

Connecting National Environmental Education Standards to Common Core Standards

The terms “environmental education” and “environmental literacy” can mean different things to different people, depending on their experience base, their focus, and their educational perspective. Regardless of a person’s definitions, it can’t be emphasized enough that we live in a society and a world that expects that our future generations to be more capable of making sound environmental decisions than in the past. Students and employers are demanding that the education sector take action to build a vision, tools, and capabilities for a sustainable future. This challenge brings new opportunities for educators to contribute to teaching and learning that shapes an environmentally literate citizenry.

Education must equip students with knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes, and values compatible with a sustainable society. It goes beyond the “green” agenda to raise awareness of the complexity and dynamism of issues. It builds capacity for collaboration and creativity in problem-solving, critical reflection and systemic and futures thinking, a trans-disciplinary orientation, and motivates action for environmental sustainability.

With the United States moving to develop a set of common core standards for teaching and learning in the K-12 settings, it is imperative that we in Kentucky make sure that teachers and administrators understand how these standards correlate strongly with national guidelines for excellence in environmental education. These standards have already been developed by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). They first published *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)* in 1999. It is now in its fourth edition (2010). This set of guidelines is part of a series of documents that includes guidelines for excellence for environmental education programs, materials, early childhood environmental education programs, and the preparation and professional development of environmental educators. The guidelines were produced as part of the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education, and were prepared and reviewed by thousands of individuals and organizations representing all aspects of environmental education. The National Project on Environmental Education has been funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency through the Environmental Education and Training Partnership, under agreement with NAAEE.

The entire series of Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education is available free of charge through the NAAEE Website, at <http://eelinked.naaee.net/n/guidelines/topics/National-Project-for-Excellence-in-EE>. Printed copies may be ordered from NAAEE at (202) 419-0412.