

The Rain Garden Academy

Educate the Public to Increase Environmental Stewardship

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Sociology and Sustainability

THE PROBLEM

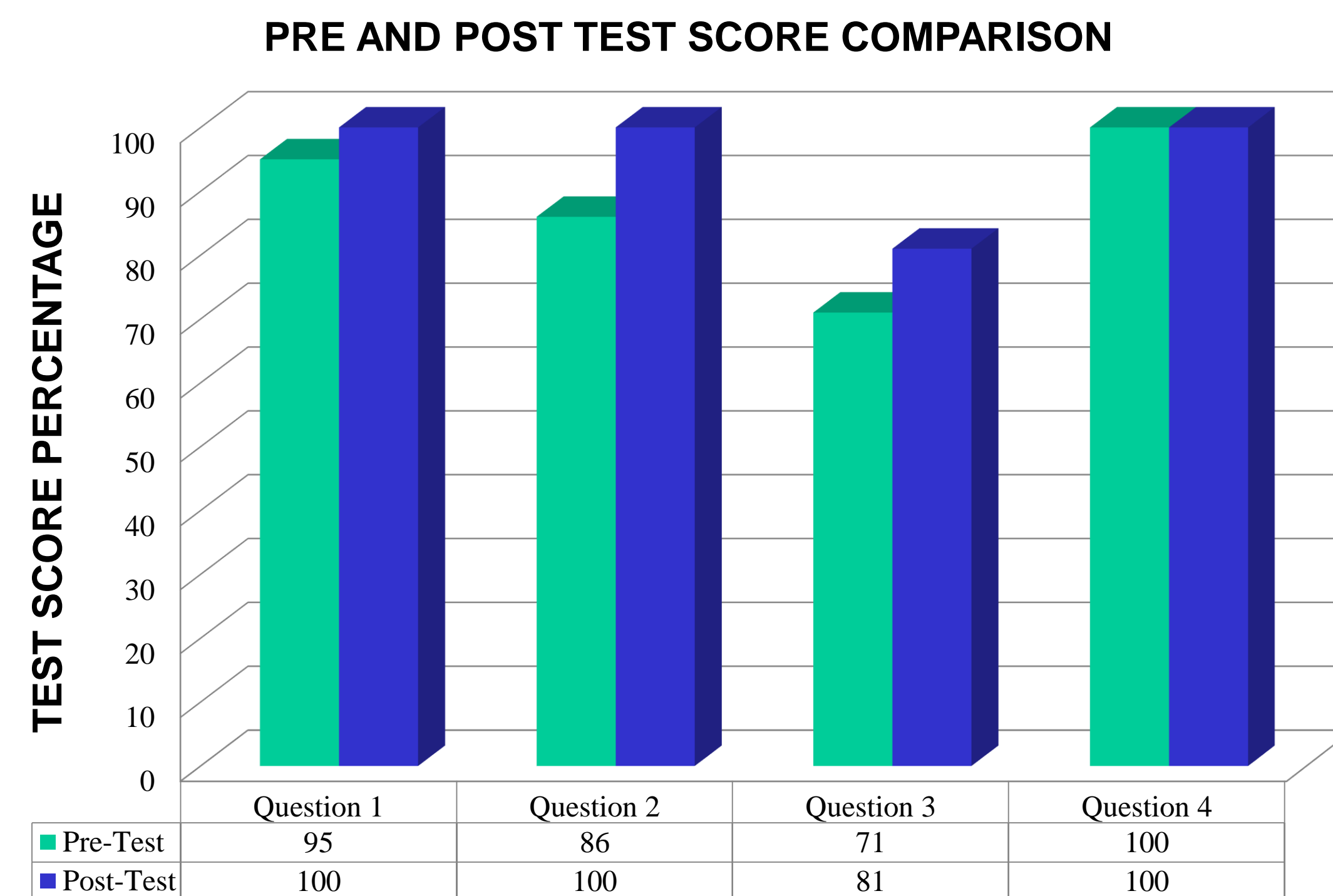
One of the things stopping people from becoming environmental stewards is lack of education on how to be better environmental stewards and why it is important to do so.

The Illinois River Watershed Partnership and Beaver Water District were given a grant from the EPA and ANRC to install 60 demonstration rain gardens in the Illinois River and Beaver Watersheds, along with facilitating rain garden academies in order to teach people the importance of watershed management and how rain gardens can be good tools for combatting pollutants and helping to keep our waterways clean.

THE PROJECT

This project looks at a combination of lecture and hands-on education at the Spring 2014 Rain Garden Academy to see if this mechanism does influence an increase of knowledge and attitude toward commitment to environmental stewardship.

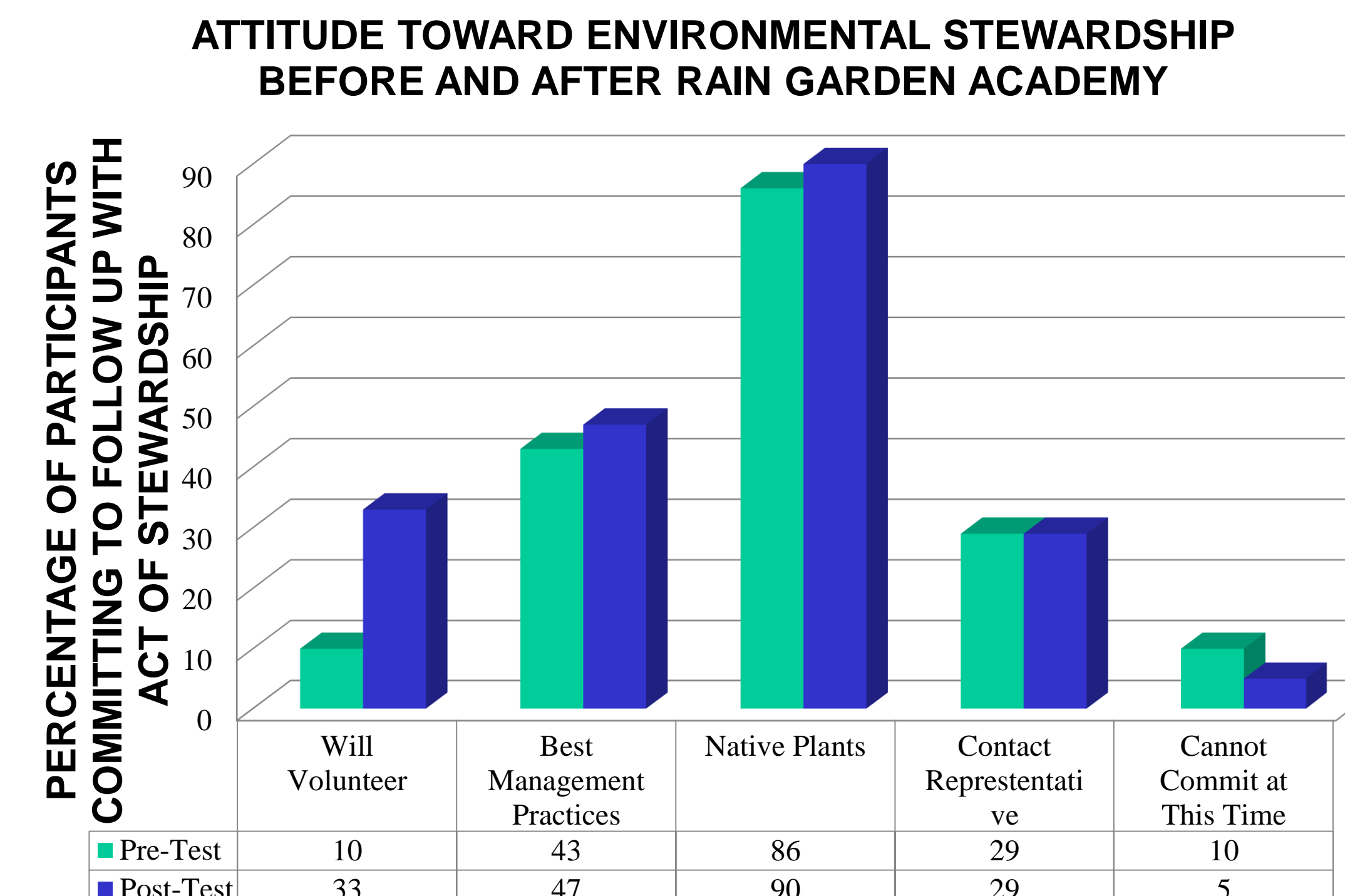
I know anecdotally that this mechanism of education influences an increase in education and change in attitude toward environmental stewardship. By using Pre and Post-Tests surveys, I gathered performance measurement data that would empirically prove this to be true



The participants in the Rain Garden Academy demonstrated an increase in knowledge on each of the curriculum questions asked in the survey other than the one (question 4) that they all got correct both times. Though the test group was only 21 people, this is a good way to empirically prove that the combination of lecture and hands-on education is effective.



2014 Rain Garden Academy



The participants in the Rain Garden Academy also demonstrated an attitude change in favor of additional commitment to future environmental stewardship. In the Pre-Test, there were only two participants who said they could not commit to performing one of the given options for environmental stewardship and that lowered to only one participant in the Post-Test, empirically proving that this mechanism is also effective in changing attitudes in favor of commitment towards stewardship.



Rain Garden Planted at Mitchison Park
Huntsville, AR

SUSTAINABILITY

This project contributes to sustainability in all four of the sustainable systems.

This project primarily addresses the social systems of sustainability by teaching the general public about the importance of watershed management and environmental stewardship

The built systems of sustainability are also addressed in this project by teaching people how to build rain gardens, which is a type of low impact development, that they will hopefully implement at their home, school or place of business in the future.

The natural systems of sustainability are addressed with rain garden building because they lessen the impact to the ecological system and contribute to the restoration of ground water.

The managed systems of sustainability are addressed through teaching people how to plant, weed, care for, mulch, and replant the rain gardens for optimal maintenance.

OVERVIEW

Completing this project has solidified my interest in pursuing a career in sustainability and environmental communication. It is obvious to me that if we want to have a more sustainable society, education and outreach is critical to motivating individuals to become environmental stewards. While working on this project, I have gained a respect for the knowledge needed to be an environmental steward and the passion to continue to work in the field of sustainability.



Through a partnership between the Arkansas Natural Resource Commission, EPA, Illinois River Watershed Partnership and Beaver Water District, the Rain Garden Project grant seeks to empower students and communities to confront local watershed concerns by implementing demonstration rain gardens and educating the public about the numerous benefits of this alternative storm water management approach.

