMBASSADORS

Description and Purpose of a Student Ambassador
Student Ambassadors are the voice of the Everglades in their schools, homes, and communities. The purpose of a student ambassador for the Everglades is to educate others about the Everglades and protect the ecosystem through everyday decisions and lifelong commitment. Ambassadors work both individually and together to produce a positive change in attitude and protection of the environment.

Student Ambassadors for the Everglades can be a part of a new or existing organization. A school may already have an existing environmental club, garden club, or something similar where it is appropriate to discuss Everglades education and initiatives. A new club can also be organized to specifically address Everglades education and initiatives.

Student Ambassador Skills
Student Ambassadors will exhibit skills such as:

- Brainstorming
- Planning
- Organization
- Dedication
- Good communication
- Collaboration
- Creativity
- Teamwork

Student Ambassador Goals
These overarching goals help guide Student Ambassadors to educate others about the Everglades and protect the ecosystem through everyday decisions and lifelong commitment. Your Student Ambassadors may develop additional goals.

- **Goal 1:** Students will understand why it is important to preserve and protect the Everglades.
- **Goal 2:** Students will explain why it is important to educate others about the Everglades.
- **Goal 3:** Students will generate ideas and develop an action plan for sharing Everglades projects and initiatives.
- **Goal 4:** Students will implement and share their action plan with an authentic audience.
STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT THE EVERGLADES

Student Ambassadors are to gain knowledge by researching more information about various Everglades topics. Building background knowledge on specific Everglades topics empowers students to make better informed decisions and create opportunities to share what they have learned with an authentic audience. Knowledge=Power!

Everglades Resources

Learning about the Everglades can happen at school, at home, visiting the Everglades ecosystem, and by talking to friends and family about the ecosystem. This includes watching informative videos, learning in the classroom, doing activities at home, and more.

- The Everglades Foundation’s Everglades Literacy Program - https://www.evergladesliteracy.org
- Everglades Rangers Youtube Channel - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC24LhjbqdfJFORftuHxGk8Hg
- Everglades National Park Youtube Channel - https://www.youtube.com/user/EvergladesNPS
- Odyssey Earth - Odyssey Everglades (multiple videos) - http://www.odysseyearth.com/video-category/odyssey-everglades/

Other Everglades Topics To Explore

Protecting and restoring the Everglades focuses on the following topics:

- Water quality (drinking water, accessibility, pollution)
- Water quantity
- Habitats - Hardwood Hammock, Pinelands, Mangrove Swamp, Cypress Swamp, Sawgrass Marsh
- Native species of the Everglades - American alligator, Florida panther, West Indian manatee, Roseate spoonbill, Great Blue Heron, and more!
- Endangered or threatened species of Florida
- Everglades threats: habitat loss, invasive species, polluted water, etc.
- And more!
STEP 2: TAKE THE EVERGLADES PLEDGE

It is ideal to have your Student Ambassadors understand the importance of a pledge, and use it to reflect on throughout the year. Student Ambassadors are agreeing to being an active voice of the Everglades. Signing the pledge is a great way to start off a student ambassador meeting. It is encouraged to provide students with opportunities to share their commitment with teachers, family, and friends.

Download the Everglades Pledge here
STEP 3: TAKE ACTION

Taking an action is a way that Student Ambassadors can be given the hands-on opportunity to model and practice successful collaboration, and leadership skills to advance Everglades education. The audience to which they may reach may be within the organization itself, reaching out to other students, leading their whole school, or even within the greater community.

Action Plan Components

Student will address the following 5 core components of the action plan to achieve their goals:

1. Explore
2. Plan
3. Action
4. Reflect
5. Celebrate

Developing the Action Plan

An action plan is a checklist for the steps or tasks you need to complete in order to achieve the goals you have set. We encourage you to use the Action Plan template provided below. Student Ambassadors should take the following questions into consideration when developing their action plan:

- What is the overall purpose of this action?
- What impacts do you hope it will have on students, school, and/or community?

Download the full Action Plan template here
**Everglades Action Plan**

Use this Action Plan as a checklist for the steps or tasks you need to complete in order to achieve the goals you have set. Don’t forget to document and track your progress!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everglades Project Title:</th>
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<tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name (Have all student ambassadors working on this project list their full names and grade level on the back of this form):</th>
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<tr>
<th>Identify the Everglades topic of focus:</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Explain why it is important to educate others about this Everglades topic:</th>
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<th>Who is your target audience? (Who will be reached? Who will benefit from this?)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Implement your Action Plan. What is the overall purpose of this action? What impacts do you hope it will have on students, school, and/or community? Use this section to write notes as you proceed.</th>
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<tr>
<th>How will you implement your plan? List step by step.</th>
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<tr>
<td>*If you need more space, attach your steps to this form.</td>
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1.
2.
3.
4.
5.  

Everglades Student Ambassadors' Guide
**List of Materials Needed** (Include how many of each. Make sure you discuss how you may gather these materials. Are they easily accessible? Are they eco-friendly?)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Materials Needed</th>
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<td>(Include how many of each. Make sure you discuss how you may gather these materials. Are they easily accessible? Are they eco-friendly?)</td>
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</table>

**What is the expected timeframe for this action plan to be completed?**

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**Other than your group members, who else is contributing to the success of your action plan?** (Principal, community partners, parents, etc.)

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**How will you measure the results to determine if your action plan was effective?**

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**Reflection Questions:**

- What was successful about your project or goal? What were the strengths?
- What are areas of improvement in your action plan, goal, or project?
- What would you have done differently?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection Questions:</th>
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<td>What was successful about your project or goal? What were the strengths? What are areas of improvement in your action plan, goal, or project? What would you have done differently?</td>
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**Teacher Approval Signature:**

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<th>Teacher Approval Signature:</th>
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**Comments:**

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Student Ambassador Action Examples

Explore the Everglades action examples below for ideas that may inspire Student Ambassadors as they establish and help build a sense of Everglades community and culture throughout the school year. Student Ambassadors are not limited by the number of actions implemented at their school.

1. Make educational videos about the Everglades and share with your school and/or community.
2. Share Everglades information with students during school announcements on a recurring basis (daily, weekly, etc.)
3. Creating a specific project or communication piece to celebrate Everglades Day (April 7) for your school and/or community.
4. Create a designated anthem or song about the Everglades for your club and/or school. Share it with others!
5. Create an outdoor garden or an indoor plant propagation station at your school/community that has a connection to the Everglades. Ex: Garden includes many varieties of Everglades native trees and plants to attract Everglades native animals and insects. Communicate with the rest of the school and/or community why planting natives instead of non-natives is important to conserving the Everglades.
6. Create an Everglades art wall mural project in your school and/or community. Provide information/facts about the Everglades in the art mural if possible.
7. Connect with a community partner to develop a fundraising opportunity that benefits an Everglades related initiative or organization.
8. Create Everglades habitat for Everglades wildlife in your school and/or community. Monitor the habitat's amount of biodiversity over time.
9. Have higher grade level students work with younger students to learn about the Everglades.
10. Create an Everglades themed skit or play and perform it for your school and/or community.
11. Invite your congresspeople or any governmental officials to visit the school and prepare questions to ask them in regards to what they are doing to address protecting the Everglades and threats such as habitat loss, invasive species, or climate change.
12. Make poems about the Everglades and read them aloud and showcase them around your school and/or community.
13. Create an Everglades themed obstacle course for your school and/or community. Have prizes and educational/communicative components.
14. Organize an Everglades book club with other students and teachers in your school and/or community.
15. Create an Everglades themed newsletter to go out to your school and/or community.
### Action Plan Reflection

Student Ambassadors play an important role in giving the Everglades a voice in their school and their community. Think of how your actions have helped and made a positive impact on the environment. Reflect and discuss what the implemented action plan at your school means and how it connects to the environment, fellow students, and the school.

Consider the following reflection questions:

- What was successful about your project or goal? What were the strengths?
- What are areas of improvement in your action plan, goal, or project?
- What would you have done differently?
- How can Student Ambassadors share this action plan further?
- Can you take additional actions to teach others in your school, community, family, and friend group?

### Celebrate Your Successes

After reflecting, it’s time to celebrate! Student Ambassadors are encouraged to share what they have learned from the process of developing and implementing an Everglades action plan with their school community. Don’t forget to take pictures of your actions and include your successes in your Everglades Champion Schools Application.

The Everglades Foundation’s Education team thanks each and every Everglades Student Ambassador and their leaders for their efforts to engage and empower their school’s community to become stewards of the River of Grass.

Please contact evergladeschampion@evergladesfoundation.org with any questions or comments.
Thank you!

From The Everglades Foundation's Education Team

For more information:

www.evergladesliteracy.org