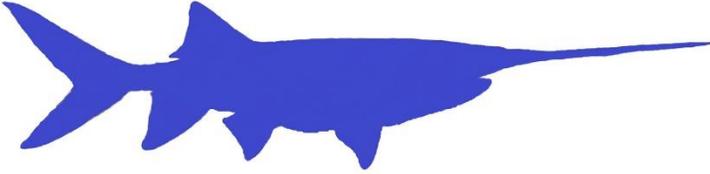


**Paddlefish Reintroduction**  
  
**Education Initiative**

Summary  
For  
2014 – 2015 Academic Year

Paddlefish Reintroduction Education Initiative  
TODAY Foundation – Collins Academy

The Paddlefish Reintroduction Education Initiative (Paddlefish Project) is an environmental science enrichment program that networks scientists with schools to create extraordinary learning opportunities based on issues of local importance. By virtue of a successful pilot project and a recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant award, the TODAY Foundation – Collins Academy will expand project offerings and support over the next two years.

**Type Participation:** Classes/groups that choose to adopt, name, and track paddlefish movements only are classified as *Satellite* Groups. Classes/groups that choose to adopt, name, track paddlefish, conduct descriptive or open-ended inquiry projects, and report out at the annual Paddlefish Festival are classified as *Study* Groups. Study Group schools are eligible for sub-grants and teachers may receive stipends for summer Professional Development Camp participation. Satellite Groups may be upgraded to Study Groups in successive iterations whereby students conduct investigations and report out at the culminating event.

**Multiple Campus Participation:** When a school district has more than one classroom/group or campus participating, only one campus and its specific Lead Teacher may be eligible for annual sub-grants and a Professional Development stipend, respectively.

**Goal:** The goal of the Paddlefish Project is to bring the learning process to life for PreK – postsecondary students by skillfully using the environment as the integrating context for learning.

**Objectives:** The primary purposes for the project are to (1) improve student performance on the annual statewide science assessment and to (2) increase stewardship, the public’s ability to proactively engage with issues affecting the health of Caddo Lake and Big Cypress Bayou.

**Overarching Theme:** Habitat restoration and conservation

**Course of Study:** Depending on the age level of students, the particular Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills targeted, and the specific environmental education curricula selected, study modules should consist of 8 – 12 sessions. It is important to note that Project Based Learning should be of sufficient depth and complexity to generate good products/study reports.

**Project Outputs:** The Paddlefish Project will meet its objectives by delivering effective recruitment meetings, professional development workshops and a summer camp for teachers and college professors, school-based projects for preK-Grade 2 students, field-based investigations for Grades 3-5, field inquiry and problem-based investigations for Grades 6-postsecondary students, optional summer day camps for students, and special events commemorating national/international days of service. An annual culminating event, the Paddlefish Festival, will be conducted during May of each year for student project reporting and celebrating new contributions toward a healthier environment for native plants, animals, and humans alike. In addition, certain other special events will be conducted to help assure recruitment and retention of volunteer and school participants. This includes continuing education certifications, stipends for teachers, and sub-grants for schools, a volunteer banquet

associated with National Public Lands Day in September for volunteers, and an evening reception for school Superintendents and Curriculum Directors in March of each year.

**Curriculum:** Content delivery includes hands-on, outdoor education delivered in multisensory modalities where descriptive inquiry moves quickly to field inquiry. This transition corresponds to a right-hand shift toward the higher order cognitive skills of Bloom’s Taxonomy as the grade levels increase. Similarly, students move from conducting descriptive investigations in PreK-Grade 2 to planning/conducting field inquiry at Grade 6. In the same way, the sophistication of scientific materials and equipment used by students increases with grade level whereby students begin with simple tools such as a magnifying lens and progress through water test kits to electronic field probes. After each class conducts its research, field investigations and other scientific inquiries, an evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of the class's work will be provided in a report that will be presented at the annual Paddlefish Festival. These products may be of any format appropriate for the topic, the audience, and the presenter.

<u>Grade Levels</u>	<u>Materials</u>	<u>Delivery Mode</u>
Primary Module (preK-Gr. 2)	Growing Up WILD	Structured classroom & school yard lessons
Elementary Module (Gr. 3-5)	Aquatic WILD, Junior Master Gardener	Structured inquiry, classroom, school yard, & Port Jefferson History & Nature Center
Middle School (Gr. 6-8)	Aquatic WILD Texas Stream Team	Field inquiry, lab & field
High School (Gr. 9-12)	Science & Civics Invaders of Texas	Field inquiry, lab & field
Summer Camps	All of above	Day camps and overnight camp out

**Sub-Grants:** Each Study Group participant school may receive a \$1500 award from the Paddlefish Project to purchase needed supplies/materials to support student projects. The Lead Teacher makes application and the campus principal is required to sign a statement certifying all funds will go toward the specific supplies/materials requested in the proposal.

**Teacher Stipends:** Lead teachers attending the Summer Professional Development Camp are eligible to receive a \$250 stipend to help cover expenses incurred.

**Project Evaluation:** Participatory evaluation modeled after “Participatory Evaluation. What is it? Why do it? What are the Challenges” by Zukoski and Lulaquisen, will be used to assess how well project goals are met, because this approach not only allows stakeholders to identify locally relevant evaluation questions and to speak with a single voice, but improves program performance, builds capacity, develops leaders and sustains organizational learning and growth. Fundamentally, participatory evaluation is about sharing knowledge and building the evaluation skills of program beneficiaries and implementers, funders, and others. It is a process composed of Identifying locally relevant questions, reflection, and applying lessons learned along the way. It is empowering because it claims the right for local people to control and own the process of making evaluation decisions and implementing them (Zukoski & Lulaquisen, 2002).