



Sum of the Rivers

Note: This lesson is based off of “Sum of the Parts” www.projectwet.org

Overview: Students will see maps of Lake Superior and the St. Louis River to compare the sizes. Students will then each draw a portion of either the St. Louis River or a river near their school that flows into the St. Louis River or Lake Superior. They will make connections that every part of the river can impact the health of the rest of the river and of Lake Superior.

Subject Areas: Science, Social Science/History

Grade Levels: K-5, 6-8, 9-12

Topics: Animals, Biology, Earth Science/Geology, Ecology, Human Culture, Plants, Water, Weather

Great Lakes Literacy Principles:

1. The Great Lakes, bodies of fresh water with many features, are connected to each other and to the world ocean.
4. Water makes Earth habitable; fresh water sustains life on land.
5. The Great Lakes support a broad diversity of life and ecosystems.
6. The Great Lakes and humans in their watersheds are inextricably interconnected.
8. The Great Lakes are socially, economically, and environmentally significant to the region, the nation and the planet.

Materials:

- Outline of Lake Superior (supporting file)
- St. Louis River Overlay (see below)
- Paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Introduction:

Show students the outline of Lake Superior and have them guess as to where they are and what percentage (or how big) the St. Louis River is in comparison. Then put the overlay of the St. Louis River over the edge of Lake Superior (if you don't adjust the size of the St. Louis River overlay and if you print Lake Superior's outline in parts on 11"x17" (there should be six pages, two of which will be blank) then the overlay should fit almost perfectly. Have students then find where they are on the river map. Ask them what impact their river has, if any, on Lake Superior. Remind them of how small their river is (or how small the St. Louis River is) compared to Lake Superior. Does it still have an impact? What if the students owned land on the river bank? Would they have an impact on the river or the lake?

Activity:

Hand out paper and markers, pencils, or crayons and have students draw a part of a river (whichever river you choose). You can assign students with “roles” (for example: farmers, car repair shops, homes, industries, etc. and have different outcomes such as manure runoff, spilled/dumped oil, etc.). Using historical events can also bring awareness to local history. Put the students’ parts together in a line to represent a river. Start at one end and go through each part with scenarios to see how the quality of water changes by the mouth of the river. How are the plants and animals impacted? What about the humans that use that water for recreation or for drinking?

