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# YEAR 1 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## THIRD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

### UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – STEVENS POINT

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#### *Introduction*

The Third Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP3) is a consortium of nine organizations<sup>1</sup> that deliver environmental education (EE) training to teachers and other education professionals. EE prepares citizens to make informed, intelligent decisions that protect human health and environmental quality. Through workshops, courses, and other training, EETAP3 is building a cadre of educators who are knowledgeable about the environment and have the skills needed to help children and adults understand complex environmental issues. It is helping education professionals work effectively with diverse audiences and make their organizations and programs more inclusive. EETAP3 is ensuring that environmental education programs and resources are of high quality and present multiple perspectives in an unbiased manner. U.S. EPA's Division of Environmental Education and consortium partners fund the project; the budget for the first year was \$2.5 million. Of this amount, the Federal share was \$1.7 million while partners contributed \$0.8 million. The University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point (UW-SP) serves as the managing partner.

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<sup>1</sup> EETAP partners include the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Council for Environmental Education, Fish and Wildlife Service (National Conservation Training Center), National Audubon Society, North American Association for Environmental Education, Northern Illinois University, Project Learning Tree, Project WET, and University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

EETAP3's Year 1 work plan detailed 12 activities designed to achieve a more environmentally literate public over the five-year period of the project. The consortium made significant progress toward achieving Year 1 project outputs and outcomes. A total of 231,968 education professionals and an estimated 2,198,000 individuals in over 27 states across the country benefited from EETAP3 activities. These figures reflect attendance at EETAP3-supported EE training workshops and user visits to EE-Link, along with the learners reached by these educators. These numbers will increase as EETAP3 Partners complete Year 1 outputs and outcomes and program implementation continues in Years 2 through 5.

#### *Why Program is Unique*

This summary covers the first year (October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006) of a projected five-year program. However, much of EETAP3's work builds on the efforts of EETAPs 1 and 2 (1995-2005). This continuity has enabled meaningful progress on several strategic initiatives that require years to develop and refine.

One such example is the National Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education. These voluntary standards describe quality EE resources and programs, identify what learners should know and be able to do as the result of K-12 EE programs, and articulate the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective environmental educator. The

Guidelines were drafted, reviewed, and approved and dissemination and training programs established during EETAP1. During EETAP2, the Guidelines formed the basis of such far-reaching activities as certification of environmental educators and accreditation standards for colleges and universities, development of on-line courses, along with expanded distribution and training efforts in the use of the Guidelines. EETAP3 is bringing certification to more states and creating a national certification program. Work continues on accreditation, and an active Trainer's Bureau has been created to promote acceptance and use of the Guidelines. Taken together, these long-term efforts are ensuring that educators have the resources, knowledge, and skills needed to deliver quality instruction about the environment. The Guidelines have been called the single most important event in the field of EE in the last decade.

## **Highlights of Major Accomplishments**

EETAP3 divides its activities into three areas: Professional Development, Reaching Diverse Audiences, and Advancing Environmental Education. Highlighted here are major accomplishments in each of these areas.

### **Professional Development**

Helping education professionals develop the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate learning about complex environmental issues is a priority for EETAP3. The consortium delivered professional development through in person and online workshops and courses to more than 1,800 education professionals and EE leaders working in schools and other settings.

### **Workshops**

A total of 1,037 middle and secondary school teachers, pre-service teachers, and non-formal educators increased their knowledge of a broad range of topics including risk management, water, solid waste, bird conservation, biodiversity, habitat loss, pesticide use, and energy. They also increased their abilities to incorporate EE into their instruction using tested and award-winning materials developed by Project Learning Tree, the Council for Environmental Education (Project WILD and Flying WILD), and Project WET. EETAP3 partners conducted these in-person workshops across the country in over a dozen states including California, Oregon, Wyoming, Colorado, Texas Louisiana, Maine, and New Jersey.

### **Online Courses**

The EETAP2 consortium developed two online courses: Fundamentals of EE and Applied EE Program Evaluation. In EETAP3, ten additional universities are offering these courses, providing much-needed professional development for those without ready access to a college campus. The demand for these courses has been so high that people were wait-listed for each course offering. Student evaluations indicate that quality of instruction and accessibility are responsible for the success of this project. This training has helped 438 educators (in 11 courses) incorporate learning about the environment into their work; as a result, it advanced student academic achievement and increased environmental literacy.

### **Trainer's Bureau**

EETAP3 has also established a Guidelines Trainer's Bureau to disseminate the National Guidelines for Excellence in EE and encourage

their use through an “Adopt the Guidelines” campaign. A team of environmental educators was trained to facilitate workshops and make presentations about the Guidelines in their geographic regions. The Trainer’s Bureau added 17 members in Year 1; trainers delivered 26 workshops and presentations in 14 different states and reached 350 education professionals. The workshops and other presentations focus on how to use the Guidelines to promote quality EE practice.

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### Reaching Diverse Audiences

Another EETAP3 priority is helping education professionals develop the knowledge and skills needed to work more effectively with audiences traditionally underserved by EE. These audiences are wide-ranging, including African and Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and conservation practitioners.

#### Workshops

EETAP3 conducted two EE & Cultural Diversity workshops and posted information and resources on how to work with diverse audiences on the Internet. To date, more than 1,300 people have visited these pages. The consortium also began planning a pilot program on increasing exclusivity in EE organizations. In addition, EETAP3 is supporting training of Tribal educators on several reservations and sponsoring their participation at EE professional development events. This interaction is anticipated to result in EE programs and resources that best meet Tribal needs.

#### Toolkit

EETAP3 also works with conservation practitioners and educators that work in non-formal settings such as zoos, botanical gardens, and parks. EETAP3 is developing a toolkit of resources to help these practitioners use EE to support their conservation goals. The toolkit will

contain case studies of programs effectively using education to achieve conservation objectives. It will also provide resources practitioners will use to better incorporate education into their programs. Surveys and interviews were completed, a draft toolkit outline was written, a literature search was conducted, case studies were researched, and discussions were conducted with members of the target audiences in Year 1. The resource will be tested in Year 2, and published and disseminated in Year 3. EETAP3 is planning workshops to introduce the toolkit and help conservation practitioners apply the concepts presented.

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### Advancing Environmental Education

EETAP3 is helping to ensure EE resources and programs are of high quality, support student academic achievement, and increase environmental literacy. The consortium is also increasing access to information about EE and related areas for educators. More than 1,100 education professionals enhanced their skills as environmental educators through in person training and 228,000 individuals accessed information online using the Internet (eelink.net).

#### Alignment to Standards

Several award-winning EE programs<sup>2</sup> have aligned their resources to national and state academic standards so teachers can more effectively use EE to meet learning standards for students while increasing the environmental literacy of our future leaders and decision makers. More than one dozen states including California, Oklahoma, New Jersey, and South Carolina are working on alignments to state

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<sup>2</sup> The programs included Project Learning Tree, Project WILD, and Project WET.

standards in Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science among others. As alignments are completed, they are posted online so they are readily accessible to educators in the state and throughout the country.

### Online Review of Resources

Using the Guidelines for Excellence, EETAP3 is supporting development of an online review program for materials and programs. The program both conducts reviews and provides access to reviewed materials through a shared online resource database system with states. In its first year, nine resources were reviewed and entered into the system. Ten states have signed on to use the resource database system and three have established state-level resource review programs.

### Pre-service Education

To ensure that pre-service teachers are highly qualified to teach about the environment and environmental issues EETAP3 is writing EE standards for college and university education programs. The standards will influence the preparation of every future teacher attending over 600 colleges and universities accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE will review the standards in October 2007; if accepted, colleges and universities will need to demonstrate how they are addressing the EE standards within the next seven years when they are reviewed for accreditation.

### Certification

By establishing certification programs at the state and national levels, EETAP3 is also increasing the number of highly qualified environmental educators. Again based on the Guidelines for Excellence, certification creates accountability for the knowledge and skills

expected of individual environmental educators. Kentucky, Texas, and Utah are now certifying individual educators. Colorado and Nevada are establishing programs and a national program is under development and expected to be operational on a trial basis in summer 2007. The national program will certify state programs so that an individual's certification is recognized by other certifying states.

### Online Resources: EE-Link

EETAP3 supports EE-Link (an Internet portal for EE information), EE-News (an on-line newsletter sent to more than 6,000 education professionals twice a month), and resource databases for states. The EE-Link Web site provides a broad spectrum of EE information and resources including lesson plans for teachers, publications, programs, organizations, and more. During 2006, EE-Link experienced 79% growth compared to the same period in 2005. Through EE-Link EETAP3 is making EE information more accessible to education professionals throughout the country, thus improving the quality of EE programs and instruction.

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## **CONCLUSION**

EETAP's work as highlighted above is helping to develop an environmentally literate public whose behaviors foster improved environmental quality and a healthy environment. For more information about EETAP visit: [www.eetap.org](http://www.eetap.org)

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