

NO SUBJECT LEFT BEHIND:

A Guide to Environmental Education Opportunities in the 2001 Education Act

Introduction

Passage in late 2001 of a new framework for the federal role in public education has both opened opportunities and raised questions related to environmental education. This publication provides an overview to programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. These laws are the basis for most federal funding for the nation's schools. This guide is a layered document with information at a glance, as well as links to more detailed information and resources.

This guide is not a government document, although it is modeled on the U.S. Department of Education's 1997 guide to resources for state and local arts education leaders and was compiled by arts and environmental education groups working together. It is intended to be a living document with periodic updates and revisions inserted where appropriate. **We hope this guide will help local and state leaders and practitioners learn about opportunities for securing funding to improve environmental education (EE) and overall student performance.**

Major Areas of Reform

Readers will find important information about two major areas of reform resulting from the new law: the new accountability plans that each state must develop, and the law's requirement for programs to be based on research.

Programs of the U.S. Department of Education

The No Child Left Behind Act gives greater authority to states to run their own programs with funding provided by the Department of Education, which in the past ran many of these programs itself. For practitioners, the practical effect is that they will apply for funding from and will be accountable to their own state education departments. We would also like to note that most federal education programs focus on low-income or low-achieving schools. As of March 2002 we have looked at four programs that seem to show special promise for EE; as we analyze additional programs we will add them to this document.

Readers will find one-page descriptions of several Department of Education programs that have funded EE projects or, in the case of new programs, that show promise of doing so in the future. Each program description includes information on:

- Program name
- Contact information and website link
- Citation and link to the No Child Left Behind Act
- Who may apply or otherwise participate
- Amount of fiscal year 2002 funding

A box at the bottom of each program page provides anecdotal information on how EE has been or may be involved in the program.

Further Analysis of the No Child Left Behind Act

The No Child Left Behind Act is over 1,000 pages long. As this guide is not a complete analysis of the bill, please consider reviewing two comprehensive but brief summaries of the law itself:

[U.S. Department of Education's Preliminary Overview of Programs and Changes](#)

[Learning First Alliance's Major Changes to ESEA in the No Child Left Behind Act](#)

This document is the result of a collaborative effort on the part of the following organizations:

[American Arts Alliance](#)

[American Association of Museums](#)

[American Symphony Orchestra League](#)

[Americans for the Arts](#)

[Arts Education Partnership](#)

[Association of Art Museum Directors](#)

[Association of Performing Arts Presenters](#)

[Dance/USA](#)

[MENC: The National Association for Music Education](#)

[National Assembly of State Arts Agencies](#)

[National Environmental Education & Training Foundation](#), on behalf of the
National Education and Environment Partnership

[OPERA America](#)

[Theatre Communications Group](#)

There are two different versions of this document, because while EE and arts education share many characteristics, and in most cases the language in the new law would have exactly the same effect on one field as on the other, there is one critical difference in the law's treatment of EE and arts education. The list of "core academic subjects" includes the arts but not environmental education. On the other hand, science is included in the high-priority subjects for which the law imposes stringent requirements on the states, especially with respect to standards, assessments, and state accountability plans. However these differences play out on the ground, we thought it best to prepare different versions of the section on state plans for EE and arts. We have also included different anecdotes on the individual program pages.

Part I. Reform issues.

State Plans: A Golden Opportunity

Section 1111 of the No Child Left Behind Act requires states to develop plans to improve student achievement. The states must consult with local education agencies, teachers, administrators, parents, and other staff. Some states may have broader consultation. Clearly, this presents a golden opportunity for EE to get in at the ground floor of the new phase of education reform. Note: Section 1112 requires local plans as well.

What the State Plans Require: The plans must require “challenging academic standards” for content and achievement in at least math, reading, and science (though science is not required until in the 2006-07 school year), as well as other subjects that states may determine. States may use other indicators as well to assess progress. They will have to provide information to the U.S. Department of Education on their science, reading, and math results, but they may provide other information as well. Plans must include “sanctions and rewards” to ensure that schools make “adequate yearly progress” which is based at a minimum on math, reading, and science. Failure to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act may entail loss of funds for administering federal programs.

No Child Left Behind requires a planning process that will take at least a year and a half, with preliminary plans required first followed by fully developed plans. Clearly, implementation and fine-tuning will continue beyond that time period.

What to Recommend to State Planners: From the standpoint of EE, there are many opportunities presented by the plans. At a minimum, EE supporters can urge states

- to include environmental material in both the content standards and assessments in math, reading, and science, as well as to assess EE separately.
- to adopt EE standards if they have not already done so. To access the national standards, go to www.naee.org/npeee/learner_guidelines.html
- to correlate EE standards to the standards in other subjects. For some examples of state correlations, go to www.pde.psu.edu/environment/index.html (Pennsylvania) or www.k12.wa.us/envedu/guidelines.pdf (Washington) or www.isbe.net/ilgreendoor (Illinois). There are also examples of correlations to specific curricula, such as www.plt.org/html/curriculum/correlations.htm (Project Learning Tree). www.creec.org (California) has correlated PLT and other curricula to its standards.
- to use open response questions in their assessments of student progress. This type of assessment requires the ability to solve problems and think critically, abilities that EE fosters.
- to recognize environment-based education as a strategy for whole school improvement.
- To develop and disseminate best practices for partnerships between schools and community-based organizations. A fairly recent publication exploring

characteristics of successful partnerships can be found at www.aep-arts.org/Publications&Resources.html. Although it was written for the arts community, it applies quite well to EE.

- To perform an audit of the state of environmental education. For a sample list of indicators, go to <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/neeap/statusofee/survey98.htm> (National Environmental Education Advancement Project).

Whom to Contact: While the planning process will likely vary from state to state, in most states it will be driven by four main people: the heads of the state department of education, Title I, and the state board of education, and the governor. Contact info: state departments of education: www.ccsso.org; Title I directors: www.titlei.org/Contacts/contact_directors.html; state boards: www.ibiblio.org/cisco/schoolhouse/schools/boards/; governors: <http://www.nga.org/governors/1,1169,,00.html>

Because environmental education efforts in many states are found in the state departments of natural resources or environmental affairs, it may be useful to contact their top officials, since they might have input in the state planning process. Any web search engine should bring up your state departments without much trouble, if you are not already in contact with them.

A NEW EMPHASIS ON RESEARCH

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 stresses, in almost every section of the law, that decisions about the allocation of federal resources for education should be based on “scientifically based research.” The intent, as interpreted in the U. S. Department of Education’s Strategic Plan, is no less than to leverage this new decision-making process to “transform education into an evidence-based field.”

Here are two links that shed more light on the Department’s thinking:

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/research/> (this is a symposium that the Department hosted) and <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/stratplan2002-07/stratplan2002-07.pdf> (this is the Department’s Strategic Plan – go to page 59 of the PDF version for the section on research).

This new approach to education reform means that those who support EE will have to become more familiar with the work of the research community. And it poses three basic procedural challenges that have yet to be worked out:

1. Defining what constitutes acceptable “scientifically based research” for the purposes of administering our educational system; and
2. Encouraging and instituting research in EE activities and programs that meets the procedural definition of acceptable research; and
3. Working to ensure that, as a practical matter, important information regarding the real-world growth and development of American children is not excluded from the decision-making process because it has not been collected or formulated in terms of “scientifically based research.”

Regarding the first point, the law specifies that research should involve “the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable programs and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs.” It further defines research with terms like “empirical,” “rigorous data analyses,” “valid and reliable data across observers,” and “experimental or quasi-experimental designs.” In sum, the definition is narrow to the point that decision-makers in most curricular areas are likely to find that the data to support programs - even programs acclaimed as highly successful by all concerned - is difficult to come by. The Department of Education’s chief research official (as of March 2002) says that the only field with a reliable body of evidence is reading, and even that is incomplete.

Thus, encouraging and tracking research that meets this standard will be important in the at least the six years until NCLB is up for renewal. Research that is certain to meet the emerging definition of “scientifically based research” exists alongside other valuable but less narrowly construed research. One important aspect of the law is that, in addition to stressing strictly quantitative research, the law supports research that is “accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.”

Ongoing research can be found at the Journal for Environmental Education, among others.

Part II. Programs.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM PROGRAM

compreform@ed.gov

www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform

The Comprehensive School Reform Program supports the development, adoption, and implementation of comprehensive school reforms based on reliable research and effective practice and that will improve the academic achievement of children in participating schools. The No Child Left Behind Act creates a separate authorization for the program, which was created by a 1998 appropriations bill sponsored by Reps. John Porter and David Obey – hence the program is often referred to as “Porter-Obey”.

Program Office Contact: The Department provides no individual contact name. The switchboard number for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, which houses this program, is 202-401-0113. Inquiries may also be addressed to compreform@ed.gov. The website listed above provides application forms, a database of existing grants and programs, a listing of state education department contacts, and related literature.

Legislation: Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, Title I, Part F.

Type of assistance: Formula grants to the states.

Who may apply: Local educational agencies and consortiums may apply to state departments of education for grants to support comprehensive school reforms in Title I schools.

FY 02 Appropriation: \$310,000,000

Existing school reform models such as the State Education and Environment Roundtable's Environment as an Integrating Context have in some cases been successful applicants for CSRD funds. Some environment-based models are described in the National Environmental Education & Training Foundation report "A New Opportunity for Environment-Based Education: US Department of Education's Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Grants", which is available as of April 2002 at www.neetf.org/Education/index.shtml.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM GRANTS

(202) 260-2502

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SIP/programs/apip.html>

Previously authorized under the Higher Education Act, this section is designed to encourage more low-income students to take Advanced Placement (AP) courses and tests. The reauthorization creates two separate programs, one that defrays fees for AP tests, and one that offers funding for activities, such as teacher training and pre-AP course development, designed to increase access to AP classes.

Program Office Contact:

Madeline Baggett

(202) 260-2502

Madeline.Baggett@ed.gov

Legislation: Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, Title I, Part G.

Type of assistance: The test fee program is formula-based; the incentive program is competitive.

Who may apply: The definition of "eligible entity" for this program has been expanded to include State education agencies, local educational agencies and national nonprofit educational entities with expertise in AP services.

FY 02 Appropriation: The program is funded at \$22 million. Priority is given to funding the test fee program, with any remaining funds distributed for the incentive program. It is not clear whether there will be "remaining funds" this year. For the incentive program grants, priority is given to applications that focus on developing or expanding advanced placement programs and participation in the core areas of English, mathematics, and science. Priority is also given to applications that involve participation of business and community organizations.

If the "incentive program" is funded, EE providers could apply for funding to develop teacher training and course development materials for the AP Environmental Science course, which clearly falls into the "core area" of science. Watch this space for further developments.

21st CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

202-401-0113

www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/21stCCLC

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program funds before and after school, weekend, and summer programs designed to enhance school day academics and to provide enrichment, recreational and social services. Established in 1997, the program undergoes several changes with the No Child Left Behind Act. First, community-based organizations may now apply (formerly, only schools and school districts were eligible). Similarly, programs may be housed in community organizations as well as in schools. Applications will now be made to state departments of education instead of to the federal level. Other changes include a stronger focus (though not an exclusive one) on reading and math. Although EE is not specifically named as an allowable activity, a database <http://www.ed.gov/21stcclc/grantees.html> of existing centers funded by this program shows considerable EE activity nonetheless. The database includes digests and contact information.

Program Office Contact: the Department provides no individual contact name. The switchboard number for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, which houses this program, is 202-401-0113. Inquiries may also be addressed to 21stCCLC@ed.gov. The website listed above provides a wealth of information, application forms, a database of existing grants, etc.

Legislation: Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, Title IV, Part B.

Type of assistance: Formula grants to states.

Who may apply: Schools, school districts, and community-based organizations may apply singly or together to state departments of education. Priority will given to applications targeting Title I schools and submitted jointly by schools and community-based organizations.

FY 02 Appropriation: \$1 billion, of which \$325 will be available for new programs and the remainder will fund continuation of previous grants. Grants are multi-year.

This program is highly hospitable to EE programs, or at least environment-related programs, because it is free from school-day scheduling constraints, promotes partnerships with non-formal education and service learning providers, and allows both non-academic activities and academic ones. For example, the Plumas County school district in Quincy, CA developed an integrated art and environmental program. In Albuquerque, NM, the learning centers utilize public libraries, museums, zoos and parks, EE groups, nature centers and more.

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

202-205-9178

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SIP/programs/pcsp.html>

Provides financial assistance for the design and initial implementation of charter schools and the evaluation of the effects of charter schools on students, student achievement, staff and parents. NOTE: not all states authorize charter schools. Information on various states is available at www.uscharterschools.org.

Program Office Contact: Donna Hoblit, (202) 205-9178, donna.hoblit@ed.gov, School Improvement Programs, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Legislation: 1995-2001: ESEA as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act Title X, Part C; 2002- : ESEA as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, Part B.

Changes made by No Child Left Behind Act: according to the U.S. Department of Education, the new law has only minor changes in language, except that it authorizes a new "per-pupil facilities charge" to help schools with their facilities cost. However, the FY '02 appropriation includes no funding for this charge.

Type of assistance: competitive grants

Who may apply: state education agencies (SEAs) that have authority under state law to authorize or approve a charter school. If the SEA does not apply or is not funded, authorized public chartering agencies within these states may apply.

FY 02 Appropriation: \$200,000,000

At least seven charter schools have adopted the environment as an organizing theme. For example, the mission of the Environmental Charter High School in Lawndale, CA is to provide a "student-centered, rigorous education that extends learning beyond the classroom walls and into local environments so that all students graduate with the knowledge, skills and values to become self-motivated, life-long learners and quality stewards of their community." Some charters are housed in universities and cultural institutions, particularly museums, and many others have developed strong relationships with such institutions.