

BAY AREA CREEC EE PROVIDERS CORNER NEWSLETTER: EE Evaluation Efforts in the Bay Area

For many environmental educators, teaching students about the environment is an important component of fostering environmentally responsible behavior. How do those who deliver programs know if they are doing just this?

This is a hard question to answer and thus most program providers steer clear of measuring their impact without the resources to support such inquiries. Surely, if efforts to educate youth about the environment have no lasting impact, program providers would want to find ways to encourage environmental literacy in more effective ways. According to research from Environmental Literacy in America [NEETF, 2005: 38 (see resources below)], even though Americans have environmental awareness and knowledge, Americans don't always will act on their awareness and knowledge. Awareness does not mean action, but it certainly helps according to NEETF/Roper data in this report. There is no direct correlation between knowledge and stewardship, but other factors come into play such as attitudes, environmental sensitivity, and skills to put knowledge into action. The connections are complex.

One field EE could benefit from is social marketing to learn about the complexities in the awareness - action link. If this information could be captured, the EE community would be able to possibly deliver more effective programs. This collective change in behavior could thus be translated into less environmental impact. Most EE organizations do not have capacity to track this information.

One approach is for EE organizations to work collaboratively to realize the potential for truly being more effective. As important as evaluation is to any program development, it doesn't happen as often as one would think in the under-resourced EE Community. Because of this understanding, a group of EE leaders in the Bay Area have gathered as a "learning community". The learning community is focused on increasing the EE community's capacity to evaluate their effectiveness and improve educational efforts.

What are EE Providers Doing in Evaluation?

Evaluation Collaboration Learning Community

In September 2003, twenty Bay Area EE providers and six funders, facilitated by Jack Chin of Blueprint Design, participated in a learning community to develop a framework to become more effective in delivering and evaluating EE programs. The group developed a logic model for a collaborative approach for service providers to explore how the EE community is being effective at reducing environmental impacts, the basis for much of EE work. See CREEC website region 4 for a PDF of the Framework.

Four of the EE groups continued to convene the learning community participants the following year to keep the momentum of the network (Learning Community Two). Out

of these efforts grew another step in building capacity for EE organizations to increase their capacity for evaluation.

In 2006, Evaluation Collaboration Learning Community Two developed to take the Framework learning to the next level. The San Francisco Foundation and the Heller Foundation funded Community Resources for Science, Bay Area CREEC, Headlands Institute, and Neighborhood Ecology Center of Oakland to continue to convene the network, to pilot a peer cluster model for Bay Area providers, and to develop a resource directory of evaluators and evaluation tools. The evaluation collaborative has met one more times since the original learning community was formed. During the last meeting, in May 2006, the peer cluster model was introduced and an evaluations tools workshop was conducted. Some of participants will be exploring developing peer cluster groups for next year. Participants selected tools in cultural competency, behavioral change, core EE messaging and communication, collaboration, evaluation 101, etc., reviewed and discussed them and shared them out with the larger group.

The Leadership Team, comprised of the four groups who convened the second phase of the learning community, have participated in two Peer Cluster Site Visits. The first site visit took place at Headlands Institute with Chantelle Johnson of TCC, an evaluation specialist, who coached the peer cluster process. Headlands Institute is exploring the impact their programs have on environmental behaviors. The group looked at a number of tools in environmental responsible behaviors. As a group, they developed indicators on what environmental responsible behavior would look like for students in consumer choices, water conservation, educating others, advocating for open space, and investigative skills. The Bay Area CREEC site visit involved planning for a front-end needs assessment for bringing in a strategic partnership model from LA CREEC Region 11 to the Bay Area Region 4. Collaborative and cultural competency tools will be reviewed for informing this front-end evaluation process.

Snapshots of evaluation work being done at organizations in the Bay Area

Headlands Institute

The Field Science program of the Headlands Institute just wrapped up a 6-month internal evaluation project that aimed to improve their field educators' understanding of multicultural education while integrating it more deeply into their teaching practice. The project was designed to be both formative and summative in nature and was intended to be closely linked with the delivery of trainings in the selected areas.

The project began in winter with both field staff and administrators agreeing on three of the many principles of multicultural education to focus more deeply on over the course of the spring semester. From these principles, HI collaboratively developed more detailed measurable objectives that, in essence, describe what successful implementation of the chosen multicultural education principles look like. These objectives were then

folded into two evaluation tools: a self-assessment for field educators (to be taken 3 times over the course of the semester) and a field evaluation (that administrators and peers complete following educator observations throughout the spring).

This type of targeted assessment plan proved useful in improving the Institute's multicultural education practice. First, assessing for progress in these areas sent a clear message to the field staff that multicultural education is valued at the Headlands Institute. Second, it has allowed HI to track specific successes and challenges and directly informed the content of trainings in a formative way. Summative data, tabulated in June, demonstrated some encouraging improvements in the ways that HI field educators work with English Language Learners as well as the degree to which HI is making learning relevant to students' home communities. The data suggested less success in incorporating the idea that all cultures have relationships with their environment, a topic that will be explored again in more depth in the coming year. HI looks forward to replicating this kind of integrated approach to program improvement into the future.

Kids for the Bay

For Kids for the Bay Watershed Action Program and Four Rs Action Program they have had a variety of qualitative evaluation tools in place both for teachers and students. For example, students keep a portfolio of work that we collect at the end of the program. They also conduct reflective discussions with the students at the end of each lesson. We conduct mid-way and end-of-program interviews with teachers to collect feedback. This year they have continued to develop an evaluation plan. They have added quantitative measures for both teachers and students. We have also revised the program objectives and then revised the curriculum to meet the objectives. They are piloting some new evaluation tools this year, and will be taking a look at the type of responses we receive and how to improve the tools. They are in a continuous cycle with their evaluation process, developing/improving, implementing, analyzing, and developing/improving again.

Resources in Evaluation

Environmental Literacy In America: What Ten Years of NEETF/Roper Research and Related Studies Say About Environmental Literacy in the U.S. (2005) National EE Training Foundation (NEEFT) is pleased to provide a new publication. To download this PDF document, go to <http://www.neetf.org/pubs/index.htm>

Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative: 75 Eval Tools From Bay Area Environmental Education Learning Community

This website links to 75 evaluation tools and resources compiled in July of 2004 by the Bay Area Environmental Education Evaluation Learning Community (BEEC). Nearly all the resources can be accessed directly from this page either by clicking the link on the title of the tool, or by downloading the document from the very bottom of this page.

http://www.peecworks.org/PEEC/PEEC_Inst/S006D6299

Applied Environmental Education Program Evaluation Online Course

September 18 - December 1, 2006 (Offered in the fall and spring)

This 10-week online EETAP course is designed to assist environmental educators and natural resource professionals in evaluating their education programs. All participants are eligible for the in-state tuition rate and may obtain three undergraduate or graduate credits from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point or take the course as a non-credit workshop. For more information contact Angela Arkin (Angela.Arkin@uwsp.edu).

http://eetap.org/html/online_ee_courses.php

NAAEE Resource Review

The North American Association for Environmental Education now has a national Resource Review tool to evaluate EE programs and materials. This effort grew out of the Guidelines for Excellence Initiative to help build a consistent process in developing educationally sound EE materials and programs. The review process is a fee-based review process that results in a symbol appearing in the National EE Directory indicating the resource has been reviewed against the guidelines. To find out more and submit your resource go to <http://www.naaee.org/programs-and-initiatives/resource-review/>.

Measuring the Success of Environmental Education Programs

By Gareth Thomson, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society; and Jean Hoffman, Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter; adapted from Carter McNamara's Checklist for Program Evaluation Planning. This report reviews the basic tenets of environmental education, provides ten principles of excellent environmental education, and includes a glossary and other resources about outcomes-based evaluation. Download PDF File at

http://www.cpawscalgary.org/education/edu_resources.php - 1

Look for a *Directory of EE Evaluators* on the Statewide CREEC Homepage this fall compiled by Nicole Cheslock of the Evaluation Collaborative! www.creec.org

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