

Ohio EE 2010: A Strategic Plan for Environmental Education in Ohio

In the spring of 2005, the Environmental Education Council of Ohio (EECO) recognized that it was time to develop a new statewide strategic plan for environmental education in Ohio, with the intent of building on the work accomplished through the current plan, *Ohio EE 2000: A Strategic Plan for Environmental Education in Ohio*. The following reviews the Ohio EE 2000 initiative, sets the stage for a new strategic plan and outlines the Key Areas, Action Items and Action Steps for *Ohio EE 2010: A Strategic Plan for Environmental Education in Ohio*.

Ohio EE 2000

In 1996, the Environmental Education Council of Ohio (EECO) took the lead in developing a statewide plan to build Ohio's capacity, or Ohio's ability to provide leadership and resources, for environmental education. Other interested parties joined EECO in this initiative including the Ohio Alliance for the Environment, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Science and Mathematics Network and Ohio State University Extension.

The goal for the project was to collaboratively develop and implement a statewide strategy for building Ohio's ability to promote reform-based environmental education that was interdisciplinary, community-based, and learner-centered. The intent was to develop a plan specific enough to result in tangible progress. On the other hand, it needed to be broad enough to meet the diverse needs of the targeted audiences with their different perspectives on environmental education. These audiences included formal education, nonformal education, the business community, agricultural community, community-based groups, environmental organizations, state and federal government agencies, religious groups and legal groups.

Since the development of *Ohio EE 2000: A Strategic Plan for Environmental Education in Ohio*, many of the action items have been completed. These include:

- : Established a statewide EE Steering Committee that led the implementation of the strategic plan
- : Established a "virtual" center for environmental education in Ohio to coordinate EE initiatives
- : Established the Ohio Interagency Council for Environmental Education comprised of representatives from 22 state and 8 federal agencies
- : Published *Best Practices for Environmental Education: Guidelines for Success*
- : Held a Research Symposium and published proceedings entitled, *Environment in Ohio Education: Support through Research*
- : Coordinated EE marketing initiatives through the Web site, displays, rolodex cards and Audubon Ohio case statement
- : Facilitated access to EE information and resources through the EEOhio Web site
- : Conducted a survey on EE in Ohio preservice teacher education programs
- : Provided EE professional development for formal and nonformal educators through EECO regional and statewide programs and initiatives
- : Promoted the use of "model" inquiry-based EE lessons developed by Miami University and available through www.environmentaleducationohio.org

- : Piloted an “Environment as an Integrating Context” (EIC) project with a Cincinnati school
- : Collaborated with Ohio University to conduct a survey on underserved audiences and published *Environmental Education Programs and Underserved Audiences in Ohio*
- : Established the Ohio Diversity Initiative and conducted the Rising Stars Leadership Clinic to develop regional programs to meet the needs of underserved audiences
- : Collaborated with Audubon Ohio to conduct a survey of EE centers in Ohio to identify gaps in service
- : Conducted an informal survey of funding for EE in Ohio

EEOhio, as the overall initiative came to be called, functioned independently under the leadership of the EE Steering Committee (in conjunction with EECO) since 1999. In 2004, primarily for financial and logistics reasons, EEOhio was formally integrated into EECO. At that time EECO’s Board of Directors made a commitment to continue EEOhio in three major ways—by revisiting EECO’s mission statement, by strategically broadening its membership to reflect the broad-based audiences involved in EEOhio and by developing a second strategic plan for EE in Ohio that would build on Ohio EE 2000.

Ohio EE 2010

In 2005, EECO took steps to fulfill this commitment. First, it revised its mission statement as follows:

**EECO leads in facilitating environmental education
that fosters global stewardship and a sustainable future
for all Ohioans.**

In addition, EECO crafted the following vision statement that reflects how it hopes Ohio will be in twenty years if it is successful in its mission.

**All Ohioans are environmentally literate and engage in
decision making that ensures sustainability for future generations.**

Second, as a strategy to broaden its membership, the board established “special interest sections.” EECO members may join one or more sections of interest to them because they work for or are affiliated with an organization, serve an audience that fits with the description of the section or have other personal or professional reasons for joining. The following describes the seven EECO special interest sections:

Business, Industry and Trade Associations Section

People from business, industry and related trade associations who have environment-related education, training or outreach as one of their objectives such as utility companies, manufacturers, law firms, engineering firms and agriculture

Environmental and Community-based Organizations Section

Staff and administrators who work for local, state and national non-governmental organizations that have environment-related education, training or outreach as one of their objectives; typically non-profit organizations such as conservation organizations, community action groups, local watershed groups, or faith-based organizations

Environmental Education and Outdoor Education Organizations Section

Educators, administrators and other staff who work for an organization that has environmental and outdoor education as its primary mission such as an EE center, nature center, park, camp, resident outdoor education center, zoo, museum, arboretum, or historical site; may bring their education programs to schools and other settings; typically non-profit organizations

Government Agency Section

Staff and administrators from local, state and federal government agencies who have environment-related education, training and outreach as one of their objectives such as county soil and water conservation districts, city health departments, planning commissions, solid waste districts, municipal groups

Higher Education Section

Students, faculty and administrators from colleges and universities offering associate, bachelor, Master's and Ph.D. degrees; includes programs in teacher education and environment-related education, training and outreach as well as environmental literacy courses as part of general education requirements

Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education Section

Teachers, curriculum supervisors, administrators and other staff who work for early childhood, elementary, and secondary public and private schools, before and after school programs as well as parents who homeschool their children

Research Section

People who conduct research in environment-related education, training and outreach and environmental sciences and those interested in applying the results of such research

Third, EECO again took the lead in developing a statewide strategic plan for environmental education in Ohio building upon Ohio EE 2000. The following process was used:

- 1) An ad hoc EECO Strategic Planning Committee solicited up to three people representative of each of the newly developed EECO special interest sections to form the Core Strategic Planning Group (i.e., EEOhio broad-based audiences). Each of these people was asked to represent their constituency for the duration of the planning process. One person from each section was asked to be the “anchor” or main representative for that constituency. The ad hoc committee also recruited facilitators to assist in the planning process.
- 2) This Core Strategic Planning Group (twenty members) met for a daylong session (July, 2005) where they reviewed the results of a pre-session survey and the current context of Ohio EE in Ohio; reviewed the EE 2000 plan and the resulting accomplishments; and identified and prioritized new “key areas” and “action items” for environmental education in Ohio—Ohio EE 2010.
- 3) The facilitators and ad hoc committee synthesized the work into a first draft of the plan based on the Ohio EE 2000 template.
- 4) The ad hoc committee and the Core Group recruited additional people for each section to form the Expanded Strategic Planning Group (40 people) to participate in a second daylong session (September, 2005) where they reviewed the first draft of the strategic plan, affirmed strengths and suggested changes, and prioritized the action items under each key area.

- 5) The facilitators and ad hoc committee incorporated this work into a second draft.
- 6) The Core Group and the Expanded Strategic Planning Group participated in a third daylong session (November, 2005) where they reviewed this draft and added general action steps under each action item.
- 7) The ad hoc committee prepared the third, and final, draft.
- 8) This final draft strategic plan is being sent to all members of the Core and Expanded Strategic Planning Groups for them to share with their constituencies for review and comment. In addition it will be posted on the EECO website for public review.
- 9) Based on these comments, the EECO ad hoc committee will make final changes and submit the plan to the EECO Board of Directors for consideration and approval (Spring 2006).
- 10) EECO and its partners will collaborate to implement *Ohio EE 2010: A Strategic Plan for Environmental Education in Ohio*.

Overview of Ohio EE 2010 Strategic Planning Process



Ohio EE 2010: A Strategic Plan for Environmental Education in Ohio

Overview of Seven Key Areas and Associated Action Items

Ohio EE 2010 identifies seven key areas to focus on in the next five years. Under each, the committees have prioritized one or more action items to strategically address the key areas. The following provides an overview of the plan (i.e., key areas and action items). The next section includes the action steps.

I. Coordinated EE Activities

- A. Inventory resources relevant to Ohio from for-profit and non-profit EE groups and communicate about them with formal and nonformal educators.
- B. Identify and disseminate information about educational resources that have been aligned with Ohio Department of Education academic content standards and align new/additional resources.
- C. Identify and implement strategies for developing college and university campuses as models of sustainability.
- D. Identify current, critical environmental issues, provide opportunities for discussion from multiple perspectives and identify potential actions based on sound science.

II. Communication and Promotion

- A. Create a comprehensive public awareness strategy that promotes exemplary EE.
- B. Advocate at the local, state and federal levels for increased support and funding for EE.

III. Training and Professional Development

- A. Promote existing and develop new strategies for increasing the number of teacher education programs (pre-service and in-service) that incorporate EE resources and promote their integration across the curriculum.

IV. Diversity

- A. Include underserved audiences in EE programs to stimulate and enhance balanced perspectives and be attentive to environmental justice issues.

V. Research

- A. Develop an EE research agenda, building on the work of the Ohio EE 2000 Research Consortium.

VI. Accountability & Results

- A. Identify best practices that have produced documented, measurable change in desired behaviors.
- B. Promote use of measurable outcomes in EE programs and use them to build credibility.

VII. Connecting People and the Environment

- A. Develop strategies for increasing people's understanding of the relationship between the quality of the environment and the quality of their lives, in order to increase socially responsible environmental action in communities.

Note: The timeline (“Start” and “End” dates) for each of the following action items will be determined after the action items and action steps have been finalized and prioritized.

Call to Action

We need you to bring this strategic plan to life!

Many of the following action items call for bringing together groups of diverse people to plan and carry out the action steps. As you read this statewide strategic plan for environmental education, think about your role and how you can be a part of the future of EE in Ohio. The success of this plan depends upon you, your colleagues and your constituencies.

Please e-mail or call Brenda Metcalf, EECO Director, today and let her know which action item(s) you want to work on. Thank you for your commitment to EE.

director@eeco-online.org

740-653-2649

Ohio EE 2010: A Strategic Plan for Environmental Education in Ohio

Key Areas, Action Items and Action Steps

I. Coordinated EE Activities

A. Inventory educational resources relevant to Ohio from for-profit and non-profit EE groups and communicate about them with formal and nonformal educators.

Step No.	Action Steps	“Start” Month	“End” Month
1.	Put together a working group with representatives from government (e.g., OICEE agencies), for-profit and non-profit groups to carry out the project, and obtain funding/sponsorship.		
2.	Review existing inventories of EE resources, (e.g., EECO online Resource Directory, NAAEE’s EE-Link) to determine how they can be used most effectively in Ohio, and if additional tools are needed.		
3.	Using the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) guidelines, inventory current resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include resources that are useful to the diverse audiences in the state • Include a wide variety of resources (e.g., curricula, model inquiry-based lessons, best practices, program models, assessment resources, publications, professional development). 		
4.	Create a process for updating the inventory.		
5.	Create multi-year communication plan that includes strategies to communicate the results of the inventory and its updates with formal and nonformal educators.		
6.	Coordinate activities with I.B, II.A, and II.B.		

I. Coordinated EE Activities

B. Identify and disseminate information about educational resources that have been aligned with Ohio Department of Education academic content standards and align new/additional resources.

Step No.	Action Steps	“Start” Month	“End” Month
1.	Research models that other states and national organizations have used to synthesize and disseminate information about existing resources that have been aligned to state or national standards.		
2.	Catalog existing aligned resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the existing resources.• Categorize the types of resources (e.g., programs, books, presentations, model lessons).• Synthesize information about the resources, including how they align to benchmarks and indicators.		
3.	Identify in the online inventory (I.A) resources that have been aligned with Ohio’s academic content standards.		
4.	Identify audiences (e.g. K-12 teachers, consultants, program providers) who will use the synthesized information.		
5.	Evaluate potential dissemination models and costs.		
6.	Select model, secure funding and implement.		
7.	Evaluate the effectiveness of the product and adjust to meet needs of users.		
8.	Create a process for aligning new/additional resources to ensure timeliness and relevance.		

I. Coordinated EE Activities

C. Identify and implement strategies for developing college and university campuses as models of sustainability.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	Create EECO Campus Sustainability Working Group (be sure to include diverse campus representation and representatives from higher education organizations currently addressing sustainability).		
2.	<p>Gather information about campus sustainability efforts in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational sustainability (e.g., green buildings, campus procedures and operations, recycling, energy use and conservation). • Campus education of students, faculty and staff about sustainability (e.g., sustainability in general studies programs, professional development programs on campuses for staff). • Outreach and engagement with the broader community. <p>Consider Ohio, national and international examples and resources for inclusion as best practices or for further study.</p>		
3.	Inventory and organize information that was collected in step 2.		
4.	Make the inventory of campus sustainability information available to EE and Higher Education communities.		
5.	<p>Raise awareness of campus leaders concerning sustainability by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including examples of sustainability in EECO conferences, website, and newsletter. • Connecting with existing organizations to include information from the inventory in their newsletters and on their Web sites. • Identifying spokespeople already involved with campus sustainability to promote its benefits. 		

I. Coordinated EE Activities

D. Identify current, critical environmental issues, provide opportunities for discussion from multiple perspectives and identify potential actions based on sound science.

Step No.	Action Steps	“Start” Month	“End” Month
1.	Establish a working group representing broad perspectives and skills to foster dialogue and action based on sound science. Members with expertise in natural and social sciences, economics, education, mediation/facilitation, communication, and event planning should be included. Business, non-profit organizations, government, legal professions, and higher education should all be represented on the committee.		
2.	Select an issue (at least annually) and identify a targeted audience(s) and appropriate venue (e.g., a strand or theme within conferences) to provide professional development and/or public education on the issue.		
3.	Ensure that the professional development and/or public education includes current content information as well as a format for interactive discussion and that panel members/presenters represent diverse backgrounds and approaches.		
4.	When selecting the venue, utilize as possible existing major events (e.g., conferences, workshops, summits) to foster collaboration and maximize impact. Also consider a speaker series, traveling panels and Ohio Alliance for the Environment’s forums as possible formats.		
5.	Disseminate information presented at the sessions through proceedings and summaries that elucidate areas of consensus, debate, disagreement, need for further study and recommendations for future action.		

II. Communication and Promotion

A. Create a comprehensive public awareness strategy that promotes exemplary EE resources.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	<p>Identify specific target audiences within each of the following categories: providers, consumers, and funders of EE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target audience for providers might include formal educators and pre-service teachers; non-formal educators and young EE professionals; business community members who provide EE resources, businesses who have programs to educate their own employees, and/or businesses who produce environmentally friendly products. • Target audiences for consumers might include parents, homeschoolers, formal educators and pre-service teachers, and the adult general public • Target audiences for funders might include the business community, foundations, state and federal grant programs, and the Ohio General Assembly. 		
2.	<p>Develop specific messages tailored to each target audience with the following common points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards exist for high quality EE. • High quality EE resources are available. • Resources are easy to access. 		
3.	<p>Identify and develop vehicles to approach each target audience, working through EECO sections at the statewide level, and through EECO regions at the local level with the intent of involving many partners in promoting EE. Strategies may include presentations, newsletter articles, Websites, Web links, local meetings, and the online EE Resource Directory.</p>		

II. Communication and Promotion

B. Advocate at the local, state and federal levels for increased support and funding for EE.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	Review findings from the informal <i>Ohio EE 2000</i> funding survey.		
2.	Convene representatives from a broad array of EE organizations to develop a statewide EE funding strategy that addresses the needs of individual organizations and also overarching statewide needs.		
3.	Identify old and new target audiences for advocacy to increase funding for EE, (e.g., Ohio General Assembly, corporate and foundation donors, individual donors, taxpayers and the general public).		
4.	Compile overarching statistics, evidence and testimonies of the effectiveness of EE, and Ohio examples that can be utilized by all the various EE providers in their individual lobbying and fundraising efforts. Produce print pieces, Web pages, "talking points," and statistics lists incorporate the success stories identified in VI.B.3. Also identify speakers who can present this information.		
5.	Provide training to EE providers (e.g., at EECO, NAI conferences) on how to write a news release, talk to media, lobby elected and appointed officials, write grants, and solicit funding from individual donors.		
6.	Develop a working group of key individuals from various EE organizations who can appear frequently before legislators and funders on behalf of EE, and generate letters and phone calls quickly from their constituents.		
7.	To reach the taxpayer and general public, use the channels identified from Action Items II.A and the forums and discussions in Action Item I.D.		

III. Training and Professional Development

A. Promote existing and develop new strategies for increasing the number of teacher education programs (pre-service and in-service) that incorporate EE resources and promote their integration across the curriculum.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	Review the <i>Ohio EE 2000 Preservice Teacher Education Study</i> and <i>NAAEE current National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) effort to incorporate more EE in teacher education programs.</i>		
2.	Form a working group to gather best practices for EE currently being used in pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. Include practices that support integration across the curriculum and multidisciplinary approaches. Compile these into a "teacher education best practices" product.		
3.	Develop a cadre of formal and non-formal educators who will present best practices to pre-service and/or in-service teachers.		
4.	Disseminate ideas generated from Action Step 2 through panel discussions, concurrent sessions, and other formats at professional development conferences (e.g., Environmental Education Council of Ohio, Ohio Council of Teacher Education Organizations, Science Education Council of Ohio).		
5.	Secure funding for presenters (Action Step 3) to attend conferences to present about best practices (e.g., registration, travel).		
6.	Offer incentives to pre-service and in-service educators to attend relevant conferences (e.g., reduced or free registration, group rates, graduate credit)		
7.	Follow up teacher education conferences with distance learning opportunities.		

IV. Diversity

A. Include underserved audiences in EE programs to stimulate and enhance balanced perspectives and be attentive to environmental justice issues.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	At least annually identify an underserved audience(s) as a focus for that year and in the future.		
2.	Building on <i>Environmental Education Programs and Underserved Audiences in Ohio</i> (Ohio EE 2000), promote further research on how to effectively involve diverse communities in EE.		
3.	Identify individuals and organizations currently working successfully with the identified underserved audience(s) to learn how best to work with these groups.		
4.	Identify key strategies to work with the identified audience(s) on environmental education (according to best practices).		
5.	<p>Convene regional workshops to facilitate the process of bringing environmental professionals and the underserved audience(s) together to learn from one another, increase understanding of the issues of the audience and develop strategies to address those issues in the delivery of environmental education. The workshops should follow these guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops should be held in the communities where the underserved audience lives. • Local community members should make up a majority of the people attending and be involved in leadership roles in the planning process. • Workshops and meetings should be attentive to issues of environmental justice and strongly advocate for stakeholders being fully involved. 		

V. Research

A. Develop an EE research agenda, building on the work of the Ohio EE 2000 Research Consortium.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	Reconvene the Ohio EE 2000 Research Consortium and other interested parties to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and update the Ohio EE 2000 Research Consortium report and re-prioritize research activities if appropriate.• Identify a sustainable coordinating committee for the Research Consortium composed of interested researchers and stakeholders to oversee Action Steps 2-6.		
2.	Inventory existing Ohio research and researchers and do a needs assessment to determine new areas of research needed for EE in Ohio.		
3.	Develop a research agenda which includes timelines, potential funding sources, collaborations (within Ohio and outside of Ohio), responsible parties, and communication means to achieve the priorities.		
4.	Finalize funding sources and a sponsor to house, coordinate and disseminate research activities.		
5.	Monitor implementation of the agenda and revise as necessary.		
6.	Ensure maintenance and momentum of the Research Consortium by scheduling periodic professional exchanges on-line or in-person.		

VI. Accountability & Results

A. Identify best practices that have produced documented, measurable change in desired behaviors.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	Gather background information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify EE programs with behavior change as a goal. • Conduct research/literature review of EE programs that have linked the results of these programs to behavior change. • Review <i>Best Practices for Environmental Education: Guidelines for Success</i>. 		
2.	Identify best practices for programs to use in developing and evaluating behavior change in targeted audience(s) (e.g., K-12, adult, business, nonformal).		
3.	Synthesize information in a user-friendly "best practices" product.		
4.	Develop a plan for distributing the best practices product and coordinate its use with II.A.		
5.	Solicit and select programs that will implement the best practices product and serve as model programs for Ohio.		
6.	Seek funding for longitudinal behavioral change study of the model programs.		

VI. Accountability & Results

B. Promote use of measurable outcomes in EE programs and use them to build credibility for EE.

Step No.	Action Steps	"Start" Month	"End" Month
1.	Establish a working group to oversee the action item.		
2.	Define terms (e.g., measurable outcomes) and criteria that will be used in this project for selecting examples of EE success stories (e.g., use North American Association for Environmental Education guidelines, <i>Best Practices for Environmental Education: Guidelines for Success</i>).		
3.	Conduct a broad-based search for EE success stories that resulted in documented achievement of measurable outcomes. Review OEEF outstanding projects for examples. See also II.B.4.		
4.	Synthesize the information into a product and disseminate.		
5.	Collaborate to infuse the use of measurable outcomes within organizations' new and existing programs and processes (e.g., funders' grant guidelines and procedures; development of curriculum; programs for general public and adult education).		
6.	Promote use of measurable outcomes through multiple venues and approaches such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing "How to" pieces on different organizations' Websites. • Promoting the rubrics used to evaluate OEEF outstanding projects. • Setting up a clearinghouse of best practices and success stories. • Doing concurrent sessions at professional meetings and conferences with respect to the use of measurable outcomes in EE. • Including articles in different organizations' newsletters. • Preparing press releases and fact sheets (e.g., how to, success stories). • Developing a database of reliable/valid instruments for measuring EE outcomes. 		
7.	Review project achievement and success and decide next steps for the project.		

VII. Connecting People and the Environment

A. Develop strategies for increasing people’s understanding of the relationship between the quality of the environment and the quality of their lives, in order to increase socially responsible environmental action in communities.

Step No.	Action Steps	“Start” Month	“End” Month
1.	Form a collaborative partnership to address this issue. Include diverse groups such as local and state government, nonformal EE organizations, community and faith organizations, watershed groups, higher education, Pre-K-12, and other groups and institutions engaged in environmental education.		
2.	Identify existing and, if needed, create new curricula for formal or nonformal education settings that connect people with the environment and create opportunities for people to interact with the environment. Promote connections and stewardship through understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How earth systems work. • How human interactions affect those systems. • Impacts of human activity on those systems. • Possible actions to mitigate human impacts. • Wide variety of environmental careers that contribute to stewardship. 		
3.	Serve as a clearinghouse of information about those opportunities, curricula and stories of best practices/case studies/examples through Web postings.		
4.	Use the Ohio environmental literacy survey (1999) and other studies such as the NEETF/Roper annual surveys to continually evaluate people’s understanding of and connections to the environment. Note from DC—What is the intent here? To conduct a survey, based upon the Ohio instrument with some additional questions based on NEETF and/or others? To repeat the Ohio survey and review findings from NEETF and others?		