

Students' project to save water may lead to new law

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Lawmaker Phillip Chen sits with students Fiona Paredes and Jessica Gallegos at the State Assembly. Paredes and Gallegos talked to lawmakers about their water conservation bill. The bill was a school project for the students, who are known as the "Water Guardians." Photo from: Phillip Chen's office.

A student project that began in 2015 made its way onto the California State Assembly floor last month. There, the state's lawmakers gather to discuss bills. If a bill is approved, it becomes a law.

The bill was inspired by four students. They are nicknamed the Water Guardians. Their bill calls for water suppliers to include K-12 schools in certain water rebate programs. Customers who are not wasteful with their water use can get money back from water suppliers.

Class Project Teaches Students About State Government

This idea would help schools conserve water and save money. It also taught one group of students more about their state government.

"It was an incredible experience to learn how California government works," said Jessica Gallegos. She is 14 years old. "It has been wonderful meeting with the assemblymen and a great learning

experience."

Jessica's teammates on the project were Fiona Paredes, who is 15, June Kim, who is 14, and Angeline Dequit, who is 15. They all took turns speaking to lawmakers. The students explained why the bill would be a good law.

"I am so proud of these amazing young women who saw a problem and wanted to be part of the solution," said Phillip Chen. He is an assemblyman, or lawmaker.

Chen introduced the bill and joined the students as they explained their bill to the group of lawmakers.

"This bill can save California more than 20 million gallons per day," Chen said. "I am encouraged to see our youth embracing STEM education and applying what they have learned to the real world." STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math.



Water Guardians Win A Contest

The Water Guardians formed nearly two years ago, in 2015. That year, Washington Middle School science teacher Susan Pritchard challenged her students to enter a national contest. Their mission was to choose an environmental problem and come up with a plan to help solve it.

"The first thing I ask my students when we enter a contest is: are you doing this for the competition or do you have a passion for what you want to do," Pritchard said. "It's obvious these girls have a passion for what they are doing. We've been at it non-stop since the fall of 2015."

Finding Ways To Use Less Water

Not long ago, California was in a deep drought. So, the students proposed ways to use less water at their school. Their ideas included landscaping that needed less water. They also looked into getting low-flow toilets and automatic faucets, which would cut down on water waste.

The school made changes. And the students' water-saving plan helped them win the national contest. They took home a prize of \$25,000.

"We are passionate about water conservation and the environment," Fiona said. "Students at Washington Middle School will now go up to teachers and let them know there is a leak. The students are more aware of the environment now."

Jim Byerum was impressed by the group's plan. He is the president of the California Domestic Water Company, a water supplier. Mr. Byerum saw the group present their project in front of the city government in 2015.

"What I saw that night was an articulate group of eighth-graders that did their research and homework," Mr. Byerum said.

"It blew me away," he added. "This community should be fully supporting this group."

Trip To Talk To Lawmakers

The group's work isn't done. Soon, they will make another trip to talk to lawmakers again. They will go over the bill and possible additions to it. Then lawmakers will vote on the bill. They will decide if it should become a law.

The girls also want to encourage other students to keep thinking about water conservation. They are planning Water Guardian clubs at other schools. Clubs have been planned for a high school, middle school and three elementary schools.

"We want to start small and teach the current generation at Washington Middle School," Jessica said. "There are a lot of students that are aware of what we are doing. We are hoping it snowballs and other students teach other students and the clubs continue to grow."



Quiz

- 1 Read the section "Water Guardians Win A Contest." Which sentence BEST explains why the Water Guardians worked on their project for two years?
- (A) The Water Guardians formed in 2015.
 - (B) Susan Pritchard challenged her students.
 - (C) The students wanted to win the contest.
 - (D) The girls really cared about the topic.

- 2 Read the paragraph below from the section "Class Project Teaches Students About State Government."

"This bill can save California more than 20 million gallons per day," Chen said. "I am encouraged to see our youth embracing STEM education and applying what they have learned to the real world." STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and math.

Which idea from this paragraph BEST supports the conclusion that STEM education is important?

- (A) STEM education is considered fun by many students.
 - (B) Students can learn about STEM education through projects.
 - (C) Youths are applying STEM to actual problems that affect them.
 - (D) Many students are passionate about STEM education.
- 3 Which of the following are two MAIN ideas from the article?
- (A) Water rebate programs encourage people not to be wasteful; students wanted to think of ways to help save water.
 - (B) Students are helping California schools save money; lawmakers will vote on whether they pass the students' bill.
 - (C) California was in a deep drought in 2015; the Water Guardians was formed to help stop the drought from continuing.
 - (D) Students at Washington Middle School are more aware of the environment; lawmakers will vote on the bill.

- 4 Read the sentences summarizing the MAIN ideas of the article below.

Four students came up with a plan that included schools in water conservation programs. Students worked on ways schools could save money.

Which answer choice would complete the summary?

- (A) The students call themselves the Water Guardians.
- (B) More clubs are planned for other schools to save water.
- (C) Lawmakers will vote on whether to make the bill a law.
- (D) The Water Guardians have a passion for what they do.