



Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC) Summer Council Meeting; July 23-24, 2013

Meeting Location: Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill; Harrodsburg, KY

Meeting Time: July 23 from 2:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. and July 24 from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time

Council Members in Attendance: Chair Horace Brown, Vice-Chair Karen Quinn, Lona Brewer, Cheryl Messenger, Marc Norton, Karen Reagor, Amelia Stenger

Absent Members: Greg Higdon, Shannon S. Graves

Staff in Attendance: Elizabeth Schmitz, Michelle Shane, Zach Webb

Meeting Introduction

The meeting was called to order by H. Brown at 2:25 p.m. EDT, after Council member pictures were taken for the agency website.

Minutes

Minutes from the previous Council meeting were presented for review and approval.

⇒ A. Stenger moved that the Minutes be approved as presented; K. Reagor seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Agenda

E. Schmitz queried the Council about how far in advance they would like to receive the agenda for Council meetings. All present agreed that at least one week in advance of the meeting would be ideal.

Impacts and Benefits of Environmental Education Presentation

E. Schmitz and the Council discussed the impact and benefit of environmental education (EE). EE takes place in school parks, natural lands, nature centers, aquariums, zoos, non-profit organizations, government agencies, farms, industries, universities, schools, agri-tourism, and grant providers. Minorities are an essential part of EE. EE is experiential, interdisciplinary, life-long, explores the interrelationship between nature and humans, and encourages positive actions for sustainability. In EE, an emphasis is that is important not to tell people what to do or what to think; instead, the goal of EE is to foster critical thinking skills in our students so that they can explore multiple perspectives and then draw their own conclusions. A video excerpt of the March 2013 *Education Matters* episode featured Kentucky teacher Beverly McDaniel getting her students excited about EE (Full video available at <http://www.ket.org/educationmatters/archivevideo/>).

Historical research demonstrates the benefits of EE. The 1998 publication, *Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning*, by Gerald Lieberman and Linda Hoody, states that all schools in the study found quantitative benefits of improved achievement through the use

of EE, and that students exposed to EE performed better on standardized tests. Current research also supports the greater benefit of using EE. Authors Richard Louv and David Sobel argue that outdoor exploration leads to creativity and problem-solving skills, and reduced health concerns regarding ADHD, obesity, and asthma.

There is also growing public support for EE. According to the Council's own *Land, Legacy and Learning Master Plan and Survey*, 98% of Kentuckians believe that EE should be taught in schools. There is a national movement for passage of the No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Act. The U.S. Department of Education has included EE in their publication *Blueprint for Education Reform*, and the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has directed that the Kentucky Environmental Literacy Plan (KELP) be implemented along with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is emphasizing the goal of career-ready high school graduates with 21st century learning skills. The NGSS and KELP will support this new direction, with development tailored to meet changing requirements. Additionally, House Concurrent Resolution 29 outlines a children's bill of rights, including the right to a variety of outdoor experiences.

Reflection Activity

E. Schmitz posed the question to the Council, "What brought you here today?" H. Brown recounted his journey from age 4 to present, including his work with the Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board. Sr. A. Stenger related several stories about teaching youth outside and witnessing the impact of the environment as a classroom on children. K. Reagor and C. Messenger added their own anecdotal stories as witnesses of the powerful effect EE can have on children and adults.

Council Budget Review

The Council had total expenditures of \$200,497.57 in Fiscal Year (F.Y.) 2013. For F.Y. 2014, a new recordkeeping system is under development to organize expenses; the new system was previewed and the Council was pleased with the level of detail being shown. L. Brewer recommended that KEEC staff view reports in the Commonwealth's InfoAdvantage system, to prevent duplicative work. K. Quinn requested that a final Travel Report and new budget tracking spreadsheets be sent to the Council for review. There was ambiguity regarding the final carry-forward amount after close-out. The Council instructed staff to meet further with the KDE financial department to better understand expenditures listed under eMARS codes E222, E231, E257, E381, and E399, and the end-of-year figures.

During the budget discussion, K. Reagor requested notification of when the KELP is distributed to the School Superintendents so that the Council may make follow-up contact.

The meeting was suspended at 4:50 p.m. and resumed at 7:20 p.m.

The Council will no longer purchase food for meetings, with the exception of the Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools (KGHS) Youth Summit and Awards Luncheon, co-hosted by KY-NEED, and the Council Retreat.

Currently, the agency receives enough income to keep two full time staff on board with no additional funding for programs like KGHS and the Professional Environmental Educator Certification. There was a brief discussion regarding the sagacity of seeking more funding through amendment of the founding statutes; the Council agreed that this should be a last resort and that funding should be sought in other ways. The Education and Workforce Development Cabinet's legal department recently concluded that

the agency can charge to recoup admission fees, application fees, and administrative costs, which will help KEEC continue to offer programs.

The agency will apply for a grant from Toyota. Additionally, there may exist an opportunity to contract with Toyota to train their staff in basic environmental education for their Outdoor Classroom. The agency is also considering developing a proposal to the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board (HLCFB) that would pay KEEC for development of place-based curricula specific to individual conservation areas. This could possibly be included with a project for the Capitol Education Center (CEC), developing touch-screen kiosks and curricula about nature preserves. The lack of available matching funds precludes many grant opportunities.

Kentucky Association of Environmental Education (KAEE) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

E. Schmitz informed the Council that KEEC and KAEE are working to align the Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools (KGHS) program and the Project Learning Tree (PLT) Green Schools program. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being drafted by the National PLT office through KAEE. E. Schmitz requested that the Council approve the development of an MOU with KAEE so that the agencies may form a better working relationship and reduce competition between the organizations.

⇒ A. Stenger moved that the Council develop an MOU with KAEE; C. Messenger seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The meeting was suspended at 8:58 p.m. on July 23 and resumed at 8:00 a.m. on July 24.

General Program Updates

Kentucky University Partnership on Environmental Education (KUPEE) Update: Rather than compete, the University Centers for Environmental Education decided to partner and submitted a single RFP. The University of Kentucky is not participating and does not have an active Environmental Education Center; the University of Louisville still has no director for their Environmental Education Center. KEEC provided detailed comments about the RFP that need to be addressed by the applicants before the RFP will be sent for contract. K. Reagor and K. Quinn requested that the comments be sent to the Council for review. October 1 will likely be the start date of the executed contract. A. Hoffman has been asked to present on KAEE's programs at a future Council meeting.

Capitol Education Center (CEC): New Cabinet Secretary Tom Zawacki will tour the CEC in August. A CEC brochure is in development and kiosk hoods (to lock touch-screen computers on designated program) are coming soon. The Commonwealth has hired a tour guide to be responsible for the CEC tours and ensuring that the facility is running smoothly. Kiosk content will be updated on a quarterly basis in accordance with the seasons. The First Lady has also suggested the production of a video documentary focusing on outdoor schools in Kentucky.

Certification Advisory Committee (CAC) Update: The CAC has been working via Wikispace to better collaborate and share documents. The committee changed the program name from "Nonformal Environmental Education Certification" to "Professional Environmental Educator Certification." Applications for the 2013-14 course are due September 20; workshop dates and locations are listed on the agency website. The workshops begin in November and end in March. There will be an additional book fee of \$60 to cover the curriculum guides for Project Learning Tree, Project WET, and Project WILD. E. Schmitz is considering purchasing a classroom set of David Sobel's book *Childhood and Nature: Design*

Principles for Educators (2008); alternatively, future certification courses may require this book be purchased for the course. A graduation activity/ceremony still needs to be planned, and a sponsor for the graduation lunch must be secured.

Tracking of the Continuing Education Plans for Certified Environmental Educators who have already completed the course has been consolidated by Z. Myers into a single spreadsheet. The CAC decided to do away with the C.E. proposal documents, and require only a report. Reporting has been moved from every two years to an annual basis. Backlogged reports will be accepted until January 1, 2014 with no penalty. Individuals who wish to maintain their certification must submit the annual C.E. report, complete a short webinar and pay a nominal admissions fee. The Council inquired about what would happen if a Certified individual missed one year but wanted to become recertified. E. Schmitz indicated the CAC was still discussing this issue and hoped to have an answer after the next CAC meeting. The CAC has also decided to maintain the optional level of Master Environmental Educator. The council agrees with the CAC that lapel pins should be made to designate this honor. The pins should be designed and made before the 2013 KAEE Conference in order to present the award at the conference.

A new Review Committee shall be formed, made up of Certified Environmental Educators, to enforce the Code of Ethics and Continuing Education requirements. C. Messenger requested a copy of the new Code of Ethics be distributed to the Council. It is recommended that Certified be required to sign a new Code of Ethics sheet every year when they go through the recertification process.

Kentucky Environmental Literacy Plan (KELP)/ Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Update: The NGSS were adopted by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) in June of this year. The KELP will be implemented with the NGSS. The KELP will be mailed to all state Superintendents. H. Brown requests that a letter be drafted about how the Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools program can help teachers and school implement the KELP, and that the letter be signed by all Council Members and sent out with the KELP. E. Schmitz will present at the North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) conference on how the KELP and NGSS will be implemented. In Kentucky, there is currently an open public comment period for the NGSS; the period will close on July 31. E. Schmitz attended a public hearing on July 23 and listened to multiple public comments; she observed that there were 12 opposing the standards, and only 4 supporting the standards during the time she was there (although she had to leave early). E. Schmitz requests that the Council issue a letter of support for the NGSS.

⇒ K. Reagor moved that the Council formally endorse the NGSS as written and publicly comment in favor of them; K. Quinn seconded the motion. The motion passed.

A Writing Workshop Literacy Design Collaborative Gates Foundation grant and Southeast Environmental Education Association (SEEA) grant will defray some costs of implementing the KELP.

Energy in Education Collaborative (EiEC): Partners of the EiEC include KEEC (represented by E. Schmitz and M. Shane), KY-NEED (represented by K. Reagor), Department for Energy Development and Independence (DEDI; represented by Eileen Hardy, Lee Colten, and Greg Guess), and Kentucky School Board Association (KSBA; represented by Ron Wilhite). The collaborative has developed a display and presentation. The EiEC has presented at the following conferences: Kentucky Association of School Business Officials, Kentucky Association of Manufacturers, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, Kentucky School Board Association, and the Kentucky Association of School

Administrators. The EiEC also hopes to present or exhibit at the Governor's Conference on Energy and the Environment.

Outreach: The Kentucky Association of Environmental Education (KAEE) conference will be held at Lake Barkley on September 14 and 15; E. Schmitz will be presenting a legislative update and beginning work on the next Master Plan; both E. Schmitz and M. Shane will present at separate sessions on various agency initiatives. Council members planning to attend include H. Brown, C. Messenger, M. Norton, K. Quinn, and K. Reagor. The agency will be represented at the Governor's Conference on Energy and the Environment September 17-18. The NAAEE conference will be held in Baltimore October 9-12. E. Schmitz has received a partial scholarship from NAAEE to attend as part of the NAAEE Guidelines Trainers Bureau; M. Shane has an application in for an affordability scholarship through NAAEE, but will not receive notification until Aug 5. E. Schmitz requested that the Council approve travel expenses for herself and M. Shane to attend this conference.

⇒ K. Reagor moved that the Council approve travel expenses for E. Schmitz and M. Shane to attend the NAAEE conference; K. Quinn seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The agency will exhibit at the Kentucky Science Teacher Association conference beginning October 31. M. Shane will attend the National Green Schools conference in Sacramento, CA in March 2014.

Future Council Meetings: The next Council meeting date has been changed to October 30 from 1-4 p.m., location TBD. The winter meeting will be held on January 22 from 1-4 p.m. in Frankfort, KY. The spring meeting will also serve as the retreat and will be held on April 30 and May 1 at the Ursuline Sisterhood in Maple Mount, KY. The summer meeting will be held on July 30, 2014 at Mammoth Cave National Park.

Interagency Subcommittee on Environmental Education (ISEE) Update: The most recent ISEE meeting was held at Cane Run Elementary, an environmental magnet school in Louisville. The ISEE meetings have been quarterly with moderate attendance. Council members will be added to future ISEE invite lists.

Kentucky Association of Environmental Education (KAEE): E. Schmitz presented on the NGSS at the KAEE Sustainability Symposium. E. Schmitz, M. Shane, Z. Webb, and Z. Myers have alternately been participating in the KAEE EE Consortium. KEEC will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with KAEE regarding the Project Learning Tree (PLT) and KGHS programs. E. Schmitz is now a member of the NAAEE Guidelines Trainers Bureau, an outcome of the KAEE EE Consortium.

Kentucky Green & Healthy Schools (KGHS) Update: M. Shane has revised the sponsorship form to encompass the entire KGHS program (not just the Summit) by offering professional development, expanded travel reimbursements, and school mini-grants. Sr. A. Stenger, K. Reagor, and C. Messenger recommended not setting limits on number of donors at each level; all funds can be put toward programmatic uses. M. Shane is also responding to teacher feedback indicating the program is intimidating, confusing, and requires too many forms. She plans to revamp forms with the aid of the KGHS Advisory Committee after this academic year. Some new schools have signed up for the KGHS program for 2013-14. K. Reagor would like to see a focus on re-connecting with those schools who have previously signed up but for whatever reason (e.g., teacher moved, lack of funds, etc.) are not active in the program; priority should be to re-engage with these schools before recruiting new schools. The program also needs design guidelines and alignment with other guidelines and similar programs.

2014 Environmental Literacy Survey and Master Plan: The survey’s Request for Proposals (RFP) needs to be developed and issued. M. Shane recommends that the survey methodology be updated to account for the general public’s move away from land lines to cell phones, and to embrace social media. E. Schmitz asked that the Council examine the Master Plan between now and September 13 and provide feedback as to what areas the new document should focus on during the Master Plan kick-off at the KAEE conference.

Communications Update: Z. Webb updated the Council on the agency’s current social media site traffic and usage. The agency maintains two Facebook pages, a Twitter account, and a YouTube channel. All four sites have experienced increased usage over the past six months. The agency has also merged the *KGHS Update* newsletter into the first-ever agency-wide newsletter, *KEEC Legacy*. The newsletter is currently being distributed to 489 subscribers. A new agency brochure is forthcoming.

Focus Areas

After discussion, the following focus areas were identified as topics which certain council members might wish to work on outside of Council meetings:

Marketing & Outreach

Goals:

To expand KEEC’s audience to include donors; to encourage manufacturers to support experiential learning and connect with schools; to explore the feasibility of further reaching adult audiences through “University for a Day” workshops; to connect with and offer more opportunities for grandparent involvement; offer sponsored workshops; to raise the profile and goodwill of the agency and agency brand.

Interested Council Members:

H. Brown, K. Quinn, M. Norton, Sr. A. Stenger

Evaluation

Goals:

To reduce impediments to KGHS participation, to help inactive KGHS schools resume program work; to track statistics and metrics that will assist with fundraising, including number of agencies with whom we partner, number of students we affect, the differences we make/our impact, amount of funds used in overhead costs vs. programming, showing that money raised is applied to those programs identified to donors; keeping a focus on what is mandated.

Interested Council Members:

C. Messenger, K. Reagor

Foundation

Goals:

To document the history of the agency by interviewing those involved in its creation, including H. Brown, Jane Eller, Evelyn Morgan, Karen Armstrong, David Wicks, and Ann Seppenfield; to demonstrate how KEEC is different from other agencies; to provide an overview of

the reasons why the agency is administratively attached to the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.
Interested Council Members: H. Brown, C. Messenger

Policy

Goals: To identify ways in which the legislature can assist the mandates of the agency.

Interested Council Members: H. Brown, K. Quinn

Council members not in attendance should contact E. Schmitz or H. Brown to indicate their focus area(s) of interest.

Meeting Adjourned

The meeting was adjourned by H. Brown at 12:01 p.m.