

Angela Cai  
kburns  
[cai.angela@jdragonmail.us](mailto:cai.angela@jdragonmail.us)  
Johnston High School  
6500 NW 100th St, Johnston, IA 50131

## DAY 17 GREENEST

Today my AP Environmental Science class took a field trip today to see the local wastewater treatment plant and landfill. Conveniently, we stopped for lunch at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, an animal refuge that strives to conserve tall grass prairie habitats and the animals that live there. Since prairie soil is so interconnected to the history and agriculture of where I live (Iowa) I thought it was the perfect opportunity to give a lesson about prairie soil.

After we were done eating, several of my classmates and I walked on the paths running through the extensive prairie, and based on the lesson plan, I gave a presentation about prairie soil.



It was so much more effective to be surrounded by prairie and actually understand its importance in person. My classmates were very interested, and I attribute their interest to two factors. First off, all the things we learn in school are very broad and applicable anywhere. However, my lesson specifically related to something that is very pertinent to our lives in Iowa and they were able to make a more personal connection with what I

was saying. Secondly, learning in a classroom environment is very different than being able to learn something by actually experiencing it and being around it. I like to think about it like learning a language; it comes much quicker if you're fully immersed in that culture as opposed to just sitting in a classroom. Everyone was very interested in the wildlife refuge itself so they had questions that I didn't have the answers to. A common question was if there were bison at the refuge and I was also very curious so we went in the visitor center and asked. We were told that if we followed the trail, we would find a 700 acre enclosure with bison, so we did that and had a fun time looking at bison amidst their natural habitat.

I was a little nervous to be playing the role of the teacher, but it was a very good experience because everyone was very interested in what I was talking about and they were all in high spirits because of the beautiful weather. I definitely learned the value of a hands on approach to learning.

Angela Cai

kburns

[cai.angela@jdragonmail.us](mailto:cai.angela@jdragonmail.us)

Johnston High School

6500 NW 100th St, Johnston, IA 50131

Sure you can memorize something in a classroom, but it's so much more enjoyable and impactful to get your hands dirty (literally) and actually experience it.

