Fairchild Tropical Botanic garden
Westland Hialeah Senior High School
Fairchild Challenge 6
Interview Review

Recently, my partner and I set forth on an adventure at our high school, Westland Hialeah (home of the wildcats!). This adventure was an exciting experience for the both of us, and we will not forget the lively discussions and reactions that we received. We were on a mission to find out what our fellow wildcats (students, faculty and staff) know about water and plants. This mission was accomplished through a series of video interviews. We chose random students and adults that volunteered. These particular individuals were unsuspected of the types of questions we confronted them with, making them perfect candidates for this experiment! The goal was to discover how knowledgeable people in our school community are regarding the relationship between water, plants and human beings. The interviews included the following three questions:

- How do people use water and plants?
- Do plants need water?
- How are plants important to water?

These three simple questions should be easy to answer considering the fact that we all live alongside plants and very much depend on water. The questions also show a direct relationship between water and plants. The idea was to encourage a thought-provoking conversation about water and plants – two vital elements of life.

Even though these were three basic and simple questions, many of the interviewees were stumped. Most answers were based on opinions rather than actual facts. A few students discussed the fact that the Earth and humans are dependent on water. One student was very specific and went further with the information stating that less than 3% of the Earth's water supply is fresh drinkable water. One of the adults, Mr. Esperon (an English teacher), had an elaborate answer with details of how plants and water rely on each other. He was the only person that was able to have an in-depth conversation about the topic. The rest of the answers were generic and regarding human dependence on water. Everyone stated that humans and plants need water to live and survive. As one student stated, "every living thing needs water and oxygen to survive." Many answers included how they personally used water for hygienic purposes (bathing, washing, etc.) Other uses include drinking and to stay hydrated both humans and plants.

An interesting aspect of this project was the reactions that people had to the interview and the questions themselves. We found it very interesting that the correct answers were usually regarding water. Most people seem to know more about water because it is part of their daily routine, which is why most answers included personal usage. Water seemed to be extremely important to everyone at our school to the point that many answers were quite defensive. When we asked about the importance of plants to water, many were flabbergasted that we would even ask such a thing. It almost seemed that people thought water to be superior to plants. Both students and adults were confused by the question and assumed that we stated the question incorrectly. One student asked, "Is this a trick question because we really don't use plants for anything." When discussing plants, most people discussed the decorative use for plants. Given time to discuss, however, some people actually tried to provide a scientific answer discussing oxygen and photosynthesis. These answers by students, however, were criticized highly. One student was extremely critical of answers that related plants to energy. Oddly enough, this particular student knows (as stated earlier) that living things rely on both oxygen and water but does not discuss plants at all. The conversations were one-sided with most people cheering for water! The adults, however, did make a hint towards some relationship between water and plants. One adult stated that there must be some "ying and yang" relationship between water and plants. Another

adult stated that plants may act as a “filtration system.” The best answer came for Mr. Esperon which made a connection with plants and water as part of a cyclical relationship of life.

In addition to the answers we received, we were quite surprised by various facial expressions and everyone’s overall participation. People were interested to answer the questions and tried their best, although they wish they would have been better prepared. It was interesting to hear everyone’s opinion about a topic that they normally don’t discuss outside of science class. Another interesting point was that we were art students trying to create a film and most students did not see why this topic would be important for us. Everyone asked us the purpose of this project. It is obvious that “water and plants” is not a topic that appears in everyday conversation. Students may not have learned a considerable amount of new information about water and plants but it was an opportunity to openly discuss. The conversation certainly reminded them of information they may have learned in science class. These students were able to hear each other’s opinions and facts they did not know before. My partner and I learned that the water cycle does in fact need plants. We realized that there is much more to be learned. One student was very wise in saying that there we take water and plants for granted and that a good lesson would be to trade places with someone with limited access to water. We did not realize that not only is it important to know the scientific information about water plants but to know the social implications. At our school, everyone has free access to clean water. Not everyone is so lucky. Our video can be used to make others aware that we need to care more about our plants and water. It would be interesting to interview people in countries that have difficulty accessing fresh drinking water. Would they know how plants affect the water cycle? We could also find out how other people in the world use or attain water as well as discuss their idea on conservation. It would be interesting to know how foreigners might feel about our views on this global issue on plants and water.