

Declaration in Support of Environmental Education in Alberta

November 2019

This document was initially created by over 80 environmental educators who came together in May 2019, for a Provincial Summit hosted by the Alberta Council for Environmental Education. Since then, it has continued to be reviewed and revised slightly by environmental educators in Alberta.

Why is environmental education important?

The health and wellness of Albertans relies on a healthy environment. Environmental education is a vital strategy to ensure people understand the interconnections between environment, economy and society – a key requirement for a society that wishes to create a sustainable future – especially in the current climate of polarized views of either/or for environment and energy. To achieve this, the 700,000 Alberta students need to build their core competencies by learning more about the environment, developing skills to investigate it, and making intelligent, informed decisions to create a sustainable future.

Our definition of environmental education includes education about conservation, outdoors, and energy, that includes wellness, climate, water, recycling, nature connections, energy efficiency and sustainability as outlined in the Environmental Education Is... tree image.

We identified the following priorities for environmental education in Alberta. It must:

- be available for every child, every day across all grades and subjects
- foster a sense of place and increase personal wellbeing through regular connections with nature
- empower students to be active environmental stewards that build vibrant, prosperous and resilient communities
- incorporate expertise from outside the classroom, and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives

We desire to work alongside the government of Alberta, and Alberta's educational leadership, to create the following conditions to support environmental education for all K-12 students.

1. Support student environmental literacy through the creation of school board policies and plans that...

- make it easier for teachers and students to spend time in nature and connect with external expertise
- provide recognition for exemplary practices by school boards, schools and teachers
- connect 'green infrastructure' with student learning

2. Support relevant teacher professional learning and planning by providing...

- financial resources to the Alberta Regional Consortia
- more opportunities through the Alberta Teachers' Association conventions, specialist council conferences, and other offerings
- more opportunities for professional learning within school districts, such as professional learning communities to help teachers learn and share together
- opportunities for pre-service teachers through Faculties of Education
- stronger links between teachers, experts and quality resources offered by community education groups to support teaching and learning

3. **Ensure that new K-12 curriculum enhances student environmental literacy across all grades and subjects by adopting information from the community-created Curriculum for a Sustainable Future.** An 'evergreen' document created by a multi-stakeholder Education Task Force in consultation with over three dozen Albertan opinion leaders that supports cross-curricular learning and will deliver on the identified priorities.