

Press Release

Issued by

The Environmental Education Council of Marin “EECOM”

June 23, 2008

Fairfax, CA

Survey Reveals California Public Schools Lacking In Environmental Education

California public schools need to improve their environmental education curriculum according to a survey of fifty-nine public schools. The survey found that the majority of the K-8th schools assessed fell short in providing their students with education about the environment. The survey was sponsored by the Environmental Education Council of Marin “EECOM”. (www.eecom.net).

According to Catriona M. Glazebrook, Executive Director of the Environmental Education Council of Marin “EECOM”, *“We need to educate our children so that they are able to address increasingly important issues like access to fresh water, natural resource depletion and global warming.”*

The study conducted predominantly of Marin County schools indicates that less than one third of the 20,000 students enrolled benefit from environmental education programs. Further, while some schools have extensive environmental programming, slightly less than half offered only one program, reaching a small percentage of students, or offered no environmental education at all.

These results appear to fit with a general trend in declining knowledge about the environment and science. For ten years the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation teamed with Roper Reports, to conduct surveys measuring American’s environmental IQ. What they found is that most Americans, when tested, receive an “F” in environmental knowledge.¹

According to the Roper survey, 45 million Americans think the ocean is a source of fresh water; 120 million think spray cans still have CFCs in them

¹ [NEETF report on Environmental Literacy in America.](#)

even though CFCs were banned in 1978; and 130 million believe that hydropower is America's top energy source, when it accounts for just 10% of the total.

In spite of – or perhaps because of the confusion about the environment, fully 95% of adult Americans (including 95% of parents) believe that environmental education should be taught in K-12 schools!

California now has the opportunity to turn the tide in the face of mounting ignorance about the environment with the state's adoption of The Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI), signed into law in 2003.

EEI requires California to develop Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&C) to complement the state's academic content standards. This law led to the design of Model Curriculum to help schools integrate environmental education into much of the K-12 curriculum.

According to California State Superintendent Jack O'Connell, in order to *“ensure that the curriculum is sound and workable, extensive field testing is presently taking place in 19 school districts throughout the state”* The Model Curriculum are to be incorporated into science, history/social science, English/language arts and mathematics.

Some California schools and teachers are way ahead of the curve. Laura Honda, a 4th grade science teacher at Manor School in the Ross Valley School District, and the recipient of a National Science Award, has been providing environmental education to her students for years. She was instrumental in having the Ross Valley School District selected as one of the 19 districts for initial launching of the EEI curriculum.

According to Honda, *“Teaching children about our environment, how to restore and protect this beautiful place that we share with so many other species is the most important thing that we can do. It works very well to integrate environmental education into all subject areas, for example language arts, math, art, science, social studies and even music can be incorporated into a unit on birds. The new EEI curriculum helps to make environmental education possible for all teachers, so that all K-12 children can be reached.”*

With the new EEI, California is poised to lead the nation in environmental literacy. [To learn more about the EEI go to <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/education/eei/>.

“EEI comes at a critical time when the world is facing not only some of our greatest environmental but human health challenges,” says Glazebrook. It has been proven that environmental education is an excellent way to teach science, math and other disciplines. Turning out well educated young people should be a key goal of the United States.”

EECOM supports public schools in this transition by **providing environmental education programs to K-12th graders**, offering teacher training in environmental and multi-cultural education, and linking schools to environmental education resources and providers. *Many of these providers”, according to Glazebrook, “ help teachers meet state standards while providing excellent learning experiences for children that are not only educational but life changing.”* Go to <http://www.eecom.net/educators.html> to view a list of providers in Marin and the Greater Bay area and sign up at www.eecom.net to get on the mailing list to **learn about environmental education programs**, upcoming workshops, events and training sessions.

“While I am pleased to see the progress that California is making in addressing the environmental knowledge gap, if schools in Marin county, where many people consider themselves to be “environmentally conscious”, are this far behind, there is a lot of work to be done. We are here to help.” says Glazebrook.

Note – DO NOT INCLUDE THIS INFO BELOW IN PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION – ONLY TO EDITORS

Note for Editors

Catriona Glazebrook, J.D., M.S., R.M.A.

Executive Director of EECOM is available for Interviews

415-785-3887

Catriona.macgregor@comcast.net