

# The Environmental Education Association of Oregon



## Strategic Plan: 2011

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## **Vision: The ultimate goal**

The Environmental Education Association of Oregon (EEAO) initiates, leads, participates in and supports projects and programs for systemic change that advance the role of environmental education in achieving student success in education, and as a non-regulatory tool for addressing natural resource challenges.

Through leadership and educational support, we promote a vision for a healthy, sustainable, and thriving environment.

## **Mission: What we do**

### **The goals of EEAO are to:**

- Be the statewide advocate for environmental education in Oregon
- Enhance the professionalism of environmental education through the establishment and implementation of core competencies
- Strengthen the dynamic networks for environmental education from local level systems to complex international collaborations

## **Key Strategies: The primary methods we use to realize our mission**

### **The primary functions of EEAO are to:**

- Collaborate with state level partners to ensure the inclusion of environmental education in related initiatives;
- Educate, and assist EEAO affiliates in educating, decision makers about the importance and relevance of environmental education;
- Serve as a liaison for environmental education between all systems levels from local to international;
- Promote the delivery of consistent and high quality environmental education through the certification of non-formal environmental educators;
- Improve the evaluation of environmental education programs;
- Compile and share “best practices” for environmental education; and
- Establish and enhance collaborative environmental education networks throughout Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, the United States and internationally.

## **Values: What guides the way in which we work**

### **The principles guiding the work of EEAO include:**

- Education occurs along a continuum of learning opportunities from cradle to gray
- Appreciation for a diversity of perspectives
- Learning is about the process, experience and personal growth, not just saturated information
- Environmental education operates through a broad lens and should be understood and accepted as such

## **Brief organizational history**

EEAO is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit organization and has served as Oregon's leader in environmental education for more than forty years. EEAO has been instrumental in advancing environmental education in Oregon evidenced by the organization's recent role as: host to the 2009 North American Association for Environmental Education's (NAAEE) international conference; convener of a series of evaluation workshops in 2010 based on NAAEE's recently published *Evaluating Your Environmental Education Programs – A Workbook for Practitioners* (sponsored by the Environmental Education Training and Partnership (EETAP) program), and active developer and implementer of an easily accessible on-line Resource Directory of environmental and sustainability education resources currently available to non-formal and formal teachers, partners, funders, and other community partners across Oregon.

In 2009, EEAO assumed a lead role in the development and passage of the No Oregon Child Left Inside (NOCLI) Act, a state policy set to establish a framework for providing students with a continuum of place-based, environmental education learning opportunities from K-12. EEAO was represented on the Environmental Literacy Task Force<sup>1</sup>, as stipulated by the NOCLI Act, responsible for developing *The Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan: Toward a Sustainable Future* (the Plan). This Plan, completed and submitted to the Oregon Legislature on October 1, 2010, will ensure that Oregon students graduate as critical thinkers, ecological problem solvers and engaged citizens, while providing a template for similar efforts in other states.

EEAO hosts and maintains the EEAO website and Resource Directory to promote Oregon EE programs, resources, and curriculum. EEAO serves as Oregon's national representative in the Affiliates Network for the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).

## **Our strategic planning process**

EEAO recently attended a strategic planning summit for the Affiliate Network in Baltimore, Maryland. Participation in this process streamlines with EEAO's recent new strategic planning efforts. In January 2011, EEAO retained a facilitator, Kathy Kniep, from the Nonprofit Association of Oregon to guide the EEAO board and invited participants through a strategic planning process. This work resulted in the development of the following new strategic plan for EEAO.

## **Current Strategic Goals**

- Be the statewide advocate for environmental education in Oregon
- Enhance the professionalism of environmental education through the establishment and implementation of core competencies
- Strengthen the dynamic networks for environmental education from local level systems to complex international collaborations

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<sup>1</sup> EEAO currently has one part-time staff member to support organizational efforts, and relies heavily on its board members to execute the work of the organization. Traci Price, board co-chair, has taken the lead on this project on behalf of EEAO.

## **Goal 1: Be the statewide advocate for environmental education in Oregon**

### **Strategy A: Collaborate with state level partners on related initiatives**

#### Supporting Activities

1. Identify state leadership (organizations and individuals - Oregon Department of Education, state agencies, stakeholder sectors, etc.)
2. Determine the intersections and/or relevance of related initiatives with environmental education
3. Develop relationships with organizational and individual leaders (join appropriate listserves, attend meetings, etc)
4. Consider membership with leadership organizations (Oregon Business Association, etc)
5. Host coalitions (No Oregon Child Left Inside, The Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan implementation, etc.)
6. Synergize funding opportunities around priority and related activities (STEM, program evaluation, early learning, etc)

### **Strategy B: Educate and help other educate decision makers about environmental education**

#### Supporting Activities

1. Survey networks to find out how environmental education providers are working with decision makers (ESDs, counties, school improvement plans, school boards, etc)
2. Compile and share results to encourage providers to adopt new and effective strategies

### **Strategy C: Be a liaison for environmental education at all levels**

#### Supporting Activities

1. Serve as Affiliate Liaison for the North American Association of Environmental Education's Affiliate Network
2. Share information between and across all networks (state, regional, national)
3. Participate in related conferences and workshops - support regional representatives in attending workshops and becoming members in related organizations

**Goal 2: Enhance the professionalism of environmental education through core competencies**

**Strategy A: Pursue a certification program for non-formal environmental education providers**

Supporting Activities

1. Develop a framework for the certification program
2. Partner with higher education institutions to implement the certification program
3. Educate the environmental education community about the benefits of integrating a certification program.

**Strategy B: Enhance the evaluation of environmental education programs**

Supporting Activities

1. Identify local, professional evaluators to support non-formal environmental education providers
2. Develop evaluator teams to support regional networks - consider securing seed money for regions to “hire” evaluators
3. Work with the funding community to influence evaluation strategies for environmental education grantees

**Strategy C: Develop a best practices “toolkit”**

Supporting Activities

1. Assemble a comprehensive toolkit of quality resources (*Guidelines for Excellence, Evaluating Your Environmental Education Programs – A Workbook for Practitioners*, templates, research, etc.) - and make them available on EEAO’s website and Resource Directory
2. Collect strategies for working with formal teachers from non-formal environmental education providers - develop a “how-to” resource guide
3. Compile case studies for exemplary environmental education in Oregon into a bi-annual report

**Goal 3: Strengthen the network for environmental education**

**Strategy A: Establish and/or enhance regional environmental education networks throughout Oregon**

Supporting Activities

1. Create a vision document that describes the roles and responsibilities of regional networks (learn from existing successful networks)

2. Identify geographically diverse non-formal environmental education leaders to serve as regional representatives

3. Host an annual gathering of regional representatives

4. Determine effective communication strategies to support information sharing across regional representatives (conference calls, social media, listerves, Clearing Magazine, etc.)

5. Develop and ensure relevancy and use of Resource Directory as a tool for regions

6. Support regions with additional resources (collaborative marketing, events, forums, annual conferences, etc) based on identified needs

<b>Strategy B: Participate in the Pacific NW regional network</b>
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Supporting Activities
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| 1. Communicate with partners (EPA Region 10, WSTA, OSTA, NAI, etc)               |
| 2. Explore opportunities for collaborative projects and/or conferences           |
| 3. Consider joint memberships - in professional orgs/co-membership opportunities |

<b>Strategy C: Grow the national and international network</b>
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Supporting Activities
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1. Serve as Affiliate Liaison for the North American Association of Environmental Education's Affiliate Network

2. Identify influential individuals and organizations on “the cutting edge” of environmental education - initiatives, philosophies, methodologies

3. Determine relationship to "cutting edge" individuals and organizations (membership/co-membership, participation, attendance, etc)