



Workshop Resources

Guidelines for Excellence K-12 Environmental Education

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Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)

Written by:

Bora Simmons

Contributors:

Lisa Herrmann

Elizabeth Schmitz

Renee Strnad

Sally Wall

Brenda Weiser



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2000 P Street NW, Suite 540, Washington, DC 20036

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NAAEE is the professional association for environmental educators in North America and beyond.

Education We Need for the World We Want

Workshop Resources

Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)

Workshop Overview

In this workshop, participants will be introduced to a set of competencies for environmental literacy. The environmental literacy framework is benchmarked at the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade levels. Participants will have the opportunity unpack the environmental literacy framework, and explore how environmental literacy links with national and state standards. In addition, they will complete a self-assessment against the appropriate benchmarks. If you follow the module as outlined, the workshop will take approximately 5.5 hours to complete, not counting breaks and lunch.

Workshop Background

This workshop introduces participants to [*Excellence in Environmental Education—Guidelines for Learning \(K-12\)*](#) which provides students, parents, educators, home schoolers, administrators, policy makers, and the public a set of common, voluntary guidelines for environmental literacy. The guidelines support state and local environmental education efforts in this way:

- ✓ Set expectations for achievement in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades
- ✓ Suggest a framework for effective and comprehensive environmental education programs and curricula
- ✓ Demonstrate how environmental education can be used to meet standards set by the traditional disciplines and give students opportunities to synthesize knowledge and experience across disciplines
- ✓ Define the aims of environmental education

Workshop Objectives

- Participants will describe the learning framework used in *Excellence in Environmental Education—Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*
- Participants will compare the *Guidelines for Learning* to national and state academic standards
- Participants will correlate the *Guidelines for Learning* to curriculum materials

Materials Needed

- ✓ Projector and PowerPoint presentation (optional)
- ✓ Chart paper, markers, tape
- ✓ Copies of *Excellence in Environmental Education—Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*
- ✓ Copies of *Excellence in Environmental Education—Guidelines for Learning (K-12) Executive Summary and Self-Assessment Tool*

- ✓ One environmental education activity guide (e.g., Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, Project Wet) for every two participants.
- ✓ One set of state or national standards for science, math, social studies, and English language arts for every two participants.
- ✓ Journals for each participant (e.g., blue books, notebooks, sheets of paper stapled together)
- ✓ Copies of handouts:
 - Handout #1: Correlating Guidelines to Curriculum Materials
 - Handout #2: Linking Environmental Education and Curriculum Standards
 - Handout #3: Self-Assessment: *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*
 - Handout #4: Workshop Evaluation

Sample Workshop Agenda

Welcome, Introductions and Logistics

Icebreaker

Project Background

Getting Started—Jumping into Environmental Literacy

A Walk through the Guidelines

Digging into Environmental Literacy

Exploring Environmental Literacy and Instructional Materials

Linking Environmental Literacy and the Standards

Pulling it All Together—Self-Assessment

Wrap-Up, Questions, and Workshop Evaluation

Welcome, Introductions, and Logistics

15 minutes

Icebreaker

45 minutes

Use the Brainstorm Carousel (below) or pick one of your favorite icebreakers. If possible, use the icebreaker as both an opportunity for participants to get to know one another and to begin the process of thinking about what it means to be environmentally literate, especially for school-aged students.

Activity: Brainstorm Carousel

This activity gets participants talking about environmental literacy. It can be used as an icebreaker activity, needs assessment, or as an engagement activity. In small groups, participants are asked to brainstorm key components of environmental literacy.

Materials

- ✓ Several sheets of chart paper, tape, and a variety of colored markers

Procedure

1. In preparation, position pieces chart paper on the walls around the room with one prompt printed on each. These prompts, the title of the strands or substrands from the *Learner Guidelines*, serve as stations during the activity.
2. Divide the participants into roughly equal teams (approximately three to five participants per group); one team for each station or prompt.
3. Give each team a colored marking pen and assign them to one of the stations. Depending on the size of your group, you will want to adjust the number of stations (a minimum of four stations and a maximum of eight stations). Each station is labeled with one of the strands or one to two of the substrands, depending on the number of stations. For example, if there are 24 participants, you might set up six stations labeled:
 - Questioning, Analysis and Interpretation Skills (1)
 - Earth as a Physical System (2.1) and the Living Environment (2.2)
 - Humans and Their Societies (2.3) and Environment and Society (2.4),
 - Skills for Analyzing and Investigating Environmental Issues (3.1),
 - Decision-Making and Citizenship Skills (3.2), and
 - Personal and Civic Responsibility (4).
4. Tell the participants that their job is to brainstorm, as a small group, the concepts or skills included in the title of their particular piece of chart paper. They should think about what key concepts or skills someone would be developing if they were learning about Earth as a Physical System or Decision-Making and Citizenship Skills.
5. Tell the participants that after about 90 seconds, they will be asked to finish recording their answers and move to the next station.
6. You will want to give the groups a little more time at their first station so that they can become oriented to the task and make introductions.
7. When time is up (or most of the groups are off task) ask the groups to rotate (clockwise) to the next station. At their new station, participants should continue to brainstorm the concepts or skills that could be included under this strand or substrand. There is no need to repeat previously recorded answers. They can simply place a checkmark next to concepts or skills they would also suggest including.
8. Continue the rotations until each group has visited all of the stations. With the final rotation, groups should return to their initial station.
9. Ask the participants to take a minute to look at the responses added to their initial station during the subsequent rounds by the other participants.
10. The whole activity should take no more than 10–15 minutes.

Wrap-Up

1. Tell the participants that they will discuss each of these strands throughout the workshop.
2. Ask the groups to sit back down, but to stay in their groups.

Project Background

15 minutes

Provide a short overview of NAAEE, the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education, and the purpose behind the *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*. What is NAAEE? What is the National Project for Excellence in EE? Why were the *Guidelines for Excellence* series developed? How were they developed? Why was *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)* developed?

Getting Started—Jumping into Environmental Literacy

110 minutes

Activity: A Walk through the Guidelines

In this activity, take a few minutes to orient participants to the *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*.

Materials

- ✓ Copies of for each participant *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*
- ✓ Copies of for each participant *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12) Executive Summary and Self-Assessment Tool*

Procedure

1. Hand out a copy of *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)* and *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12) Executive Summary and Self-Assessment Tool*. If possible, have a copy available for each participant. If that isn't possible, participants can share or use a downloaded version on their computers.
2. Walk the participants through the guidelines and how they are organized. Give participants 1–2 minutes to become familiar with the publication.
3. Point out that the guidelines have four strands. Some strands are further subdivided into substrands and each strand is described by a set of guidelines or learning expectations. Explain that today they will spend time exploring each strand.
4. Be sure to mention that the guidelines are environmental education's national student standards. They were modeled after other national standards and try to describe what a student should know and be able to do if they are on the road to environmental literacy.

Activity: Digging into Environmental Literacy

In this activity, participants will dig deeper into the component parts of the learner guidelines and teach the other participants about their assigned strand or substrands.

Materials

- ✓ Chart paper and a variety of colored markers

Procedure

1. Tell the participants that they will be responsible for learning more about one of the strands or substrand, and for teaching the whole group about that strand or substrand.
2. Make sure each group is clear about which strand or substrand is assigned to them.
3. Give teams about 15–20 minutes to investigate their strand or substrand and plan a short (two minute) presentation (elevator speech). They should include some explanation of the strand or substrand and why it is important to environmental literacy.
4. Ask each group to present their assigned strand or substrand in numerical order (e.g., strand 1, substrand 2.1, substrand 2.2). Stress key points on each or clarify information after each group has finished.
5. Create new groups, making sure that there is at least one member of each strand or substrand group in each of the new groups.
6. Ask the new groups to create a way of communicating the strands (the entire framework) to others. Encourage their creativity. Give groups 30 minutes to prepare their presentations. Presentations should be limited to four to five minutes each.

Reflective—Journaling

Using their journals, participants should reflect on this environmental literacy framework: How might you use the environmental literacy framework in your practice? What excites you most about environmental literacy? What do you feel is missing or underrepresented in the environmental literacy framework?

Exploring Environmental Literacy and Instructional Materials **45 minutes**

Activity: Connecting the Guidelines to Curriculum Materials

Now that participants have a greater understanding of the environmental literacy framework outlined in the guidelines and how it progressing from fourth grade to eighth grade to twelfth grade, this activity asks them to see what the *Guidelines for Learning* look like in curriculum materials.

Materials

- ✓ Handout #1: Connecting Guidelines to Curriculum Materials
- ✓ One environmental education activity guide (e.g., Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, Project Wet) for each small group. Note that you can use a variety of different activity guides for comparison, or you can assign each group the same guide.

Procedure

1. Ask the participants to think about the activity guides that they typically use or suggest that others use. Do they use just one guide to build their programs and curriculum or do they select from a variety of sources? When they select activities

and activity guides, what are they looking for? You'll want to find out to what extent they think about specific learning objectives, goals, and overall fit with environmental literacy.

2. Tell participants that they will be looking at curriculum guides with an eye toward building environmental literacy.
3. Ask participants to work in pairs (two participants per group).
4. Distribute an activity guide for review and a copy of Handout #1: Correlating Guidelines to Curriculum Materials to each group. If all of the participants are reviewing the same activity guide or multiple groups are reviewing the same activity guide, you may want to ask some groups to start their review at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the guide. This will ensure that a wide variety of activities are reviewed.
5. Review Handout #1: Correlating Guidelines to Curriculum Materials with the group. To use the grid, participants write the title of an activity contained in the curriculum in the far left hand column and state which guidelines are addressed well, addressed minimally, or whether it depends on how you interpret the guideline and the activity.
6. Ask groups to take the next 30–40 minutes to review their assigned activity guide, looking for specific ways that lessons support the development of environmental literacy.

Wrap-Up

1. Ask each group to share some of their findings.
2. As different groups share what they found, ask them to reflect on which components of environmental literacy are most often represented in the activities they reviewed. What seems to be missing?

Reflective—Journaling

Using their journals, participants should reflect on this environmental literacy framework: How might you use the environmental literacy framework when you select instructional materials? How might you use the environmental literacy framework when you create instructional materials? Are there components of the environmental literacy framework that you typically wouldn't include in your instruction? Why?

Finding Environmental Literacy in the Standards

60 minutes

Activity: Linking the Guidelines to Curriculum Standards

In this activity, participants will analyze the relationship between the guidelines and various state or national student standards.

Materials

- ✓ Copy of Handout #2: Linking Environmental Education and Curriculum Standards for each group.

- ✓ Copies of state science, English-language arts, social studies, and mathematics standards or national standards, if that is more appropriate. You will need enough copies so that two participants can share. You may want to ask participants to bring their own copies or, if you have Internet access and computers available, use the online versions.

Procedure

1. Tell the participants that we will be turning our attention to how environmental education connects to a standards-based curriculum.
2. Lead a short discussion about state or national standards. Ask the participants about how they use standards in the development of their programs and materials. Ask them if there are specific subjects that environmental education seems to support best. Now, ask them if there are specific subjects that seem to support environmental education best.
3. Form four to eight small groups (two to four participants per group). Assign each group a set of standards (e.g., science, social studies, math, English-language arts) and a specific grade level or grade level grouping. For example, the first four groups would all examine middle school. The second four groups would examine high school level standards.
4. Distribute Handout #2: Linking Environmental Education and Curriculum Standards and explain their task.
5. Explain how the handout is organized. Tell them that they will be trying to find places where the guidelines are similar to the standards and visa versa.
6. After the groups have completed their task, create a matrix on a white board or a couple of pieces of newsprint:

	Science	Math	English	Social Studies
Strand 1				
Strand 2.1				
Strand 2.2				
Strand 2.3				
Strand 2.4				
Strand 3.1				
Strand 3.2				
Strand 4				

7. Ask each group to tally (on the matrix) the number of linkages they found for each strand or substrand for each grade level. You can use hash marks or colored dots. If colored “dots” are available, give each group a different color and ask them to put the number of dots in the appropriate boxes on the chart. If dots are not available, use hash marks or some other mark so that the relative number of instances is obvious to the group. Use different colors for different grade levels.

8. After the table is completed, lead a discussion about any patterns that they see. Ask them:
 - How can environmental literacy instruction best support the implementation of a standards-based curriculum? What is missing? Where are the gaps?
 - How can the implementation of a standards-based curriculum support the development of environmental literacy? What is missing? Where are the gaps?
 - What does this tell you about the implementation of environmental education?

Reflective—Journaling

Using their journals, participants should reflect on the relationship between curriculum standards and this environmental literacy framework: How might you use the environmental literacy framework when you are developing standards-based instruction? Given your understanding of curriculum standards, are there components of the environmental literacy framework that really don't fit? If so, how might you address them?

Pulling It All Together

20 minutes

Activity: Self-Assessment for Environmental Educators

As a culminating exercise, ask participants to reflect further on the environmental literacy framework and their own capacities as an environmental educator.

Materials

- ✓ Handout #3: Self-Assessment: *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*

Procedure

1. Now that the participants have explored the environmental literacy framework throughout the workshop, they will have the opportunity to self-assess their own environmental literacy, using the 12th grade benchmarks.
2. Distribute copies of Handout #3: Self-Assessment: *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)*. Give participants about 20 minutes to complete the self-assessment.
3. When most of the participants have completed the self-assessment, discuss their reactions. In particular, you may want to focus on any insights into the creation of a professional development improvement plan.

As an alternative culminating exercise, ask the participants to conduct a program assessment.

Activity: Self-Assessment of Programs

In this activity, participants complete one of the Self-Assessment tools found in the back of *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K–12) Executive Summary and Self-Assessment Tool*.

Materials

- ✓ Copies of *Excellence in Environmental Education—Guidelines for Learning (K–12) Executive Summary and Self-Assessment Tool*

Procedure

1. Now that the participants have explored the environmental literacy framework throughout the workshop, they will have the opportunity to self-assess their own environmental education programs.
2. Distribute copies of *Excellence in Environmental Education—Guidelines for Learning (K–12) Executive Summary and Self-Assessment Tool*. Point out that starting on page 20 the self-assessment tool is divided into grades K–4, 5–8, and 9–12. The self-assessment tool is designed to help educators determine whether they are providing learners with the entire array of K–12 learning experiences that will enable them to become environmentally literate.
3. Ask the participants to select the most appropriate grade level band given their environmental education setting and complete the self-assessment tool.
4. Point out that—no matter which grade level band they analyzed—they should complete Pulling It All Together (page 32).
5. Discuss their reactions. In particular, you may want to focus on any insights into possible program revisions.

Wrap-Up, Questions, and Workshop Evaluation

20 minutes

Materials

- ✓ Handout #4: Workshop Evaluation

Handout #2

Linking Environmental Education and Curriculum Standards

EE Learner Guidelines	Grade level:
Strand 1: Questioning, Analysis, and Interpretation Skills	
Strand 2: Environmental Process and Systems	
2.1: Earth as a Physical System	
2.2: Living Environment	
2.3: Humans and Their Societies	
2.4: Environment and Society	
Strand 3: Skills for Understanding Environmental Issues	
3.1: Skills for Analyzing and Investigating	
3.2: Decision-Making and Citizenship Skills	
Strand 4: Personal and Civic Responsibility	

Handout #3

Self-Assessment *Excellence in Environmental Education—Guidelines for Learning*

Using the 12th grade benchmarks of *Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)* to reflect on your own environmental literacy.

Key: L = Lacking / B = Basic / P = Proficient / D = Distinguished

Strand 1—Questioning, Analysis, and Interpretation Skills	L	B	P	D
A. Develop, modify, clarify, and explain questions that guide environmental investigations of various types, and identify factors that influence the questions they pose.				
B. Design investigations to answer particular questions about the environment—even developing approaches for investigating unfamiliar types of problems and phenomena.				
C. Locate and collect reliable information for environmental investigations of many types. Know how to use sophisticated technology to collect information, including computer programs designed to address, gather, store, and display data.				
D. Apply basic logic and reasoning skills to evaluate completeness and reliability in a variety of information sources.				
E. Organize and display information in ways appropriate to different types of environmental investigations and purposes.				
F. Create, use, and evaluate models to understand environmental phenomena.				
G. Use evidence and logic in developing proposed explanations that address your initial questions and hypotheses.				
Strand 2—Knowledge of Environmental Processes and Systems				
2.1—The Earth as a Physical System	L	B	P	D
A. Understand the major physical processes that shape the Earth; relate these processes, especially large-scale and long-term ones, to characteristics of the Earth’s surface.				
B. Apply your understanding of chemical reactions to round out your explanations of environmental characteristics and everyday phenomena.				
C. Apply your knowledge of energy and matter to understand phenomena in the world around you.				

2.2—The Living Environment	L	B	P	D
A. Understand basic population dynamics and the importance of diversity in living systems.				
B. Understand the basic ideas and genetic mechanisms behind biological evolution.				
C. Understand the living environment to be comprised of interrelated, dynamic systems.				
D. Account for environmental characteristics based on your knowledge of how matter and energy interact in living systems.				
2.3—Humans and Their Societies				
A. Understand the influence of individual and group actions on the environment and comprehend how groups can work to promote and balance interests.				
B. Understand cultural perspectives and dynamics and apply your understandings to particular contexts.				
C. Understand how different political and economic systems account for, manage, and affect natural resources and environmental quality.				
D. Analyze global social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental linkages.				
E. Understand the functioning of public processes for promoting and managing change and conflict, and analyze their effects on the environment.				
2.4—Environment and Society				
A. Understand that humans are able to alter the physical environment to meet their needs and that there are limits to the ability of the environment to absorb impacts or meet human needs.				
B. Understand “place” as humans endowing a particular part of the Earth with meaning through their interactions with that environment.				
C. Understand that the importance and use of resources change over time and vary under different economic and technological systems.				
D. Examine the social and environmental impacts of various technologies and technological systems.				

E. Converse, write about, and evaluate environmental issues at scales that range from local to national to global; understand that these scales and issues are often linked.				
Strand 3—Analyzing, Investigating, and Addressing Environmental Issues				
3.1—Skills for Analyzing and Investigating Environmental Issues	L	B	P	D
A. Apply your research and analytical skills to investigate environmental issues ranging from local issues to those that are regional or global in scope.				
B. Evaluate the consequences of specific environmental changes, conditions, and issues for human and ecological systems.				
C. Identify and propose action strategies that are likely to be effective in particular situations and for particular purposes.				
D. Engage with others in peer review conducted in the spirit of open inquiry, knowing that environmental issues investigations can bring to the surface deeply held views.				
3.2—Decision-Making and Citizenship Skills	L	B	P	D
A. Communicate, evaluate, and justify your own views on environmental issues and alternative ways to address them.				
B. Decide whether action is needed in particular situations, and whether you should be involved.				
C. Plan for action based on your research and analysis of an environmental issue. If appropriate, take actions that are within the scope of your rights and consistent with your abilities and responsibilities as citizens.				
D. Evaluate the effects of your own actions and actions taken by other individuals and groups.				
Strand 4—Personal and Civic Responsibility	L	B	P	D
A. Analyze the influence of shared and conflicting societal values.				
B. Understand the importance of exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.				
C. Possess a realistic self-confidence in your effectiveness as citizens.				
D. Understand that your actions can have broad consequences and accept responsibility for recognizing those effects and changing your actions when necessary.				

Self-Assessment Part II

Now that you have completed the first checklist, what do you know? Take a few minutes to tally the results of your self-assessment in the table provided below. This should provide you with an overview of the results of your self-assessment.

Self-Assessment Summary —Starting with Strand 1 on the first checklist, add up the total number of check marks for each of the four columns: Lacking, Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished. Enter the total number in the appropriate column of this chart.				
Key: L = Lacking / B = Basic / P = Proficient / D = Distinguished				
	L	B	P	D
Strand 1—Questioning and Analysis Skills (seven guidelines)				
Strand 2—Knowledge of Environmental Processes and Systems				
2.1—The Earth as a Physical System (three guidelines)				
2.2—The Living Environment (four guidelines)				
2.3—Humans and Their Societies (five guidelines)				
2.4—Environment and Society (five guidelines)				
Strand 3—Analyzing, Investigating, and Addressing Environmental Issues				
3.1—Skills for Analyzing and Investigating Environmental Issues (four guidelines)				
3.2—Decision-Making and Citizenship Skills (four guidelines)				
Strand 4—Personal and Civic Responsibility (four guidelines)				

Self-Assessment Part III

Self-Assessment—Part III

Now that you have summarized your self-assessment, what can you say about the strengths and weaknesses of your own environmental literacy? Begin to outline a professional development plan.

Areas of Strength	Areas that Need to be Enhanced or Strengthened	Specific Actions to Address Self-Assessment

Handout #4
Workshop Evaluation

*Thank you for your interest in the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education!
Your responses will be used to improve this and other programs supported by NAAEE.*

What grade do you give this workshop?

A B C D F

Why did you give it that grade?

How strongly do you disagree or agree with the following? *Circle one for each.*

	Strongly Disagree		Unsure			Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
I will recommend this workshop to colleagues or other professionals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
This workshop was much better than other workshops I have participated in.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
Within the next year, I intend to								
... improve my EE efforts by using the <i>Guidelines</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA
... share what I learned with colleagues and other professionals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NA

How will you change your teaching or programs based on what you learned from this workshop? If you are not planning to make any changes, why not?

How can this workshop be improved to better meet your EE, professional, or other needs?

What is your current profession? *Check all that apply.*

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-K-12 teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> College or university Instructor | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation or natural resource professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preservice teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource developer | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nonformal educator | <input type="checkbox"/> Program director | |

Who do or will you teach? *Check all that apply.*

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool | <input type="checkbox"/> 9-12 | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonformal educators | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation or natural resource professionals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K-2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> College or university Instructors | <input type="checkbox"/> Families |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Preservice teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> Program directors | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other college or university students | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource developers | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |

Number of years you have been an environmental educator: About _____ years

Number of students or participants you typically teach or reach per year: About _____ NA

The students or participants you primarily work with come from: *Check one.*

- Urban Suburban Rural Tribal Mix of areas

THANK YOU!