



# California Dreamin' Becoming a Reality

by Lori Mann with updates by Melynda Coble

## Program Profile

*The high quality of regional leadership in environmental education is our key to capacity building and developing a sustainable EE network.*

People often think of California as a state that takes the lead—in healthy eating, physical fitness, fashion fads, and movie stars. Admittedly, environmental education is not the first thing to come to mind when someone mentions the Golden State. But there are many reasons it could be!

California is currently working on an Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI) directed by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and the California Integrated Waste Management Board. This landmark legislation provides a significant opportunity to increase environmental literacy by making environmental principles and concepts an integral part of the K-12 curriculum.

Legislation (AB 1548) passed in 2003 and revised in 2005 provided support, and now funding, to develop environmental principles and concepts for grades K-12 and for the writing of a model curriculum that will be approved by the State Board of Education. The model curriculum will provide K-12th grade teachers, schools, and districts with standards-based curricular materials that can be used to teach California's environmental principles and concepts. These principles examine the interactions and interdependence of human societies and natural systems.

According to the CalEPA website, “The intention [of the EEI] is that teachers will be able to teach the academic content standards through the environmental principles and concepts and, likewise, teach the environmental principles and concepts through the standards. The principles and concepts are intended to serve as part of the

teaching framework to help students achieve mastery of content standards in science, history/social science, English/language arts and mathematics. The relevance of the environment to students' lives and communities should help to increase their comprehension of the academic content standards.”



California Department of  
**EDUCATION**

Another bill passed by the California Assembly (AB1330) required a study on the effects of outdoor education programs for children in California. Completed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in 2005, the study focused on 255 sixth grade students who attended three different outdoor schools. Results showed test scores in science increased by 27%; science knowledge was maintained six to ten weeks after the program; students had gains in cooperation and conflict resolution; favorable gains were made in environmental behaviors; and English Language Learners also demonstrated gains. The study was done for the California Department of Education (CDE) with the support of private funding.

## Networking Enhances Capacity

Putting the systems-thinking principle of networking into action statewide, CDE's main environmental education focus is the California Regional Environmental Education Community Network (CREEC). CREEC's mission is to "develop a communication network that provides educators with access to high quality environmental education resources to enhance the environmental literacy of California students."



1. North Coast
2. Northeast
3. Capital
4. Bay Area
5. Region 5
- 6a. Region 6a
- 6b. STEEP
7. Region 7
8. Region 8
- 9a. SanDCREEC
- 9b. Orange County
10. Region 10 RIMS
11. CREEC-LA

In its ninth year, the CREEC Network has 13 regional hubs throughout the state, each with its own fiscal agent (usually a county office of education or a local non profit organization) and between one and four part-time coordinators. The coordinators work to build relationships among area teachers, environmental educators in non-formal settings, and college and university-based teacher educators.

Celeste Royer, Statewide Manager of the CREEC Network, says, "The high quality of regional leadership in environmental education is our key to capacity building and developing a sustainable EE network." Each region supports networking activities such as adding to the CREEC website, building and maintaining the online, searchable Resource Directory, maintaining a regional calendar of EE events and workshops, and promoting the EE programs of providers in the region.

The CREEC Network is funded primarily by CDE along with several partners including local education agencies, the California Integrated Waste Management Board, State Water Resources Control Board, and the Walt Disney Company.

The Golden State EE Consortium (GSEEC) also readily demonstrates the power of networking. A large, informal association of educators, GSEEC works to advance interest and leadership in environmental education in California. In a growing partnership with the California Association of Bilingual Educators (CABE), GSEEC is sponsoring the first ever multicultural environmental education strand at the statewide CABE conference in 2006. GSEEC also worked with California's Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education by assisting with workshop speaker recruitment for the diversity strand at their statewide conference.

Other GSEEC initiatives, most funded by the Environmental Education and Training Partnership as part of the EETAP States Program, have included the Los Angeles Youth Environmental Leadership Clinic and work with pre-service education programs. GSEEC is engaged in fundraising efforts to continue its established projects and further build capacity for environmental education in California.

A third network in the state—the Association for Environmental and Outdoor Educators (AEOE)—was the first association for environmental educators in the

country. Established in 1954, AEOE is a professional organization run by and for outdoor environmental educators. Through conferences, newsletters, online articles, outings and events, and more, AEOE “supports and inspires educators in their quest for the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to help all learners understand, appreciate and care for their environment.”

AEOE also serves as the state affiliate to the North American Association for Environmental Education.

In a state as geographically and culturally diverse as California, networking efforts are paramount in increasing the ability to develop and delivery quality environmental education.



# AEOE

The Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education

## For more information contact:

### California Environmental Protection Agency

P.O. Box 2815  
Sacramento, CA 95812  
(916) 322-7179  
<http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Education/EEI/default.htm>

### California Department of Education

1430 N Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
916-319-0800  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov>

### CREEC Network

San Luis Obispo County Office of Education  
3350 Education Drive  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93405  
805-782-7224  
<http://www.creec.org>

### Golden State Environmental Education Consortium

c/o Sandi Funke, [funkewoman72@yahoo.com](mailto:funkewoman72@yahoo.com)  
<http://www.caltrees.org/gseec.html>

### Association for Environmental and Outdoor Educators

PO Box 177  
Angelus Oaks, CA 92305-0177  
<http://www.aeoe.org>