

Theme #6—Assessment and Evaluation

Environmental educators possess the knowledge, abilities, and commitment to make assessment and evaluation integral to instruction and programs. Professional preparation should provide educators with tools for assessing learner progress and evaluating the effectiveness of their own programs.

6.1 Learner outcomes

Educators understand the importance of tying assessment to learning.

- State expected learner outcomes that are tied to the goals and objectives of environmental education.
- Identify national, state, and local standards that apply to stated learner outcomes and link assessment of environmental education learnings to these.
- Develop and use a variety of strategies for assessing learning outcomes that reflect both subject area standards and environmental education goals and objectives.
- Describe and use means for engaging learners in setting their own expectations for achievement. Discuss the importance of these abilities in light of environmental education's emphasis on learner-centered education and lifelong learning.

6.2 Assessment that is part of instruction

Educators are familiar with ways of incorporating assessment into environmental education.

- Make objectives and other expectations clear to learners at the outset of an environmental education activity or instruction.
- Provide examples of and implement specific performance-based assessments such as portfolios, open-ended questions, oral reports, group or independent research, or other projects appropriate to environmental education instruction.
- Identify and use techniques that assess learners' baseline understandings and skills at the beginning of environmental education programs, lessons, units, and other segments of instruction such as school terms.
- Develop formative and summative assessment tools appropriate to specific environmental education instructional segments or projects.

- Discuss the importance of and identify techniques for encouraging learners to assess their own and others' work. Use these assessments to improve their learning experiences.

6.3 Improving instruction

Educators know how to use their instructional experiences and assessments to improve future instruction.

- Organize, interpret, and use the results of differing kinds of assessment to help modify and improve future instruction.
- Demonstrate a willingness and ability to collect additional information from and about learners to help modify and improve future instruction.
- Seek out opportunities to reflect, individually and with colleagues, on their own instructional practices and the broader practice of environmental education within the field.

6.4 Evaluating Programs

Educators understand the importance of evaluating environmental education programs and are familiar with basic evaluation approaches.

- Discuss how program evaluation, including needs assessment, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation, contributes to program design and implementation.
- Differentiate among program outputs, outcomes, and impacts and explain how they relate to program goals and objectives.
- Describe reasons for evaluating environmental education programs.
- List a variety of data collection methods used in environmental education program evaluation.
- Develop a plan for integrating evaluation into the overall program design process using criteria such as those suggested in *Nonformal Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence*.

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