



YEAR 3 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

THIRD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – STEVENS POINT



Introduction

The Third Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP3) is a consortium of nine organizations¹ that deliver environmental education (EE) training to teachers and other education professionals. EE prepares citizens to make informed, intelligent decisions that protect human health and environmental quality. Through workshops, courses, and other carefully tailored strategies, EETAP3 is building a cadre of educators who are knowledgeable about the environment and have the skills needed to help children and adults understand complex environmental issues. It is helping education professionals work effectively with diverse audiences and make their organizations and programs more inclusive. EETAP3 is ensuring that environmental education programs and resources are of high quality and present multiple perspectives in an unbiased manner. This is the third year of a projected five-year program that has already benefitted more than 1 million education professionals and 3 million individuals across the country.

EETAP3's Year 3 work plan detailed 11 activities designed to achieve a more environmentally literate public over the five-year period of the project. In all, 403,546

educators and an estimated 1,210,638 individuals have expanded their knowledge and skills through EETAP3 Year 3 activities. These figures reflect attendance at EETAP3-supported workshops and user visits to EE-Link, along with the learners reached by these educators.

U.S. EPA's Division of Environmental Education and consortium partners fund the project; the budget for Year 3 was \$1.9 million. Of this amount, the Federal share was \$1.1 million while partners contributed \$0.8 million. Over the life of the project, Federal funds have totaled \$3.4 million and partners have contributed \$1.8 million to the project. The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point serves as the managing partner.

Why Program is Unique

This summary covers the third year (October 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008) of a projected five-year program. However, much of EETAP3's work builds on the efforts of EETAPs 1 and 2 (1995-2005) and the first two years of EETAP 3. This continuity has enabled meaningful progress on several strategic initiatives that require years to fully develop.

One such example is the national *Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education*, which has been called the single most important event in the field of EE in the last decade. These voluntary standards describe quality EE resources and programs, identify what learners should know and be able to do as the result of K-12 EE programs, and articulate the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective environmental educator. The

¹ EETAP partners include the American Forest Foundation/Project Learning Tree, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Council for Environmental Education, National Audubon Society, North American Association for Environmental Education, Project WET, University of Oregon, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (National Conservation Training Center).

Guidelines were drafted, reviewed, and approved during EETAP 1, and dissemination and training programs were established. During EETAP2, the *Guidelines* formed the basis of programs to certify professional environmental educators, develop online EE courses, and review EE resources for quality. Efforts to distribute the *Guidelines* more widely and to train additional educators and leaders to use the *Guidelines* were expanded during this time.

EETAP3 continues to build on these efforts. In Year 2, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) approved NAAEE's Standards for the Initial Preparation of Environmental Educators, the culmination of a six-year effort. Teacher education programs across the country will now have to meet EE standards in order to attain or retain NCATE accreditation. This notable accomplishment catalyzes further development of EE programs for thousands of pre-service teachers. In Year 3 NAAEE continued to put in place processes and training programs to help universities and colleges meet NAAEE's Standards for the Initial Preparation of Environmental Educators. EETAP3 is also bringing professional certification to more states and is in the final stages of creating a national program to accredit state certification programs. An active Trainer's Bureau continues to promote acceptance and use of the *Guidelines*. Taken together, these long-term efforts are ensuring that educators have the resources, knowledge, and skills needed to deliver quality instruction about the environment.

Highlights of Major Accomplishments

EETAP3 divides its activities into three areas: Professional Development, Advancing Environmental Education, and Reaching Diverse Audiences. Highlighted in this summary report are major accomplishments in each of these areas.

Professional Development

Helping education professionals develop their abilities to teach fairly and effectively about complex environmental issues is a priority for EETAP3. Consortium partners delivered professional development through in person and online workshops and courses to more than 1,433 education professionals and EE leaders working in schools and other settings.

Online Instruction

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UW-SP) added a fourth course to its highly popular online EE instruction program. Making Environmental Education Relevant for Culturally Diverse Audiences (MEER) is under development and will be offered for the first time during the fall 2008 semester. MEER will join 3 existing online courses that were developed with EETAP3 support (Fundamentals of Environmental Education, Applied Environmental Education Program Evaluation, and Leadership Development in Natural Resources, Strategic Planning and Implementation). The Fundamentals of Environmental Education was also offered at three other colleges. In Year 3 these online courses helped 261 educators and natural resource professionals incorporate EE into their work, thus advancing student academic achievement and increasing environmental literacy. The demand for these courses remains high and participant evaluations of the courses were positive.

Guidelines Training

Members of the Guidelines Trainers Bureau conducted 28 presentations and workshops in 17 different states. Focusing on the *Guidelines for Excellence*, these trainings for formal and non-formal educators ensure that EE organizations and professionals are prepared to apply the *Guidelines for Excellence* to achieve quality practice in their work. Workshop evaluations consistently indicate that

participants plan to use the Guidelines to improve their environmental education efforts and that they plan to share what they learned with colleagues and other professionals.



Writing team members working on Early Childhood EE Guidelines, Wichita, KS

EE Training Networks

EETAP3 partners American Forest Foundation (Project Learning Tree), Project WET, the Council for Environmental Education (Project WILD and Flying WILD), and National Audubon Society continued to offer professional development. These trainings have prepared 177 educators to increase their abilities to incorporate environmental topics into their instruction. Activities also included leadership training for 240 EE professionals at conferences in spring 2008. As part of their leadership development efforts, PLT and CEE assisted five new states in developing action plans for increasing state infrastructure and building their capacity to deliver high quality EE programs.

Advancing Environmental Education

EETAP3 is helping to ensure EE resources and programs are of high quality, support student academic achievement, and increase environmental literacy. The consortium is also

increasing educators' access to information about EE and related areas. More than 1,670 education professionals enhanced their skills as environmental educators through in person training and 403,546 individuals accessed information online using the Internet (eelink.net).

Building State Capacity for EE

NAAEE and four of its Affiliates (Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, and EECOM in Canada) are ensuring that current and emerging leaders are well versed in the components of high quality EE. Expanding training programs initiated in Years 1 and 2, these Affiliates conducted 10 training sessions for 422 educators who reached 37,000 children and adults. NAAEE and the Affiliate Network also planned a workshop for the 2008 NAAEE conference so that Affiliates can share their experiences in building their capacity to deliver a broad array of high quality EE programs that meet the needs of their states. The workshop will be conducted in October 2008.

Online Review of Resources

Using the *Guidelines for Excellence*, EETAP3 is supporting an online review program for EE curriculum materials and resources. The program both conducts reviews and provides access to reviewed materials through an online resource database shared with states. NAAEE tested three strategies for increasing the number of resources submitted to EE Resource Reviews. These included soliciting submissions through the original review process, providing grants to three states to solicit and review resources at the state level, and conducting an ambitious three-month program with a streamlined submission process. In total, 88 resources were submitted for review. A final report analyzing the three tracks and determining which to pursue in the future is due in late 2008.

Pre-service Education

To ensure that pre-service teachers are highly qualified to teach about the environment and environmental issues, NAAEE worked with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to develop standards that will influence the preparation of every future teacher attending nearly 700 NCATE-accredited colleges and universities.

These standards were approved in Year 2. In Year 3, NAAEE began recruiting members to fill expiring terms on the Board of Examiners, which visits institutions seeking accreditation and reviews program reports that universities will begin submitting in 2009. About 750 institutions, including 123 historically Black and Hispanic institutions, were added to NAAEE's online higher education directory in Year 3. In addition, NAAEE awarded two fellowships for its new mentoring program, helping faculty members develop quality pre-service EE programs.



Debriefing activity demonstration, 2008 Project WILD International Coordinators Conference, Estes Park, CO

EE Certification

By supporting establishment of certification programs at the state level, EETAP3 is increasing the number of highly qualified environmental educators. Again based on the *Guidelines for Excellence*, certification creates accountability for the knowledge and skills expected of individual environmental

educators. A draft manual for states seeking to have their certification program accredited by NAAEE was circulated for comments; a revised version will be sent to the Certification Advisory Council in August 2008. The NAAEE Accreditation Review Board will review applications from states for their certification programs and ensure quality and reciprocity among states. In addition, nine Affiliates received awards to expand or start new EE certification programs.

Technology Tools for EE

EETAP3 supports EE-Link (an Internet portal for EE information), EE-News (an online newsletter sent to more than 6,800 education professionals twice a month), and a technology program for NAAEE Affiliates and other organizations building electronic networks. The EE-Link Web site provides EE information and resources including lesson plans for teachers, publications, programs, organizations, and more. EE-Link is arguably the primary channel for reaching individuals new to EE. During Year 3, some monthly averages exceeded 10,000 visits per day. An online survey was revised to provide better formative data and improved information regarding how EE-Link serves its diverse audiences. In addition, substantial progress was made in developing a new, structurally sustainable strategy that enables more Affiliates to participate in NAAEE's technology program.

Reaching Diverse Audiences

Another EETAP3 priority is helping education professionals develop the knowledge and skills needed to work more effectively with audiences traditionally underserved by EE. These audiences are wide-ranging, including African and Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and conservation managers.

Delivering Culturally Relevant Environmental Education

As part of a pilot initiative started in Year 2, UW-SP, Intercambios (a binational, bicultural consulting group), and three EE organizations continued developing strategies to help the three organizations become more inclusive. The group developed an evaluation plan and collected data about program progress, to be included in a Year 4 report that will capture the concerns and problem-solving processes used and identifies best practices for the field of EE. In addition, a meta-analysis of three years of one-day EE and Diversity Workshops was conducted and a journal article on challenges associated with implementing inclusive practices through a one-day workshop was drafted for future publication. NAAEE posted three new installments on EE and diversity on its Web site; visitation rates to these pages increased by 180 percent over Year 2. Average visits per month rose from 1,333 in Year 2 to 2,394 in Year 3.

EE Training for Tribal Communities



Conducting an EE workshop for Ramona Tribal Educators in Anza, CA (Photo courtesy of Native American Environmental Protection Coalition)

Support for working in culturally diverse tribal communities across the United States continued during Year 3. Six workshops were conducted with various tribes in Arizona, California, Connecticut, Nebraska, and New

Mexico, and contacts were initiated in Delaware, Iowa, and Minnesota.

A revised survey instrument enabled the consortium to gather information from 68 workshop participants; this informed the approach for making contact with tribes and state coordinators.

Conservation Education Toolkit

EETAP3 is also helping to increase the ability of conservation managers to use high-quality EE as part of an effective strategy to reach their conservation goals. The National Audubon Society (NAS) developed a draft Conservation Education Toolkit to provide resources, training tools, and research to help conservation managers better understand how to use education as a conservation tool. NAS initiated a pilot effort by linking the conservation education planning tool—a cornerstone of the Toolkit—to its own broader conservation planning tools. NAS is further testing the tool in its Mississippi River Initiative regional conservation planning efforts. Initial responses at the testing stage indicate that the Toolkit will play an important role in helping to integrate education into on-the-ground conservation efforts.

CONCLUSION

EETAP's work as highlighted in this report is helping to develop an environmentally literate public whose behaviors foster improved environmental quality and a healthy environment. Over the life of the project, this work has ensured that more than 1 million formal and non-formal educators and conservation professionals have the skills and knowledge to deliver EE that is fair, balanced, and scientifically accurate and that is relevant to culturally diverse audiences. This work is continuing in Year 4. For more information about EETAP visit www.eetap.org.