

Toxic and Harmful Algal Blooms ***“A Community in Crisis - Introduction”***

Students are presented with a scenario of a recent harmful algal bloom in the fictional town of Habport. They are assigned roles and are asked to prepare for and participate in a Habport town meeting called to discuss the bloom. Once provided with the scenario and roles, students should have several days to prepare for the meeting, as research will be required of them. Students should use the knowledge they have about harmful algal blooms to address possible causes and effects, as well as monitoring, prevention, and remediation efforts that might be taken. Some students will be given roles that they would not necessarily choose in real life. Encourage them to embrace their roles for the purpose of the exercise, and assure them that they will have the chance to voice their personal convictions after the fact. In addition to researching their individual roles, students should investigate actual recent harmful algal blooms, the impacts they have had, and the steps that were taken to deal with them. Encourage students to be creative! This should be a fun exercise that challenges their way of thinking and problem solving skills!

The town meeting can take a variety of formats depending on the time available and the decisions made by the students. At a minimum, each constituent should be allowed time to speak. That time might be spent expressing specific concerns over the algal bloom, suggesting causes, suggesting solutions, or anything else the constituents would like to discuss. The goal of the meeting is to hear all parties concerned and hopefully come up with some suggestions for mitigation, as well as detection and prevention of future blooms. The roles listed below are flexible. If your class is large enough, assign groups of students to represent the different roles. If your class is not large enough to assign all of the roles and still have an audience of “concerned citizens,” partner with another teacher and combine the classes for this multidisciplinary exercise. At the conclusion of the exercise, allow time for the students to discuss what occurred during their town meeting. This can be accomplished as a group discussion, as a reflective paper, or as a journal exercise. Questions they should consider addressing include: What did they learn from the process? What did they learn about harmful algal blooms? What did they learn of the impacts of harmful algal blooms? What did they learn about dealing with HABs?

http://www.bigelow.org/edhab/community_crisis.html#activity