

EE Legislation

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However, in recent years, we have seen a tremendous drop in the environmental education opportunities our children receive. Schools are being forced to scale back and/or eliminate environmental education programs. Fewer students are participating in field studies and valuable instruction in the classroom. Many educators cite two primary factors for this drop: 1) the unintended consequences of the **No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act**; and 2) the lack of funding for these critical environmental education programs.

Environmental education organizations claim that NCLB's testing requirements have pushed schools to abandon environmental education programs to invest more time and resources in math and reading instruction. If it isn't directly related to the state test, it isn't taught. Additionally, environmental education programs have suffered because the amount of funding allocated through NEEA is only about \$6.6 million per year for the entire country, an average of \$132,000 per state. This certainly isn't going to meet the environmental education needs of our children and teachers.

So what can we do to support environmental education and make sure our children get these amazing opportunities? We can work together to continue to make national and state legislation support environmental education programs for our children and for all educators. Inside this issue of CREEC Connections, I've highlighted several legislative efforts currently in progress, both nationally and in California that relate to environmental education. I encourage you to stay informed of these legislative efforts and support environmental education programs for all.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.gdrc.org/uem/ee/tbilisi.html>

http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/files/33037/10935069533The_Belgrade_Charter.pdf/The%2BBelgrade%2BCharter.pdf

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/excsum.html>

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Environmental Education Legislation: Then and Now



Celeste Royer
Director

Every individual has a unique relationship with the environment. Some people embrace the quiet beauty found at a nearby stream while some people prefer the ski slopes of the Sierras. Some people prefer a round of golf while some people find adventure in a tree house at the end of the block. Regardless of one's preferred contact with the environment, what is important is that we each connect with the environment in a special way and that we understand how intertwined our lives are with that environment. It is imperative that our children learn about the environments around them and that they acquire the knowledge and skills needed to address the complex environmental issues facing us now and into the future. For that to happen successfully, environmental education must be a part of every child's education.

Environmental education, as taught today, was established in the **Belgrade Charter** at the UNESCO Conference in 1975-76. It stated that "the goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones." This was followed by the **Tbilisi Declaration** that established three broad objectives for environmental education: 1) to foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas; 2) to provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment and skills needed to protect and improve the environment; and 3) to create new patterns of behavior of individuals, groups, and society as a whole toward the environment. For 30 years, we have worked hard to follow these guiding principles in hopes that our children become environmentally literate and good stewards of the earth.

The passing of the **National Environmental Education Act (NEEA)** in 1990 gave the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) its first mandate to strengthen and expand environmental education as part of its overall mission to protect people's health and the environment. The goal of the Act is to increase public understanding of the environment and to advance and develop environmental

education and training. The Office of Environmental Education at EPA, established as a part of the Act, has provided leadership and financial support to broaden the reach of environmental education through its training and grant programs.

We can say that a lot has been accomplished in 15 years as a result of the NEEA. For years, environmental education grew in schools and millions of students and teachers benefitted from these programs. Professional development programs flourished, high-quality instructional materials were developed and used in both formal and non-formal settings, and environmental education, with its emphasis on critical thinking, interdisciplinary teaching, and learner achievement, helped schools meet educational reform goals.

In the March 2005, the National Environmental Education Advisory Council submitted its **Report to Congress on the Status of Environmental Education** in the U.S. The Council developed eight recommendations to chart the course for the years ahead. These recommendations include 1) update NEEA for the 21st century; 2) broaden the audience and leadership in environmental education; 3) improve the quality, accessibility, and dissemination of environmental education materials and programs; 4) develop a framework and tools for measuring the effectiveness of environmental education; 5) support and strengthen long-term research initiatives; 6) establish an outcome-based grant program to enable states, territories, and tribes to deliver environmental education programs and services; 7) develop assessment-based professional development programs for formal and non-formal educators to improve their ability to teach environmental concepts and skills to learners of all ages; and 8) build public understanding of the value of environmental education and increase the number and diversity of talented young people pursuing environmental careers.

The Council also celebrated the successes in environmental education including the thousands of environmental education activities taking place both indoors and outdoors for learners of all ages, cultures, and socioeconomic backgrounds. More educators were receiving top quality training to teach environmental concepts and national environmental education guidelines help to guide this training. There were many accomplishments and successes worthy of celebration.

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Environmental Education Legislation

No Child Left Inside



No Child Left Inside (NCLI) Act

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is a part of the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** of 1965, federal legislation that applies to K-12 schools in the United States. The **NCLB Act**, which reauthorizes the ESEA, incorporates the principles and strategies proposed by President Bush. These include increased accountability for States, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; more flexibility for States and local educational agencies in the use of Federal education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for our youngest children. At this time, Congress is working to reauthorize this Act.

Advocates of environmental education are working tirelessly to include language in NCLB that addresses environmental education for our children. It is felt by many that NCLB is contributing to an increasing environmental literacy gap by reducing the amount of environmental education taking place in K-12 classrooms. Its emphasis on testing for core subjects is causing many administrators to eliminate environmental education in favor of investing more resources in math and language arts, severely limiting instructional time for science and social studies, the traditional subjects in which environmental education is taught. Teachers are actively or passively discouraged from providing valuable field based experiences for their students based on a fear of "loss of instructional time" for tested subjects. Such field experiences provide important opportunities for students to engage in hands-on, real-world problem solving and scientific inquiry. As a result, teacher autonomy to pursue vibrant, student-led, community-supported, environmental investigation and restoration projects is being curtailed.

Several national organizations, including the North American Association for Environmental Education, Audubon, Project Learning Tree, National Wildlife Federation, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation are working together to support the inclusion of environmental education into the reauthorized Act. The No Child Left Inside Coalition formed to alert Congress and the public to the need for our public schools to devote more resources and attention to environmental education.



The Coalition is supporting proposals by Rep. John Sarbanes of Maryland and Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island to include environmental education in the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. If Congress adopts the proposals, a substantially strengthened NCLB would include new funding for environmental education, particularly to develop rigorous standards, train teachers, and to develop statewide environmental literacy plans. The bill would provide \$100,000,000 per year for five years to help states accomplish these goals. The NCLI bill would also allow existing funding streams to be used on environmental education.

The **NCLI** bill provides an enormous window of opportunity to include environmental education into the education systems in the United States.

For more information about NCLI, please visit the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's website at www.eeNCLB.org or see the proposed legislation, HR 3036, No Child Left Inside Act at: http://www.cbf.org/site/DocServer/No_Child_Left_Inside_Act.pdf?docID=9503.

Residential Outdoor Science School Programs

SB 543 would support attendance of California's 5th and 6th economically disadvantaged students at Residential Outdoor Science School certified programs. The bill, proposed by Senator Abel Maldonado, would establish eligibility criteria for a residential outdoor science school program and would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to apportion, subject to appropriation of funds for that purpose, to each school district or county office of education that operates a residential program, an amount of \$10 per eligible participating pupil per day of participation up to a maximum of five days. We know the importance of providing outdoor experiences for our children. This legislation would help provide that experience to thousands of students who otherwise would not get the opportunity. The bill is currently held in committee and under submission. For information, visit <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/>.



The wilderness was a beautiful, even enchanting place with its graceful movement and active life.

Sally Carrighar

Environmental Education Legislation

Outdoor Environmental Education and Recreation Programs



SB 207 would establish the Outdoor Environmental Education and Recreation Program, to be administered by the Director of Parks and Recreation, for the purpose of increasing

the ability of underserved and at-risk populations to participate in outdoor recreation and educational experiences by awarding grants to education programs that are available to the public and are operated by public entities or nonprofit organizations. The bill, introduced by Senators Padilla and Simitian, is currently held in committee and under submission. For information, visit: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/>.

California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

With recent concerns about youth detachment from outdoor activities, lack of physical exercise and increased health risks, the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism adopted the **California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBR)** for the purpose of recommending a fundamental list of experiences that every child in California would benefit from experiencing, before entering high school. Numerous studies document that children who do these things are healthier, do better in school, have better social skills and self-image, and lead more fulfilled lives.



The Mission of COBR is to encourage California's children to participate in outdoor recreational activities and discover their heritage. The Objective is that every child in California, by the completion of their 14th year, have the opportunity to experience each of the activities listed within the California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. Every child should have the opportunity to 1) discover California's past; 2) splash in the water; 3) play in a safe place; 4) camp under the stars; 5) explore nature; 6) learn to swim; 7) play on a team; 8) follow a trail; 9) catch a fish; and 10) celebrate their heritage.

On July 6, 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger issued a Proclamation recognizing the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBR). For more information, visit: <http://www.calroundtable.org/>.

Education and the Environment Initiative



Two landmarks laws, AB 1548 (Pavley), passed in 2003, and AB 1721 (Pavley), passed in 2005, set the stage for the development of the **Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI)**. These laws mandated the development of a unified education strategy to bring education about the environment into California's primary and secondary schools. The California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA) and the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) are actively engaged in the implementation of EEI along with key partners including the State Board of Education, the Office of the Secretary for Education, the Curriculum and Supplemental Materials Commission, the State Department of Education, and the California Resources Agency.

Key elements of EEI include: 1) development of California's Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&C's); 2) alignment of the EP&C's to California's Academic Content Standards; 3) development of a Model Curriculum to teach the EP&C's to California's K-12 students; 4) incorporation of the EP&C's into criteria for instructional materials adoption in science, history/social science, English/language arts and mathematics; and, 5) alignment of the state's diverse environmental education programs and materials with the EP&C's.

Currently, EEI is in Phase 4 of the project. Phase 4 is the development of the model curriculum. Writers, reviewers, and editors have been hired and several draft units are completed. Teachers in several school districts across California are field testing these units now. The first draft units have received praise from educators across the state. While there is much work still to do, it is exciting to see EEI moving forward. Through EEI, California is poised to lead the nation in environmental literacy.

To you want to participate in the EEI project? Writers and reviewer applications are still available at the CREEC Network website at [http://www.creec.org/stories/storyReader\\$198](http://www.creec.org/stories/storyReader$198).

To learn more about EEI, visit the website at: <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Education/EEI/default.htm>.

The beauty of the natural world lies in the details...

Natalie Angier