



Jones, Stephanie

From: Doreen Petri <dpetri@eriesd.org>
Sent: Friday, June 11, 2021 4:18 AM
To: ED, State Board of Ed
Subject: [External] Environmental Education Standards Review

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Karen Molchanow
 PA State Board of Education

Dear Ms. Molchanow,

I have been an environmental science teacher in Erie, PA for more than 40 years both in traditional and project-based learning situations. I am currently the Project Manager for the Erie School District's sustainability plan called BELONG - Becoming Empowered by Living Our Natural Gifts.

I cannot emphasize enough how important environmental education is. Instead of reviewing the details of the academic concepts, I will give you specific instances in my teaching career in which the concept knowledge base provided the foundation for student-lead school and community outreach programming.

1. Watersheds and Wetlands - Erie School District (ESD) students participated in the International Coastal and Keep PA Beautiful Cleanups and collected almost 2 tons of trash over 2 years. Students currently assist with school and local cleanups such as the Academy Neighborhood Cleanup.
2. Renewable and Nonrenewable Resources - In one year, ESD students saved the district \$86,000+ through energy audits and behavior changes in 13 district schools. Students organized "energy police" to monitor turning off lights, powering down computers and educating school and surrounding communities about the negative impacts of wasteful energy useage related to climate change.
3. Agriculture and Society; Human Health; Humans and the Environment - We currently have 13 school gardens in the district with curriculums related to science/language arts/math and career connection activities. It is vitally important to consider food access particularly in urban communities where food deserts are increasing and increased local food production addresses human health, economic, environmental and equity issues.
4. Ecosystems and Their Environment; Human Systems - As we teach children about how things work in the world, a systems-approach is critical. Their understanding of both natural and human systems, the human impact on the environment and the impact of environmental changes on the human body are all interrelated. Our project teaching, as mentioned above and beyond, always addresses these factors, the consequences of poor choices and the positive impact of behavior changes.

In 40+ years of teaching students at the elementary, middle, high and college levels, I have found that students need the knowledge base of these environmental concepts to fully engage in becoming citizen-scientists and stewards of their communities. My most rewarding teaching experiences have been watching students become experts and change both peer and adult behavior because they could explain the rationale behind positive behavior choices.

Please tell me: How do we prepare students for the challenges our society faces now and will face in the future, if we do not teach them how the natural world operates and we as humans impact it?

I welcome a discussion with regarding these topics at your convenience.

Sincerely,
Doreen Petri
BELONG Project Manager
814-392-9796