

EE 2005 A Plan for Advancing Environmental Education In Wisconsin

Environmental Education Works for Wisconsin

- Environmental education builds a knowledgeable and skilled citizenry.
- Environmental education promotes a balanced analysis of social, economic and ecological needs.
- Wisconsin's parents and educators overwhelmingly support environmental education.



"I commend the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board for their efforts to identify and address the environmental education needs of our State. I am optimistic this plan will help empower Wisconsin citizens with the knowledge and skills to make wise environmental decisions and take responsible actions in their personal lives, workplaces and communities. Preserving the environmental quality of Wisconsin is every citizen's responsibility. Ultimately, an informed and skilled public is a strong guarantee for environmental stewardship, a sustainable economy and a high quality of life in Wisconsin. I therefore encourage you to support this plan and help to ensure "Environmental Education Works for Wisconsin," now and into the future."

Governor Tommy G. Thompson

Introduction

The Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) was established in 1990 by the Wisconsin State Legislature. The board is made up of individuals appointed to represent K-12 and higher education, state agencies, environmental organizations, nature centers, legislators, industry, agriculture, and teachers. Since its inception, the board has been a very active, "hands on" working group. In addition to operating an environmental grants program, the board has been recognized as a consensus-building group on environmental education issues. The unique make-up and mission of the board position it to provide needed leadership to "EE" while recognizing the importance of building common purpose and direction among diverse stakeholders. It is with this in mind that the WEEB facilitated "EE 2005, A Plan for Advancing Environmental Education in Wisconsin".

The WEEB Mission

To provide leadership in the development of learning opportunities that empower Wisconsin citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to make wise environmental decisions and take responsible actions in their personal lives, workplaces and communities.

Beliefs

Environmental literacy and skills are needed by all citizens because environmental stewardship is everyone's responsibility.

Agencies, educational institutions, private organizations and businesses need to work in partnership to provide quality environmental education for everyone.

Relevant environmental curricula and instructional materials need to be available and used in all educational delivery systems.

Model environmental education programs should be encouraged and promoted throughout the state.

Teachers and other leaders should be able to obtain continuing professional development in order to provide environmental education of the highest possible quality for all citizens of the state.

WEEB Central Purposes

To provide positive leadership, advocacy and policy making in the comprehensive arena of environmental literacy and education.

To support the development of local leaders and their fellow citizens to become environmentally aware and concerned enough to act on environmental issues.

To advocate the development and implementation of interdisciplinary environmentally-based curricula at all levels of the educational system.

To further the continuing professional development of staff at all levels of formal or informal education to enable them to accomplish needed environmental education goals.

Environmental Education Is...

"A lifelong learning process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, ethical awareness and sensitivity for the relationship between humans and the environment, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions. By these actions, environmentally literate citizens will help ensure an ecologically and economically sustainable environment" (WEEB 1999).

A Storied Past and a Bright Future

Wisconsin has a long history of citizen involvement and commitment for our natural resource legacy. Since the late 1800's, outdoor and nature education has been provided in Wisconsin. In 1935, a law was passed requiring teacher-training colleges to provide conservation education. In 1990, the state legislature authorized the creation of the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board with a grants program and the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education at UW Stevens Point. Academic standards for environmental education were established for K-12 education in 1998.

Environmental education planning has a long history in Wisconsin as well. Statewide planning and capacity-building for "EE" was formally done as a state as early as 1974. In 1994 the WEEB initiated a statewide planning process that included a stakeholder survey and "summit" process. This plan, with associated action items, has been guiding WEEB and other organizations for the previous five years. We are now renewing this plan. "**EE2005**" represents the thinking and input of hundreds of stakeholders across Wisconsin. The "Major Priorities" and "Objectives" are designed to guide educators, policy-makers and the WEEB for the next five years. As citizens of this state, we all have a stake in preserving and enhancing our environmental heritage. We invite you to join us in helping to provide learning opportunities for our citizens so that everyone, youngest to oldest, will gain more knowledge and skill to ensure an even more positive legacy for our environment.

EE 2005 Major Priorities

(Please note: The WEEB has not prioritized or ranked the following "Priorities" or "Objectives/Outcomes.")

I. Support the Implementation of Environmental Education in Schools

Rationale: Environmental education in our schools provides the foundation for developing lifelong learners that are informed and involved citizens who will help ensure an ecologically and economically sustainable environment. Our educational institutions and state agencies must provide the necessary support to ensure schools are meeting the environmental education needs of all learners.

Stakeholders:

Primary: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), public schools, private schools, technical colleges, universities and colleges, home schools.

Secondary: UW-System, school board associations, curriculum coordinators, parents, school organizations, professional education organizations, Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA's), government agencies and environmental organizations.

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Advocate the full implementation of the *Wisconsin Model Academic Standards* for environmental education and other content areas. (This document was produced by the DPI. For a copy, see their website <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/standards/index.html>)
2. Re-establish the DPI Environmental Education Consultant position to provide leadership and assistance to school districts.
3. Support the implementation of the "Guidelines in Environmental Education for the PI 34 Standards" (teacher licensing and certification). This document was produced by the DPI. For a copy, see their website <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/tel/newrules>
4. Promote the use of "EE Materials: Guidelines for Excellence" (produced by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)).
5. Support the dissemination of quality environmental education materials to PK-16 classrooms.
 6. Support professional development opportunities for educators.
 7. Increase cooperation between agencies involved in environmental education, PK-16.
 8. Assist in developing implementation plans for environmental education in schools.
 9. Promote safe environmental practices in the classrooms and the field (e.g., safe handling of mercury, safe handling of art supplies, awareness of environmental hazards, i.e., ticks, poison ivy, and lead paint.)
 10. Work with "School to Work" programs to ensure the development and implementation of PK-16 curriculum alignment strategies.

11. Encourage increased utilization of community resources and partnerships.
12. Encourage environmentally/energy "friendly" school buildings and grounds.
13. Encourage internal/external environmental education program evaluation (audit).

II. Develop Leadership in Environmental Education

Rationale: Deliberate and on-going efforts should be made to enhance the leadership and support provided for environmental education in Wisconsin. All groups involved with the environment and/or education need to lead by example to ensure full support for the implementation of Wisconsin's environmental education programs and future initiatives.

Stakeholders:

Primary: WEEB, Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAE), Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program, and other state and local leadership programs, National Environmental Education Advancement Project (NEEAP).

Secondary: State agencies, environmental and conservation groups, Wisconsin Association of Manufacturers and Commerce, Wisconsin School Board Association (WSBA).

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Support community environmental education leadership development through projects like the 1999 WEEB grant entitled "Leadership Institute and Seminars: Reaching Wisconsin's Decision Makers with EE" administered by the National Environmental Education Advancement Project.
2. Increase the priority for environmental education in state agencies.
3. Develop a plan to improve communications with the sectors each WEEB member represents for the purpose of increasing support for EE from that sector.
4. Explore the development of an EE leadership institute.
5. Support existing environmental education leadership programs such as the Master of Science in Natural Resources (Environmental Education emphasis) at UW Stevens Point.

III. Expand Non-Formal Environmental Education

Rationale: Environmental Education is a lifelong learning process. Programs should address the needs of all citizen ages, from all walks of life. The more environmentally literate Wisconsin citizens are, the better equipped they are to participate in public decisions affecting our working, living and recreational environments.

Stakeholders:

Primary: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), nature centers/zoos, UW Extension, youth organizations, environmental and conservation organizations.

Secondary: WEEB, media sources, Wisconsin Technical College System, UW System, industry, labor

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Promote the development of cooperative relationships between formal and non-formal educators aimed at achieving the Wisconsin model academic standards for environmental education and assessment.
2. Expand and coordinate environmental education programs and activities at zoo's, nature centers, museums, parks and other non-formal settings.
3. Provide professional development opportunities for non-formal educators.
4. Promote and encourage youth organizations to become more actively involved in environmental education.
5. Expand adult and community opportunities by increasing the use of distance learning and the internet for environmental education purposes.
6. Encourage the development of environmental education opportunities in the workplace.

IV. Conduct Environmental Literacy Assessments

Rationale: Assessment is important to determine the environmental literacy of Wisconsin citizens. Wisconsin statute states that the environmental literacy of Wisconsin students must be assessed (see 1989 Wisconsin ACT 209). The WEEB will serve as an advocate of using assessments to help achieve environmental literacy goals.

Stakeholders:

Primary: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Wisconsin Center for EE (WCEE), University of Wisconsin System.

Secondary: WEEB, Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB).

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Support environmental literacy assessment research that uses the existing DPI assessments to measure environmental literacy.
2. Support research to analyze the existing DPI assessments to determine which of Wisconsin's model academic standards for EE are assessed and develop and validate new items to address EE standards that are not being assessed.
3. Support local environmental literacy assessment efforts to determine the degree to which the Wisconsin model academic standards for environmental education are being achieved.

4. Report on changes in environmental literacy obtained from the DPI and other assessments administered since 1996.

5. Support future environmental literacy assessment efforts in Wisconsin.

V. Communicate the Environmental Education Message

Rationale: For environmental education to be efficient and effective, there must be communication, coordination and support between decision makers on school boards, school administrators, the legislature, private industry, state agencies, and the general public.

Stakeholders:

Primary: WEEB, Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAEI)

Secondary: All other environmental organizations, government agencies, Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE), nature centers/zoos, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB)

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Provide support for the development and implementation of the "Communication Plan to Promote Environmental Education in Wisconsin"
(<http://weeb.uwsp.edu/supportpages/communicplan.htm>)
2. Upgrade the WEEB web page and use it to disseminate information and solicit input regarding issues.
3. Improve communication with the private sector by implementing a series of forums to establish common ground.
 4. Investigate the establishment of a comprehensive center for environmental education.
 5. Create a web-based clearinghouse of environmental education resources.

VI. Obtain Private Funds to Supplement the Environmental Education Grants Program.

Rationale: The state legislation creating the WEEB directs the Board of Directors to seek out and obtain private funds to supplement the environmental education grants program. The WEEB has established the Wisconsin Environmental Education Fund to actively raise private funds to expand opportunities for organizations to conduct environmental education projects.

Stakeholders:

Primary: WEEB

Secondary: Partnerships, Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education (WAEI) Business and Industry, environmental and conservation organizations.

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. Develop and maintain an annual giving program to raise funds to supplement the environmental education grant program. Donations to be deposited at the direction of the donor into either an annual dispersal account or an endowment account.
2. Promote the use of additional giving options including stock gifts, bequests, and other forms of planned giving.

Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Members

Debra Blomberg
Business & Industry

Rick Koziel
Nature Centers/Zoos

William Neuhaus
Labor

Bill Buckley
Environmental Organizations

Dan Kvalheim
Agriculture

William Rockwell
WI Technical Colleges

Brian Burke
State Senator

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Brian Rude
State Senator

Robin Harris
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Pat Marinac
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Al Stenstrup
Designee for
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Neal Kedzie
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Mark Miller
State Representative

Richard Wilke
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