

**USING RESTORATIONS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM TO STUDY SERAL STAGES OF THE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE**

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*Abstract:* Located near the edge of the naturally-occurring tallgrass prairie ecoregion, Junction City has a unique population of students. Surrounded by pastureland, a military base and a college town, the students have very diverse backgrounds and surprisingly little knowledge of the once dominant habitat of the region. In November 2008, we have established a 930m<sup>2</sup> restoration from seed, which is used by the high school Ecology students for various research projects. One such project is being led by a graduate research fellow from Kansas State University, who was paired with our classes through an NSF GK-12 partnership. It has focused on overall plant species biodiversity, with an emphasis on native/non-native species and grass/forb stem counts. The research data we accumulate is then compared to data collected from restoration and remnant plots from the Konza Prairie Biological Research Station to measure the successional progress of our restoration plot.