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## Lincoln High School's water project aims to alleviate local pollution

### Retention pond garden lowers strain on Lake Lafayette, Wakulla Springs

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Think of the project as a "rain-garden concept" with an environmental twist.

A barren stretch of land tucked in the rear of Lincoln High School's campus has been transformed into the state's first storm water treatment facility at a public school.

A retention pond will collect runoff generated from the school. And the efforts will help alleviate water pollution to Lake Lafayette in eastern Tallahassee and Wakulla Springs, said Sean McGlynn, a water-quality specialist who teamed up with Lincoln teacher Elizabeth Spike on the idea.

"I wanted a place where my kids can go out and observe," Spike said. "The students can go take a field trip to their backyard."

About 150 students in horticulture classes have been tilling the 4,000-square-foot land, digging holes and planting vegetation. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday, many of them gleamed over their progress.

"There was no grass. It was ugly," Mitchell Mims, a 17-year-old junior, said. "Now, it's something you're proud to walk through knowing that you helped create it."

The project was a collaborative effort, said Blas Gomez, supervisor and grant manager for the Ochlockonee River Soil and Water Conservation District. He said the project took about \$130,000 to complete. An \$85,000 grant was obtained from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, along with \$30,000 from Baycrest Corporation and \$5,000 in donated labor from the students.

"It took all of these people working together," said James West, who teaches horticulture classes at Lincoln.

McGlynn said the project is a "perfect example" of what steps can be done for the sake of the environment.

"If we can do this on our own at our own private properties," McGlynn said. "It would clean up the storm water before it gets in the water ways."

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