



ARIZONA ASSOCIATION FOR **ENVIRONMENTAL** EDUCATION
Promoting Environmental Literacy in Arizona

JOIN US!
**ARIZONA'S ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY
WORKING GROUP**

WHO WE ARE

Led by the Arizona Association for Environmental Education, the Arizona Environmental Literacy Plan Working Group represents a diverse group of stakeholders interested in formalizing environmental education in Arizona. We are looking to expand our stakeholders to reach all corners and sectors of the state.

OUR MISSION

To develop a framework for environmental literacy that supports a vibrant and sustainable future for Arizona through well-informed, engaged citizens.

WHY DO WE NEED A FRAMEWORK?

A framework will support the development of environmentally literate students that are able to both individually and together with others, make informed decisions concerning the environment and are willing to act on these decisions to improve the wellbeing of other individuals and their local communities, as well as participate in civic life. Environmental education (EE) offered in formal, nonformal and informal learning environments contributes to the development of environmental literacy. EE teaches children and adults how to learn about and investigate their environment and emphasizes direct interactions with nature and outdoor learning environments. A framework will foster a holistic approach to providing EE for children in all aspects of their lives from activities in the classroom, learning opportunities with nonformal institutions, greater access to the outdoors and activities to create ongoing learning at home, and will support sustainability initiatives in schools to improve overall learning conditions. Students that have access to EE in all of these ways have seen many benefits.

From an academic perspective, students that participate in EE have improved performance in reading, math, science, and social studies. They also have a decrease in classroom discipline problems. Students are able to transfer knowledge to unfamiliar contexts and are able to “do science” rather than just learn about it (NEETF, 2005).

By the time a student graduates high school, they will have spent almost 20,000 hours of their life in a school, and the environmental sustainability features of these schools is as important as

the curriculum being taught in the classrooms. Sustainable schools have been found to: enhance student learning, increase educational enrichment, increase student performance, use about 30% less energy and water, increase state competitiveness, and reduce social inequity (Frisk and Larson, 2011; Kats, 2006; Turner Construction, 2005; UNESCO, 1997; Wiek, Withycombe, and Redman, 2011).

Arizonans rate the state's natural beauty and outdoor parks and trails as some of its greatest assets (Gallup Arizona Poll, 2009). However, the EPA has found that Americans spend 90% of their lives indoors (cfpub.epa.gov). A 2011 survey spearheaded by The Nature Conservancy found that only about 10% of kids between the ages of 13-18 spend time every day outdoors. This limited time outdoors is leading to the emerging Nature Deficit Disorder . This disorder has been linked to “epidemic rises in childhood obesity, increasing social and cognitive delays as our children enter the school systems and rises in diagnoses of Attention Deficit/Hyper-Active Disorder” (Louv, 2005).

Environmentally literate students have 21st century skills and are prepared for emerging careers that create a vibrant economy for Arizona. By 2018, employment in STEM jobs will increase twice as much as all other jobs, and environmental jobs will increase by 25% by 2016 and 15% by 2022 (NEEF, 2015; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Sustainability is also becoming an important feature of many businesses. In a recent study, nearly 75% of businesses had a strong interest in educating their employees about their corporate sustainability goals (GreenBiz Group Employee Engagement survey, 2014).

HOW DO WE DEVELOP A FRAMEWORK?

The framework will be developed through the work of a multifaceted group of stakeholders who will discuss success stories, common directions and common challenges to understand how all sectors can work together to support better access to EE for all of Arizona's students. The framework will emphasize a multidisciplinary approach to creating well-informed, engaged citizens by focusing on environmental education, STEM, and real-world application of learning. The framework will also emphasize a seamless integration with existing classroom curriculum, linking to appropriate state standards. Ultimately, the framework will be used as a guide for schools, districts and nonformal institutions interested in emphasizing environmental education in their teaching, as well as for businesses, legislators and community members to support their efforts.

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE EFFORT?

Join us at our upcoming AZ Environmental Literacy Summit in spring, 2016. To receive more details about the summit or to join the Working Group's current efforts to expand our stakeholder group, contact us at info@arizonaee.org. To learn more about Arizona Association for Environmental Education visit arizonaee.org.



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