

# National Education & Environment Partnership

## *using the environment as a tool for learning*

SUMMER 2002

### NATIONAL EDUCATION & ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP

The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF) and several partner organizations have formed the **National Education & Environment Partnership** (NEEP). The Partnership's purpose is to help mainstream environmental education by fostering connections among formal, informal, and environmental education policymakers and organizations. It believes that environmental education can lead both to improved academic achievement for students and stronger stewardship attitudes and skills.

NEEP is identifying opportunities for environmental and environment-based education in new and existing state and federal programs, and it is disseminating this information to the environmental education field. For example, the new No Child Left Behind Act, which revamps federal programs in the U.S. Department of Education, offers funding, programmatic, and policy opportunities. NEEP is supported by NEETF and grants from the Office of Environmental Education, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; the AT&T Foundation; and the Gund Foundation.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

#### • National School Reform Enacted

President and Congress Create Policy and Funding Opportunities for EE

In January, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which revamps the federal role in elementary and secondary education. While the new law's emphasis is on testing in reading and math, some aspects of the law are of special interest to EE. NEEP has created a guide to the major components of NCLB, go to [NEETF's NEEP page](#) for more information.

#### • Including EE in State Education Plans

NCLB requires states to consult with educators, administrators and the public in order to develop plans for how they will achieve and measure success. NEEP believes that EE can help states achieve their goals:

- First, states can include environmental-themed material in curriculum standards and assessments.
- Second, states can periodically survey the status of EE.
- Third, environment-based education can be utilized for a strategy for comprehensive school improvement.

#### NEEP Executive Committee

- American Association of Museums
- Environmental Education and Training Partnership
- Environmental Council of the States
- National Environmental Education & Training Foundation
- Office of Environmental Education - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- State Education and Environment Roundtable

#### ECOS AND EE

The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) held a session on environmental education at its April meeting. Council members, who are the chief environmental officials for the states, are now reviewing a draft resolution calling for states to incorporate environmental education into the accountability plans required by new federal education legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

### • New Resources

NCLB has reauthorized two existing programs that already have strong potential for EE.

**The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) grants program** supports schools (especially high-poverty schools and/or low-achieving schools) that wish to customize off-the-shelf reform models to fit their own special circumstances. FY'02 funding is \$310 million, which is distributed to the states, which in turn run their own separate competitions for schools.

How does this relate to EE? Several popular models include strong EE components, and one lesser known model, Environment as an Integrating Concept, has environment at its core. The EIC model has won CSRD grants in Delaware and Washington state. The State Education and Environment Roundtable developed the EIC model. Please visit the [SEER website](#) for information on for this and other model programs.

NCLB also revamped **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers**, a program that supports before and after school, weekend, and summer programs.

The **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers** program is natural fit for environmental education 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 and academic activities. At least twenty previously funded projects incorporate some aspect of EE, and probably many more. New NCLB changes now allow:

1. Programs to be located in community-based organizations as well as schools.
2. Community-based organizations may now apply directly, formerly only schools and school districts were eligible.

3. Applications will be made to state departments of education instead of to the federal level.

4. Other changes include a stronger focus (though not an exclusive one) on reading and math.

The program is funded at \$1 billion for this year, of which \$325 million will be available for new programs and the remainder will fund continuation of previous grants. For more information, please go to [Learning Centers](#).

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

In its FY '03 budget proposal, the Administration has asked Congress to abolish the EPA's EE program and transfer its funding to the National Science Foundation (NSF). While many in the EE field are strongly opposed to this proposal, and Congress has demonstrated no willingness to carry it out, it has nevertheless served to focus the EE field's attention on NSF.

Currently, NSF has no single program exclusively devoted to EE, but it is nevertheless a major funder of EE activities in schools, non-formal venues, and higher education. For more information on NSF funding programs, please go to [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov). The agency's governing body, the National Science Board, released a report in 2000 that calls for the Foundation to play a larger role in environmental education and research. The report is titled "**Environmental Science and Engineering for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**"

According to the report, NSF currently spends about \$29 million in support of EE in schools and non-formal venues, over and above the considerable amount it spends on higher education and research. In response to the report, NSF has appointed an Advisory Committee on Environmental Research and Education (AC-ERE) as well as a staff working group. More information can be found at [NSF'S AC-ERE webpage](#).

## MAJOR EDUCATION ASSOCIATION CREATES NEW EE NETWORK

One of the largest education organizations in the world, the **Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)** has formed an EE Network. The first meeting of the EE Network occurred at ASCD's annual meeting in San Antonio in March 2002. According to ASCD, its networks allow participants to exchange ideas, share common interests, identify and solve problems, grow professionally, and establish collegial relationships. Each network is operated independently and provides different resources to its members. In general, however, most networks conduct a meeting at ASCD's Annual Conference, and provide information and resources to network members. Depending on their level of sophistication, some networks even sponsor conferences and workshops. The Network's coordinator is Bora Simmons, Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, Northern Illinois University. The Network's coordinator is [Bora Simmons](#), Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, Northern Illinois University. This Network is one of ASCD's activities as a partner in the U.S. EPA funded Environmental Education and Training Partnership ([www.eetap.org](http://www.eetap.org)).

## WNET CHANNEL 13 HIGHLIGHTS ENVIRONMENTAL CAREERS

NEEP is pleased to help publicize a new television show and web resource. ***What's Up in the Environment?***, produced by WNET Channel 13, demonstrates to young people and their families that there are ways to heal the Earth, and people who are doing just that. The show premieres in Spring 2002 (check local listings for exact dates and times). Aimed at middle school students, the program's website has materials and activities for educators.

***What's Up in the Environment?*** (WUE) is a half-hour magazine program with four feature stories. In "River of Grass," Seminole ranchers and wildlife biologists explain their ambitious efforts to save the Everglades. "From Brownfields to Greenfields" takes viewers to northeastern Philadelphia for a look at one community's use of composted "biosolids," recycled from wastewater treatment to save a portion of local land. An international team of scientists shares the secrets of their "time machine" - Columbia University's Biosphere 2 Center in Arizona - in "Back to the Future," a segment on carbon dioxide emissions and their impact on the global climate. Then, "Power Up!" profiles a West Virginia engineer and his 13-year-old son, who believe it is wiser to grow their own power than to buy it from someone else - they've got a special power plant in their own back yard.

Featured on the program's website is [NEETF's Environmentors Project](#), whose director, Whitney Montague, is an on-line mentor.

WUE is a production of Thirteen/WNET New York's Educational Resources Center (ERC) in partnership with the [National Environmental Education & Training Foundation \(NEETF\)](#). The ERC is a leading provider of innovative programming, online education, and professional development for educators

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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