

Engaging Young People in 21st Century Community Challenges: Linking Environmental Education with STEM



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The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) is a pioneering membership organization dedicated to accelerating environmental literacy through education. NAAEE supports a network of more than 16,000 educators, researchers, and organizational members working in environmental education across more than 30 countries through direct membership and 54 regional affiliate organizations. Through sponsored community networks, publications, and employment development opportunities, NAAEE provides resources for educators, professionals, volunteers, and researchers. NAAEE's tentpole annual conference, now in its 42nd year, convenes leaders from private and public sectors to advance the field of environmental education. For more information, visit www.naaee.net.

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NewKnowledge is a non-profit research institute founded to pursue a deep understanding of how people engage with society's grand challenges. The organization works to expand understanding of how knowledge is acquired and acted upon in order to promote a strong democracy that enables all people to live to their greatest potential in harmony with the biosphere.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) was awarded a research grant by Underwriters Laboratories (UL) to explore integrating environmental education into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) learning for young people. In conjunction with UL, the California Water Service Company also supported this initiative. As a result of this grant, NAAEE partnered with New Knowledge Organization Ltd. (NewKnowledge), the research partner.

The goals of the research endeavor were to:

- 1) Identify and assess the most innovative and brightest ideas in E→STEM; and
- 2) Investigate a suite of activities that inspire young people to learn, experience, explore, and help solve local community challenges.

To accomplish these objectives, NewKnowledge led a multi-faceted suite of qualitative and quantitative research efforts, including a literature review, crowd sourcing, surveys, a workshop, concept mapping activities, and interviews. Hundreds of educators, professionals, and advocates from across the US—joined by a handful of international participants—took part in this major effort.

Next Generation of E→STEM

As a result of this work, NewKnowledge found that the next generation of E→STEM learning will prioritize four indicators:

Professional Development

Professional Development (PD) was the highest priority of E→STEM educators and experts. PD will take the form of strong peer networks of educators from all grade levels, as well as both formal and non-formal backgrounds. Activities will be self-directed and with support from peer mentors across disciplines. And programs will offer long-term, sustained opportunities for collaboration with practicing professionals. Successful PD will incorporate strong communication



between educators and administrators wherever possible, as administrative support is critical for K-12 programs to thrive.

Real Connections

Programs that make connections to the real environment are still extremely important, no matter how far technology progresses. Spending time outdoors doing hands-on activities is considered a “tried and true” method, with proven results that are widely respected. Outdoor activities remain affordable and offer easy access for most people as well.

Creativity in Critical Thinking

Creativity in critical is highly important and innovative in E→STEM programs. A focus on the learning process—whether through student collaborative research, experimental designs, or combining the visual arts with science lessons—show that there is a need for a variety of approaches to E→STEM learning. Diverse learning approaches are naturally appropriate in E→STEM, making it accessible to broader audiences.

Practical Synthesis

E→STEM learning will focus on the integration of cross-curricular STEM education, where educators and experts from different disciplines will collaborate in long-term projects. Notable ways to achieve this synthesis are through varied teaching teams, topics such as economics of the environment, and abandoning standardized testing for promoting life-long learning. Cross-curricular collaboration is also a powerful strategy for PD.

The research revealed a set of five supporting attributes for success in E→STEM as well. These were:

- Technology & Real Problems – Using of technology to solve real-world issues in the natural environment



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- Media & Community – Working on real problems with free, technically advanced monitoring systems to support community learning. There is a special emphasis on sharing knowledge with social networks, including those in web-based communities.
 - Community & Cross-Generational Learning – Educators called for a renewed effort in programs that promote activities for learners of different ages. This is especially promising for building connections within communities.
 - Empowerment – Urban movements are increasingly utilizing an empowerment, health, and social justice approach to engage youth in E→STEM. This could be an effective strategy for many projects.
 - Digital Tools & Modeling – using digital tools and mobile technologies to interpret natural environments—with an emphasis on engaging with local settings—which can be paired with outdoor activities.

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1. Project Overview

In 2013, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) was awarded a research grant by Underwriters Laboratories (UL) to explore integrating environmental education into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) learning for young people. In conjunction with UL, the California Water Service Company in California also supported this initiative. As a result of this planning grant, NAAEE partnered with New Knowledge Organization Ltd. (NewKnowledge) to research and assess the most innovating and brightest ideas in E→STEM, to investigate a suite of activities that inspire young people to learn, experience, explore, and help solve local community challenges through a combination of environmental education, citizen science activities, and project-based learning.

E→STEM, as defined for this project, refers to learning about the Environment as a pathway to STEM learning. The arrow between E and STEM specifically highlights programs and learning initiatives that engage individuals in the environment as a means to explore concepts in traditional STEM disciplines.

E→STEM aligns with 4 key educational best practices that deeply engage students:

1. Hands-on: Project-based environmental learning is hands-on.
2. Tangible Themes: The environment is a tangible theme (and “passion area”) that incorporates broader learning topics in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
3. Aligns with Interests: The environment is consistently rated one of children’s top interest areas.
4. Fosters Achievement & Empowerment: Projects result in a visible impact made by students, which fuels inspiration and a sense of achievement.

Long-Term Goals

The project sought to increase the quantity and quality of tomorrow’s STEM workers. This partnership aimed to foster a passion for STEM topics in today’s youth, enrich their interest in STEM educational topics, and nurture a passion for STEM-related career opportunities. Through

quantitative and qualitative research, NewKnowledge explored how environmental education is an ideal entry point for STEM learning. This report describes the research process and outcomes.

THE CRITICAL NEED FOR STEM EDUCATION

At the outset of the project, the team recognized that the planet is facing unprecedented environmental, social, and economic issues. This situation is exacerbated by a set of challenges facing the next generation of adults entering the workforce:

- In 2010, the World Economic Forum **ranked the US 48th** in the quality of math and science instruction.
- Large companies, like Microsoft, share concern over the **growing deficit** of qualified workers to fill vacant STEM positions nationwide (numbering in the millions).
- Current **barriers to STEM** education include: budget cuts, uninspiring coursework, and difficulty with foundational concepts.

Through an initial background study followed by a sequential set of surveys and interviews (1) identified Bright Spots of Creativity and Programming Gaps in current E→STEM programs in middle and high schools and communities across the US; (2) overlaid Cultural Context to these insights through feedback from educators; and (3) identified potential Partnership & Collaboration Opportunities for UL to develop a high-impact E→STEM program.

To pursue this project, NAAEE sought out the counsel of a small advisory board throughout the research phase including:

- Academic experts in innovation related to education theory and environmental learning from Stanford University, Ohio State University, and the University of Connecticut
- Experts from government and NGO organizations including the Council of Chief State School Officers, WestEd K-12 Alliance, and National Environmental Education Advisory Council – US EPA
- Leaders from the corporate world, including Disney and Microsoft

In addition to the strategic advice on the research process, the project also supported through broadcast of surveys and commentary on the project at various research efforts, including:

Aerospace Industry Assoc., American Society for Engineering Education, Association for Zoos & Aquariums, Edutopia, National Academy of Sciences, National Environmental Education Foundation, National Park Foundation, National Science Teachers Association, US Department of Education, Women in STEM, Washington D.C. Leadership Network, Teachers Recess, National Math and Science Initiative, National Geographic Society, United Nations, Environmental Funders Network, NASA, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, and California Water Service.

2. Background Study

Where are the bright spots of creativity?

What are the most effective programs?

Overview

To assess the current status of E→STEM, we conducted an internet search of current and innovative programs matching our definition of E→STEM. Search words and phrases employed for the background research included:

- Innovative
- Environmental STEM
- E-STEM
- STEM And Nature
- Environment Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
- Similar variations of the above

Further searches explored current STEM programs, determining which programs used environment or had aspects of their programs that focused on the use of the natural environment.

To expand our understanding of innovative programs, NewKnowledge researchers also compiled a list of new and innovative STEM programs. Although these programs did not directly engage with the environment, they offered insight into innovative methods being used in STEM learning scenarios.

Altogether, a total of 91 E→STEM and “traditional” STEM programs (i.e. those programs that focused on traditional STEM disciplines, without an emphasis on the environment) were found. The majority were located in a report by the Bayer Corporation that outlined a compendium of best practices for K-12 STEM programs (2010).

Some of the programs found during this background research phase were:

- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) Learning Studios
- Project Lead the Way (PLTW)
- DREAMS of Wilmington and Fort Fischer Aquarium
- Education through Exploration by the JASON Project
- Model My Watershed by Stroud Center for Water Research

A complete list of the programs can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Methodology

Using language from each program's website, we compiled a database of program descriptions. Using a qualitative analytical tool called Leximancer, we analyzed word and/or phrase frequency and connections between constructs to locate emergent concepts and general themes from the data corpus.

Leximancer extracts thesaurus-based concepts and creates a concept map in order to analyze the relational aspects of different concepts found in a body of text (for a review of Leximancer see Smith & Humphreys 2006). The program provides a visual tool as seen in Figure 1.1. Here, the tool shows how different concepts—or recurring and similar words (represented by gray dots)—form larger themes (represented by colored circles) and the ways in which they were connected to one another (represented by proximity and overlap). Colors of the themes signify importance and relevance, where red, orange, and yellow are “hot” topics and green, blue, and purple are themes of less importance.

Leximancer can also adjust the visualization of these themes according to a set percent of visibility, with 0% grouping all concepts into one theme and 100% revealing all possible concepts into separate themes. Leximancer uses a default percent visibility of 33%, however this percent can be adjusted depending on individual analysis. The research team used 40% visibility level so as to group the concepts into a meaningful number of themes.

According to Smith and Humphreys (2006), Leximancer offered the flexibility to tailor analysis depending upon the specific research questions, as long as they were part of the analysis strategy. For example, the total number of automatically selected concepts was increased to extract more specific concepts from the low ranked words. Words that occurred frequently and co-occurred with others without contributing to semantic value were removed from analysis. Concepts could also be defined manually based on criteria theoretically relevant to the research question. This strategy enabled an evaluation of the validity of our strategy and ensured it was grounded in evidence gathered through an accepted methodological framework rather than anecdotal reporting that may introduce researcher bias.



Figure 1.1 Output of themes and concepts from Leximancer

This process resulted in a list of key themes that was emerging in the current field of E→STEM and STEM programs (Appendix C). Specifically, with a 40% concept visibility, 10 themes are depicted in Figure 1.1. These themes contributed in the development of subsequent research efforts. Listed in order of the number of connections to other themes, these themes are:

- communities/community
- work
- activities
- experience
- support
- student
- resources
- innovative
- children
- grade

Thematic analysis of the Background Study was conducted at the same time as the Crowd Sourcing Survey in order to compare descriptions of innovation in E→STEM. Detailed description of these analyses are described in the following section on the Crowd Sourcing effort.



3. Crowd Sourcing Survey

Where are the bright spots of creativity?

What are the most effective programs?

Overview

The Crowd Sourcing effort was developed as an online survey to crowd source data from members of NAAEE, American Evaluation Association, and National Science Teachers Association, among others. The survey consisted of a nomination process whereby participants were asked describe attributes of the programs that they believed were the most creative, and effective programs in E→STEM.

Over 200 participants completed the survey / nomination process. The results included 179 programs or projects from throughout the world. The majority were based in the US.

Although E→STEM programs necessarily entailed some degree of engagement with the environment, the nominated programs ranged widely in their emphasis on the environment. The results included programs that focused on minority populations to the use of digital media to placing an emphasis on community and civic engagement. Some programs appeared to center around environmental learning, while others used the environment as one of several program components.

Nominated Projects

The vast majority of projects nominated were from the United States (96%). The average program catered to between 500-999 participants. Almost all the nominated programs (95%) were described as promoting “science literacy” and incorporating “hands-on learning”. Almost as many projects incorporate “experiential learning” (91%) and many claim to “support educators” (85%). Many programs targeted more than one age group. The dominant audience for these projects were youth between 7 to 12 year-olds (n= 145, 73%) and 13 and 19 (n= 149, 75%).

International Programs Nominated

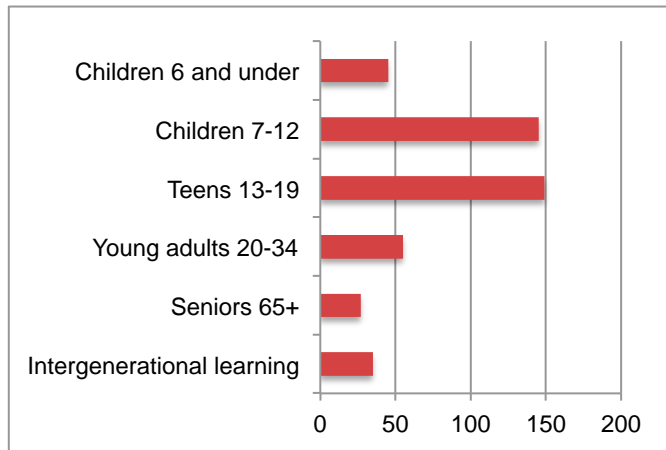


Figure 3.1 Age groups targeted by E→STEM programs throughout the US and the world. Values represent the number of distinct programs.

Project partners at UL worked to promote participation by an international cohort of educators, rebroadcasting the survey to recruit participants at the request of their German partners. Despite expressed interest from these European partners, only eight projects from outside the United States were received: Australia (n=1), Canada (n=3), Guatemala (n=1), Kenya (n=1), the Philippines (n=1), and Venezuela (n=1).

These eight programs tended to focus on “experiential” and “hands-on learning” with strong ties to local communities. This small sample of international programs also tended to involve all age groups, but three of the eight programs served adults only.

E→STEM ANALYSIS: INNOVATION

The information gathered from the Background Study (see previous section) and the responses from the Crowd Sourcing survey were used to describe current innovation in E→STEM. Both sets of data were analyzed as narrative descriptions of innovation in E→STEM. NewKnowledge researchers used Leximancer to conduct a thematic analysis and create a visualization of: 1) an overview of global E→STEM programs, using both automated and user-defined settings (i.e. the Background Study) and 2) the responses to the call for nominations for innovative programs in E→STEM (i.e. the Crowd Sourcing Survey). See the first section, Background Study, for more details about Leximancer.

For this study, the concepts were generated automatically by Leximancer without explicitly including the those that had low initial ranks. Concepts identified by the automatic process were utilized for final analysis and interpretation of the combined datasets. An open-coding process was considered most appropriate for this phase, acknowledging the focus on describing the broadest

range of attributes for innovation to be presented for community concept mapping, rather than condensed by the researchers. Since the research questions for this portion of the study had received limited previous attention, the research team chose to allow the software to surface the themes depicted in the data and use these categories for open organization to compress the concepts into discrete semantic coded sets.

Multiple iterations of the data analysis were conducted to understand the themes that described innovative programs in E→STEM. To start this process, all the responses were reviewed by NewKnowledge researchers and then by the Leximancer program. This was followed by using the automated settings to uncover concepts that were deemed relevant by the software. Following this, the researchers adapted the setting to conceal specific references to environment (E), STEM and science, technology, engineering and math but using them as semantic evidence to organize the remaining natural language data.

Emergent Themes from the Background Study and Crowd Sourcing Survey

Two separate analyses of the emergent themes and concepts extracted from the Leximancer software were compared and proved to have similar results. These “concepts” were rewritten to represent dominant or distinct attributes representing both the Background Study and the Crowd Sourcing Survey. This process produced a total of 97 statements, from which 10 thematic categories were ultimately developed.

THEMES FROM THE BACKGROUND STUDY

First, NewKnowledge researchers analyzed the results of the Background Study. To create statements that typify each theme that emerged in the data, the research team used exemplar statements of themes, extracted from the text by Leximancer, which identified these themes based on the most commonly occurring concept within that theme. Examples of these statements were:

- Working with community partners
- Design and physically build experiments

- Demonstrate how ecological systems work
- Develop digital media lessons
- Use inquiry-based methods to solve real world STEM-related problems

These statements were then compiled and grouped together into similar categories to account for redundancies.

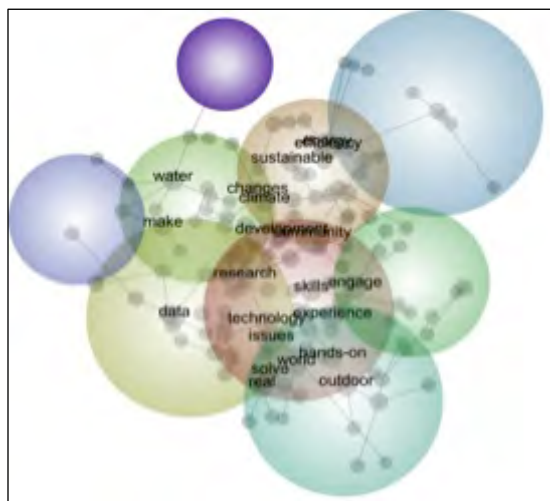
Themes from the Crowd Sourcing Survey

The researchers then used the data from the Crowd Sourcing Survey to produce theme statements and imagery, again with Leximancer. The theme statements were perhaps the clearest and most useful output for the research team. Here are several examples:

Through five face-to-face and two online courses, teachers are acquiring the experiences and / resources necessary to integrate energy concepts into their STEM curriculums.

Local environmental issues [motivate] students to understand STEM topics while solving real problems

This program takes project based learning to the next level and inspires students to create connections to their education, their environment and what experts in the field are doing about the same issues and challenges they are faced with.



In comparison, Figure 3.2 (left) shows the Leximancer output with the concepts highlighted and is less legible than the statements above.

Lastly, the Leximancer output in Figure 3.3 offers more clarity but less detail.

Figure 3.2 Leximancer output with concepts visible

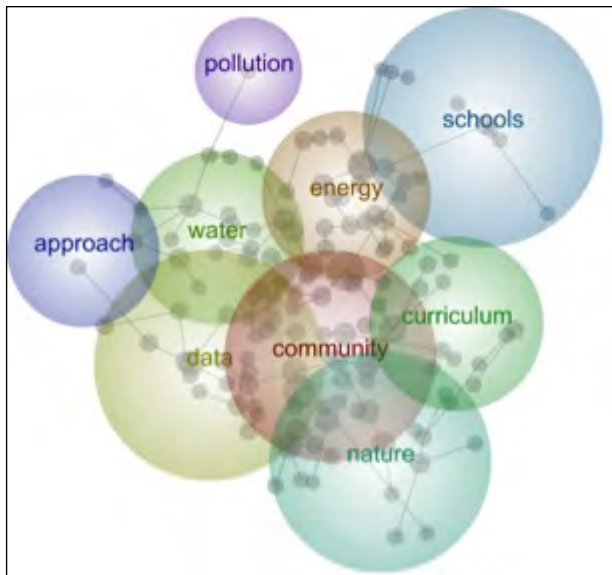


Figure 3.3 Leximancer outputs with themes visible.

Synthesizing Themes

From the 97 statements produced as a result of the Background Study and the Crowd Sourcing Survey, 10 thematic categories were compiled. Ranked in descending order of the most commonly occurring in the programs that the research team studied, the themes were:

1. Community focus
2. Environmental issues and problems
3. Web-based and digital technologies
4. Hands-on, outdoor programming
5. Youth in at-risk communities
6. Special needs populations
7. Youth development (leadership skills, debating, collaboration)
8. Partnerships between professional practitioners and teachers

9. Partnerships between professional practitioners and students

10. Self-directed learning

This process of compiling 10 overarching themes provided a reliability test to ensure that data from both research efforts were in alignment. These themes were also measured against results of subsequent research efforts, such as the Blue Ribbon Panel (see [Section 5](#)).

E→STEM PROGRAMS: GAPS & CHALLENGES

While the above attributes explain the emergent themes from the data corpus, there were notable components that were not mentioned, or not mentioned nearly enough for Leximancer to identify them as significant. Researchers closely reviewed the data and determined themes that were potential gaps and challenges for E→STEM. Such breaches in innovative and important E→STEM programming included involving family in education and multi-generational learning.

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES: THE BLUE RIBBON PANEL

A total of 64 statements representing the 10 key attributes (listed above) and a set of gaps in innovation in E→STEM were developed to have the most innovative attributes of E→STEM for the subsequent panel of experts in the field, the Blue Ribbon Panel. Redundant statements were consolidated into new single statements and other statements were adapted by NewKnowledge researchers to best fit the descriptions of the ten categories mentioned above. Additional statements based on gaps that NewKnowledge investigators saw were developed to follow similar construction as the adapted statements (see [Appendix B](#)). The fabricated statements were primarily in regard to different target populations ([Appendix B](#), asterisked items). These were added to test if these missing components may be innovative and worthwhile in expanding E→STEM programming. For a full description of the Blue Ribbon Panel effort, see [Section 5](#).

4. National Science Teachers Association Workshop

What are the best opportunities for professional development, given the need to enhance educators' skills regarding E-STEM, environmental education, and project-based learning?

What incentives are needed to engage administrators and educators to improve practice?

What support is needed for an E-STEM program to be successful?

How would we measure impact?

What are the programming gaps that exist in E-STEM?

Overview

NewKnowledge, UL and NAAEE conducted a workshop at the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) annual conference in San Antonio, Texas on April 13, 2013. The workshop was a carefully planned event, with the goal of engaging science educators from across North America in discussions about their experience with and hopes for working with E→STEM programs.

Methodology

The research team recruited 37 educators attending the NSTA conference to participate in the half-day E→STEM workshop. To kick off the session, Christiane Maertens (NAAEE) welcomed the teachers and Ginger Sommer (UL) offered remarks about UL's history and interest in E→STEM. John Fraser (NewKnowledge) then introduced the concept of E→STEM that was used throughout the project and started the first discussion.

In three separate rotations, teachers were organized into discussion groups to focus on one of six sets of questions. To encourage dynamic conversations, participants formed groups with different sets of people each time they rotated. If another group had already worked on a question, the new group was responsible for assessing the previous response(s) and adapting its own response as a new statement. Groups worked out their ideas, thought processes, and conclusions on large presentation-style poster paper. At the end of the workshop, teachers completed individual

booklets that allowed them to independently reflect on the workshop's discussions and how they resonated with their own experiences.

NewKnowledge gathered the poster paper and the individual booklets for qualitative analysis. Recordings were not made, due to the multiple conversations taking place at the same time.

Participants

The majority of participants were K-12 teachers and one principal attended the session as well. Most participants identified as general science teachers, though about 15 said they were cross-disciplinary or had a narrower subject focus, such as environmental education, technology, or engineering. In general, the group evenly represented rural, suburban, and urban school settings, from each region of the United States. One participant was from Canada.



Figure 4.1 Stickers placed on a hand-drawn map to identify participants hometowns. Attendees represented all regions of the US, and one participant came from Canada.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Workshop participants responded to the following research questions in groups, as well as independently. In general, the tone of the workshop was highly positive. Participants acknowledged current challenges of the field, but their attitude was focused on problem-solving and solutions.



Figure 4.2 The workshop was a lively gathering, where participants worked on problems as groups.

E→STEM Programs: Gaps & Challenges

Even though workshop participants were enthusiastic about the potential of E→STEM programs, they acknowledged that there remain a number of challenges and “gaps” related to E→STEM programs at the time of the workshop.

Alignment with Testing Requirements. It was difficult for teachers to align E→STEM programs with state-mandated testing requirements. This presented barriers when it came time to obtain approval from district administrators.

Time Constraints. When E→STEM programs were perceived as outside of curriculum requirements, teachers had trouble arranging for enough time to prepare for and incorporate E→STEM programs into lesson plans.

Isolated Disciplines. Teachers perceived that educators in STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) were separate and did not collaborate with each other in E→STEM programs. They felt that the Next Generation Science Standards released coincident with the meeting contained a number of structures that would enhance student experience with collaboration, something they prioritized as a criterion for success in E→STEM programming.

Lack of Confidence with Some Subjects. Teachers did not feel adequately trained in all STEM subject areas, particularly when it came to engineering.

Clear Connections to the Environment. Opportunities to link the environment to traditional STEM topics were not always clear to teachers. This was most evident for more abstract subjects (such as physics) and “applied” sciences (such as engineering).

Administrative Support for E→STEM Programs

Educators believed that close communication with school administrators was essential to E→STEM programs’ success in the K-12 school system. However, they acknowledged that support for new E→STEM programs was a challenge in many cases. Workshop participants identified the following issues and ideas.

Teacher Enthusiasm. Participants believed that administrative support was more likely when more teachers—including those outside of the STEM subjects—are involved in and excited about introducing a new program.

Administrator Involvement in Process & Training. Educators said that administrators should be invited to participate in all stages of the planning process for new E→STEM programs. Equally important, administrators should join teacher training sessions to increase their knowledge of the program, as well as challenges for teachers.

Aligning with Testing Requirements. Educators acknowledged that administrators were particularly unlikely to support a program if it did not align with mandated testing requirements. Participants suggested programs with proven outcomes would be easier to gain support for, but would still be a challenge in a testing-focused culture.

Linking the Formal & Non-Formal

Participants believed that programs involving formal and non-formal organizations would be very successful learning opportunities for young people and would also benefit the community. In this case, formal was viewed as K-12 or university settings, whereas non-formal represented broader settings where learning may occur, such as museums, nature centers, or theme parks. Workshop



Figure 4.3 Workshop participants in a group discussion.

attendees discussed a number of considerations and solutions to the challenges involved in programs that join formal and non-formal partners.

Good Communicators. Participants described a need for personnel with excellent communication skills to serve as liaisons between formal and non-formal partners, particularly to define terms and clarify vocabulary associated with each partner. This alluded to a need for understanding between two settings that may operate with different structures and objectives.

Local Issues Are Opportunities. Local or regional E→STEM issues were said to be ideal for collaboration among formal and non-formal partners. The educators believed that people working in non-formal settings had special knowledge of, contact with, and expertise related to topics that were relevant to communities and therefore of interest to young people.

Educator Exchange Sessions. Participants were interested in training sessions that would allow educators to train with experts in non-formal entities during time away from school.

Capacity-Building for Youth & Educators. Collaboration between formal schools and non-formal partners was described as an opportunity to build young people's interest in and awareness of real and accessible careers. Participants also thought that this type of collaboration had the ability to increase confidence for educators and experts with both formal and non-formal backgrounds.

Assessing Impact

Workshop participants said it was essential to measure impacts of new E→STEM programs, particularly if they would be introduced into K-12 settings. This alluded to the challenges they saw in obtaining administrative support, in that it was difficult to introduce new E→STEM programs in schools unless they had proven outcomes and alignment with curriculum standards.

Attendees also advocated for evaluation strategies that align with how children learn. Social platforms, interactive notebooking, and concept mapping were noted as tools that may resonate with how youth learn in formal settings.

Indicators of Success for E→STEM

Participants believed that E→STEM offered diverse positive impacts, which were distinct from impacts they associated with conventional approaches to STEM learning. The following were indicators that workshop leaders described.

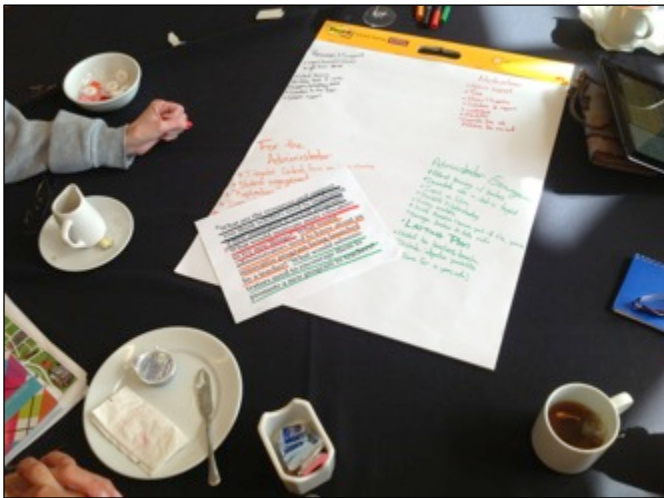


Figure 4.4 Groups created posters to describe their solutions for the research questions.

Deeper Interest in Many Subjects. The “E” in E→STEM was seen as the connector between STEM and other areas of learning, such as geography, the visual and performing arts, politics, and economics. In this way, educators could use E→STEM as a pathway to deeper engagement and exposure to a broad range of subjects.

Integrated Disciplines. Participants said that successful E→STEM programs would integrate and harmonize the traditional STEM disciplines. Elsewhere, they noted that STEM educators were often isolated and in need of better collaboration.

Youth Advocacy & Citizenship. E→STEM programs were described as tools to increase young people’s concern for and interest in their surroundings, through a sense of empowerment and ability to effect positive change in environmental and sustainability issues. Attendees also thought that involvement in E→STEM programs would make young people more active and productive citizens.

Sustained Collaboration. Educators believed that E→STEM success would include long-term collaborative relationships between with community partners, such as non-formal learning organizations and corporate entities.

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) was a high-priority topic among workshop attendees. They were hopeful that PD opportunities would contribute to the success of E→STEM and its increasing prevalence in both informal and formal education. Generally, participants advocated for stronger peer networks, with an ongoing emphasis on PD within these networks. The following tactics were described during the workshop.

Involve All Grade Levels & Disciplines. Participants believed that PD should include vertical integration—that is, equal representation of teachers from different grade levels in PD activities. Cross-disciplinary PD was also seen as valuable, particularly for high school educators, who tend to work in silos once they become comfortable with a subject. Including non-STEM educators was seen as important to building buy-in and support for new E→STEM programs.

Peer Mentoring. Pairing teachers for coaching and feedback was seen as an effective method of PD. Participants thought that this would be especially effective for new teachers, but all teachers could potentially benefit. Sharing “what works” for each grade level were perceived as valuable. Techniques could include videotaping and observing lessons, in addition to systems for consistent feedback loops.

Training with Practitioners & Experts. Participants wanted more contact with E→STEM professionals working outside of education. This would be particularly useful for the subjects with which teachers have lower confidence.

Involve Students. Students’ presence and feedback during PD activities were seen as beneficial. Students could present their understanding of E→STEM in order to identify strengths and challenges in the curriculum or associated with teachers.

Incorporate Time into Planning. When working with a new program, educators needed adequate time to successfully incorporate it into an established curriculum. This time would enable educators to plan, implement, and assess the program, then revise and re-implement the program as needed. Participants believed this ability to “fail” and adapt are essential components to building new, innovative, and effective programs.

Trust. The issue of trust emerged in many discussions during the workshop. Attendees repeatedly advocated for increased trust from administrators, parents, and members of the community. This was associated with the theme of respect for educators—for the learning professionals that they are—which would further empower them to pursue PD opportunities.



5. Blue Ribbon Panel

What are the most important, innovative and proven strategies for developing E→STEM?

Overview

An expert panel of 100 leaders from across the STEM learning field was invited to sort and rank attributes of innovation in E→STEM programs as identified from the Background Study and the Crowd Sourcing Survey. The Blue Ribbon Panelists sorted and rated 64 statements which provided a more detailed picture that helped the research team build upon the findings from previous efforts.

Instrument Development

The research team developed 64 statements to represent 10 recurring themes that were distilled from the analyses of the Background Study and Crowd Sourcing Survey. (For the list of 10 themes, see Section 3).

In order to create a selection of 64 statements for the Blue Ribbon Panel to judge its innovation and importance in relation to E→STEM, NewKnowledge researchers used statements compiled from the Background Study and Crowd Sourcing Survey that reflected aspects of the themes and modified them to make new statement descriptions of attributes to represent the range within that category that might be considered new and innovative in E→STEM.

As described above, additional statements based on gaps in E→STEM program descriptions were developed by NewKnowledge staff to test if these missing components may be innovative and worthwhile in expanding E→STEM programming. For a full list of these additional statements, see [Appendix B](#).

After identifying important attributes of innovative E→STEM programs from the Background Study and the Crowd Sourcing survey, 64 statements were incorporated into Concept Systems®. Concept Systems Global MAX® is an online survey tool that enables participants to sort statements into categories and then rate them according to a researcher's protocol.

Participants

A letter was sent to leaders of the partner organizations, who then sent invitations to knowledgeable members within their organizations. Of the 100 invited Blue Ribbon Panelists, 66 began the Concepts Systems survey, but 10 people did not finish. Of the 56 completed surveys, two of them were not counted because the sorting was improperly completed and the results could not be analyzed with the rest of the data. Therefore, 54 responses were used in the analysis.

Process

Blue Ribbon Panel participants were directed to the Concept Systems® website to complete the sorting and rating exercises. They encountered a disclaimer page, a preamble page, and then a page with questions concerning the organization(s) they represent. Following these pages there were a series of pop-up windows that explained in detail how to sort the given statements into categories.

Participants sorted the 64 statements into 3 to 22 unranked, thematic categories. After participants sorted the statements into these groups, they were asked to look at each statement individually and rate them on a Likert scale from 1 to 7, based on the following three directives:

- *Looking at the following statements please rate them from least innovative, 1, to most innovative, 7.*
- *Now we would like you to rate these statements again, this time focusing on their degree of IMPORTANCE for the next steps in E--> STEM innovation with least important, rated as 1, to most important, rated as 7.*
- *Finally we would like you to rate the same statements one more time, this time focusing on NOVELTY statements, please rate them from tried and true, 7, to experimental, 1.*

RESULTS

The average participant sorted the 64 statements into 8.11 categories ($SD= 3.92$). NewKnowledge researchers reviewed seven different ways to group the categories in order to test cohesion of

distinct categories. A nine-cluster sort was the most meaningful and therefore the final tool that NewKnowledge used to understand the ratings of the different attributes of E→STEM. The nine categories of statements that were extracted from the data from Concept Systems© were then given description names by NewKnowledge researchers based on the statements grouped in those categories. They are listed here:

- Professional development and collaboration
- Socio-cultural economic perspectives on STEM
- Scientific methods and process to foster critical thinking
- Use of technology to solve real problems
- Connections with the real environment
- Use of media to engage a community of learners
- Community and cross-generational involvement
- Empowerment and social justice
- Digital tools and modeling

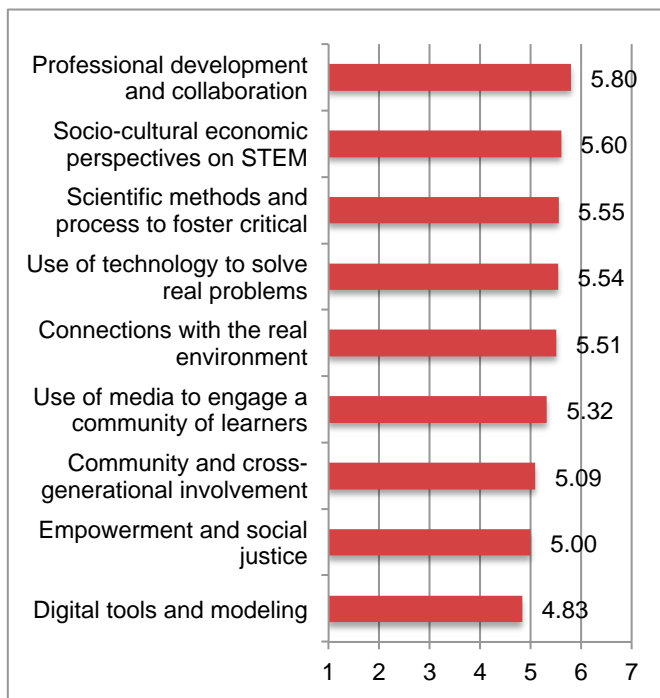


Figure 5.1 Innovation rankings of categories based on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being least innovative and 7 being most innovative.

The rankings of all statements within each category were then averaged to create a mean ranking for category in Innovation, Importance and Proven Strategies.

Innovation

Statements grouped in *Professional development and collaboration* ($M= 5.80$) as well as *Socio-cultural economic perspectives on E→STEM* ($M= 5.60$) ranked highest on a scale from one to seven where one was least innovative and seven was most innovative. Overall, all nine categories were above the rating mean of four.

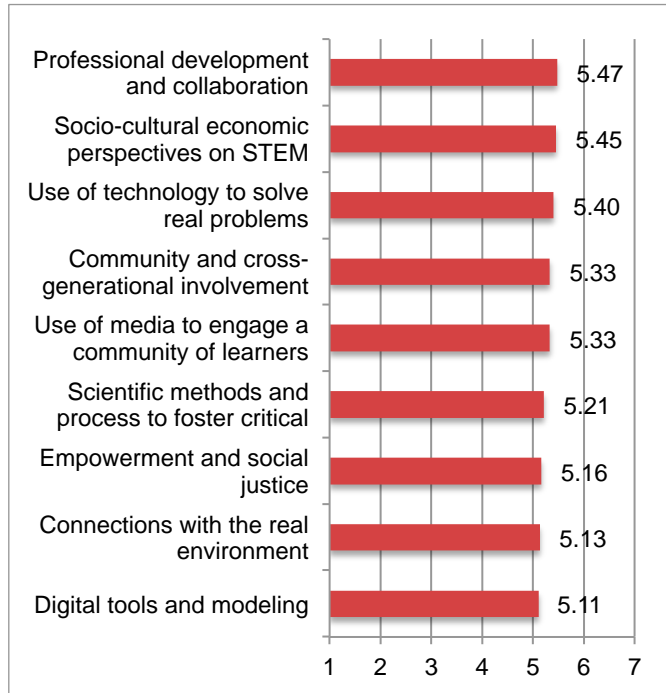


Figure 5.2 Importance rankings of categories based on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being least important and 7 being most important.

Proven Strategies

There was a disparity in ratings for *statements* representing experimental and tried and true (proven) strategies in E→STEM education. These items were on average marked in the middle of a scale rated from experimental (1) and tried and true (7), indicating a lack of clarity and understanding by the Blue Ribbon Panel about what really works in E→STEM and what has rarely been tried. This also suggests that the themes identified by other components of this research were less applicable in defining what was experimental and was a proven strategy.

Importance

Overall, the Blue Ribbon Panelists rated statements as highly important with the minimum average category ranking at 5.11. The difference between the lowest ranking and highest ranking categories was a difference of 0.36, where *professional development and collaboration* had a mean rating of 5.47 on a scale from one to seven, where one was least important and seven was most important.

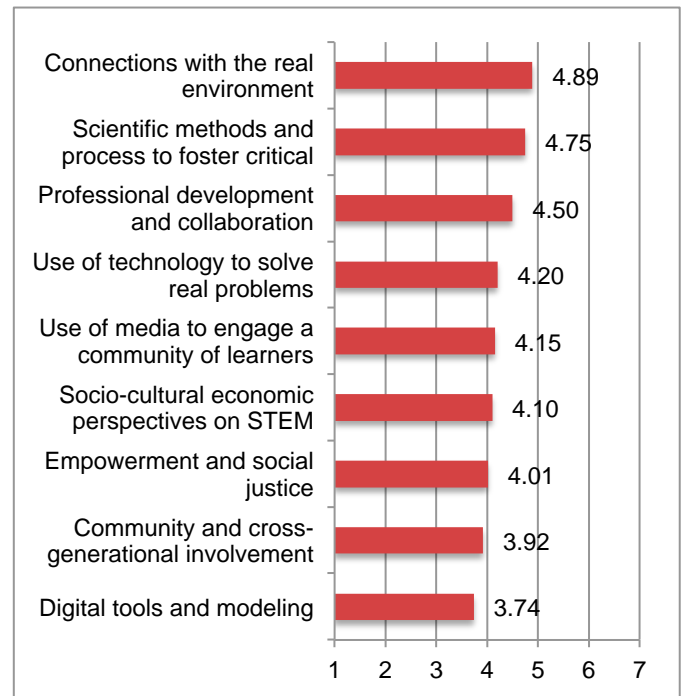


Figure 5.3 Proven Strategies rankings of categories, based on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 being experimental and 7 being tried and true.

DISCUSSION

Although the Blue Ribbon Panel results show that *Professional development and collaboration* is highly innovative and very important, it is unclear how novel *professional development and collaboration* is, as there was a range of ratings

for components of this category on the experimental/tried and true scale. Specifically *optimizing deep, engaged formal/informal educators* rated as a more proven strategy ($M= 5.24$), while in contrast *allowing teachers to pursue their own life-long development strategy* was ranked as a more experimental approach to E→STEM learning ($M= 3.76$).

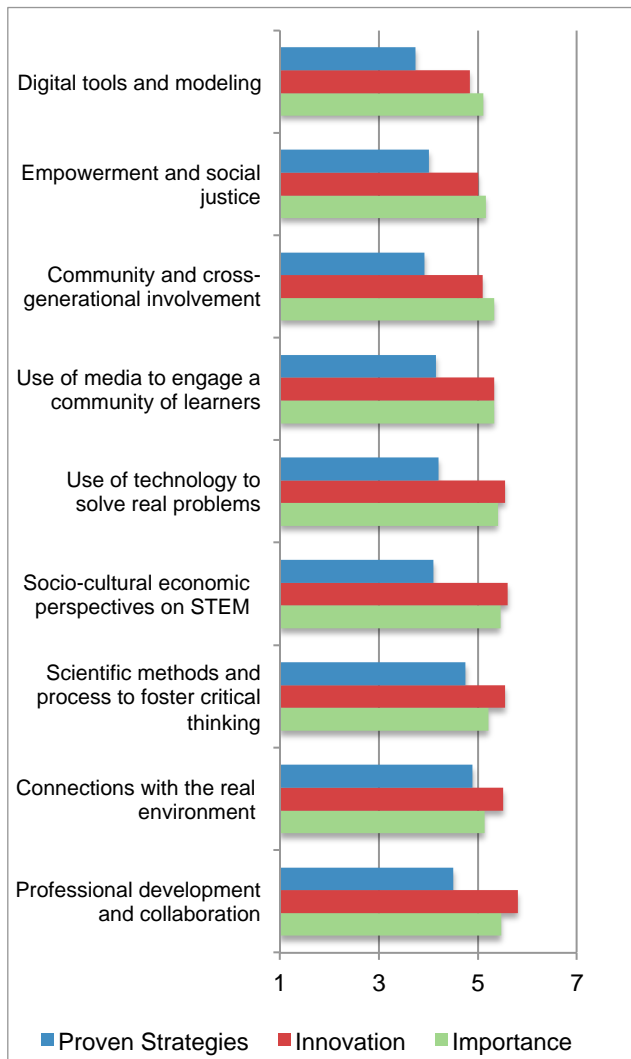


Figure 5.4 Rankings of categories, based on Innovation, Importance, and Proven Strategies scales. For Likert-scale values, see Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3.

The statement ranked as the most experimental method for E→STEM learning was *abandoning standardized testing in favor of life-long learning track for students* ($M= 2.63$), a statement lumped with the *socio-cultural economic perspectives on STEM*. The most proven strategy on the other hand was *hands-on real learning opportunities* ($M= 5.80$). The categories *Connections with the real environment* and *Scientific methods and processes to foster critical thinking skills* were ranked next highest (Figure 5.4).

Examining the interaction of statements among the three different rating scales allowed NewKnowledge researchers to take the study a step further to test validity of the results seen in the Blue Ribbon and create a Blue Print for E→STEM to rate programs with. This additional level of analysis also helped the research team to re-name the categories to represent the statements that most strongly defined the categories (See Section 8).

6. Partner Member Survey

What are the programming gaps that exist in E→STEM?

What are the best opportunities for professional development, given the need to enhance educators' skills regarding E→STEM, environmental education, and project-based learning?

What incentives are needed to engage administrators and educators to improve practice?

Are there smaller initiatives that could be scaled up? What would that look like? How could a program reach the most students and teachers and achieve the greatest impact, focusing on both quality and quantity?

Overview

Like other research efforts, the Partner Member Survey built the previous efforts and asked previously identified questions of educators and administrators. Results of the Blue Ribbon Panel and the NSTA Workshop indicated that programs focusing on professional development, connecting with nature and critical thinking skills are among the most innovative, important, and proven strategies in E→STEM.

This survey effort served as a strategy to evaluate the validity of NewKnowledge methods and ensure they were grounded in evidence gathered through an accepted methodological framework rather than anecdotal reporting that introduced researcher bias.

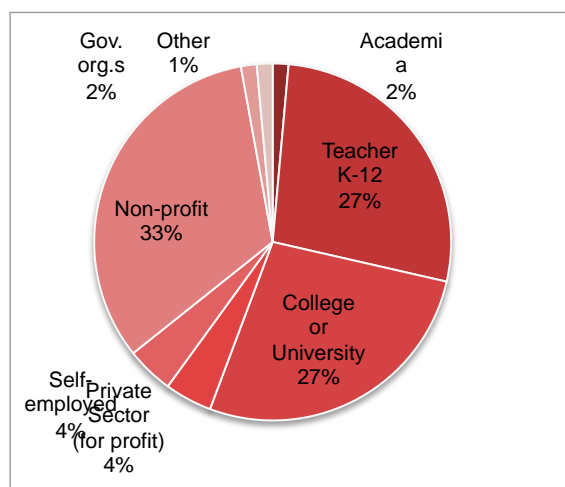


Figure 6.1 Positions of employment of participants in the Partner Member Survey.

This survey invited a panel of 80+ individuals from across the STEM learning field to participate. Each person was a member of an organization that partnered with the research team for this project. See [Section 1](#) for a complete list of partner organizations.

Participants

Participants were recruited via an open invitation broadcast through project partners membership and affinity group newsletters. Respondents came from

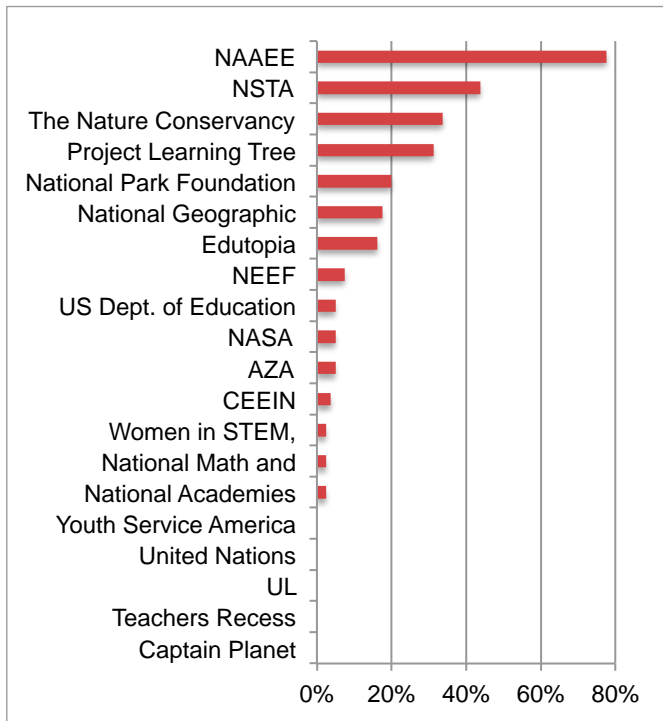


Figure 6.2 Organizational membership of participants in the Partner Member Survey.

a range of professional backgrounds and sectors, with a third working in non-profits and almost as many listing academic affiliations in college or k-12 settings (Figure 6.1.). The majority indicated membership in NAAEE (78%). None of the participants indicated membership in Youth Service America, the United Nations, Underwriters Laboratories, Teachers Recess, or the Captain Planet Foundation.

Instrument

Members were asked to answer questions about professional development opportunities and educator needs. In addition, participants were prompted to rate different attributes of innovation, importance, and strategies of programs based on their contribution to E→STEM. The 64 statements used in

the Blue Ribbon Panel research effort were used to develop this survey. (See [Appendix B](#) for the 64 statements).

To assess the needs of E→STEM, this survey explored challenges and gaps of this field and gave participants the option to say that there were no gaps. Additionally a supplementary question with possible areas in which E→STEM experiences and challenges allowed participants to choose elements from a predetermined list as well as list other components that NewKnowledge researchers and NAAEE staff might have overlooked.

Several sets of questions focused on professional development (PD). Logistical questions were also included in this section, particularly: how much time people *can* spend and how much time people *are willing* to spend, in addition to how far one can travel for professional development opportunities were included.



Figure 6.3 Challenges to the field of E→STEM learning.

participants indicating that there are indeed some gaps that are worthy of concern (see Figure 6.3).

The final sets of questions asked participants to rate the highest ranked elements of innovation, importance and proven strategies from the Blue Ribbon Panel effort to validate the findings from that effort.

RESULTS

Participants in the Member Survey indicated that there are gaps in the way environment is used as a path for E→STEM (64%). Despite this general agreement, a third of respondents were at first somewhat equivocal about whether there are gaps. The average participant indicated an average of 5.07 items (out of a possible 12) that contribute to the challenges of using the environment as a path to E→STEM ($SD= 2.70, N= 90$).

After prompting survey respondents further about the nature of the challenges or gaps in using environment as a path to STEM learning, the majority of respondents indicated that both lack of funding ($n= 59, 66%$) and lack of interdisciplinary collaboration ($n= 59, 66%$) are the greatest challenges with almost all

Following the question about the challenges of E→STEM learning was a question prompting participants to give solutions to those challenges through a topic list for professional development opportunities.

Table 6.1 Topics in E→STEM Professional Development

Topics for PD	<i>n</i>
Strategies to collaborate with other disciplines	67
How to employ complementary disciplinary approaches within a single program	62
Peer networking opportunities to help envision solutions to organizational hurdles	61
Strategies for pooling funding with other organizations.	38
Value of interdisciplinary work	35
Other (please describe)	16

When asked about how far participants could travel for professional development based on funds, the majority responded that they could not afford to go beyond their own region.

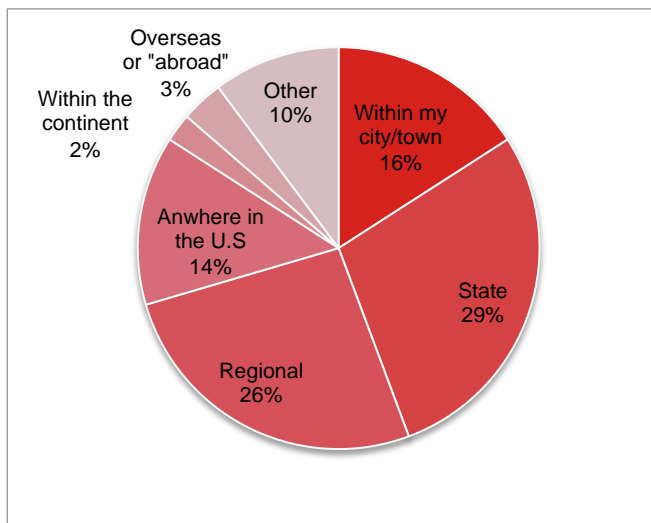


Figure 6.4 Furthest that educators could travel for professional development.

About a third of educators were willing to devote a full day each month to professional development and almost three quarters of educators were willing to spend between half a day and a few days each month participating in professional development. However, when asked what the most amount of time per year they could spend in professional development, 73% of respondents believed could not spend more than a week away from their current job, despite the fact that they are willing to do so.

When participants were asked to rate their agreement with a set of four statements

about their contribution to innovation in E→STEM, participants felt that *opportunities for professionals to share what works with other peers* was the most innovative ($M= 4.36$, $SD= .84$).

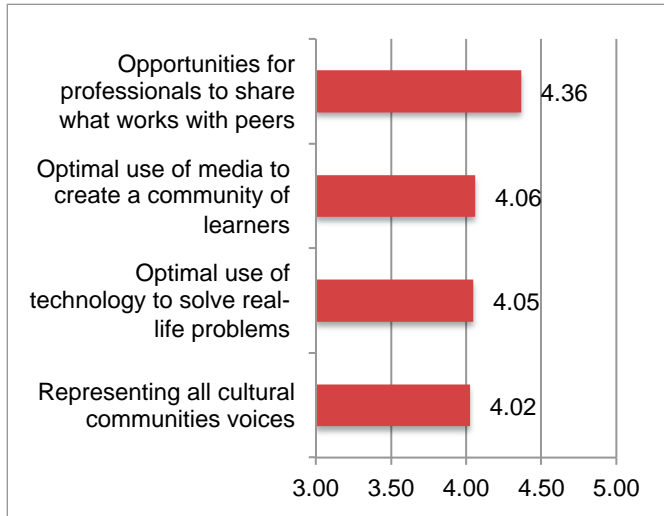


Figure 6.5 Innovation in E→STEM (1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree).

Similarly when asked how much they agreed or disagreed with how important a series of items were for E→STEM, “helping STEM professionals develop new skills for using environment as a teaching tool was most important ($M=4.75$, $SD=.59$).

When participants were prompted to answer how much they agree with a set of statements about the novelty of their approach to E→STEM, participants felt that *cross-generational social learning experiences* was the most novel approach ($M=4.24$, $SD= .91$). Despite, or because of the focus that US culture has on modern technology, modern digital interfaces were not considered as novel as other approaches (Figure 6.7).

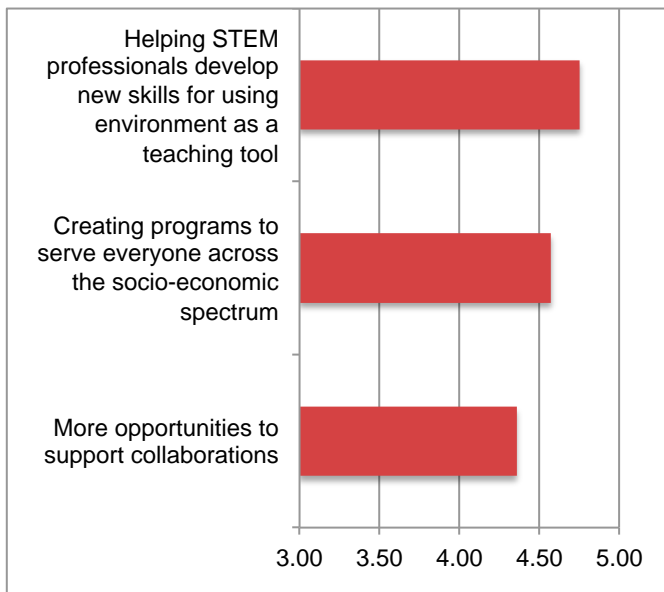


Figure 6.6 Importance of items to E→STEM (1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree).

Participants were also asked to rate how much they trust different organizational entities for leading innovation in E→STEM. The average most trusted type of organization were academics at universities and colleges ($M= 5.73$, $SD= 1.03$). Although most distrusted organizations were rated on average between *somewhat distrust* and *not sure*, their standard deviations were large, suggesting little consensus about their trust worthiness and the variability that

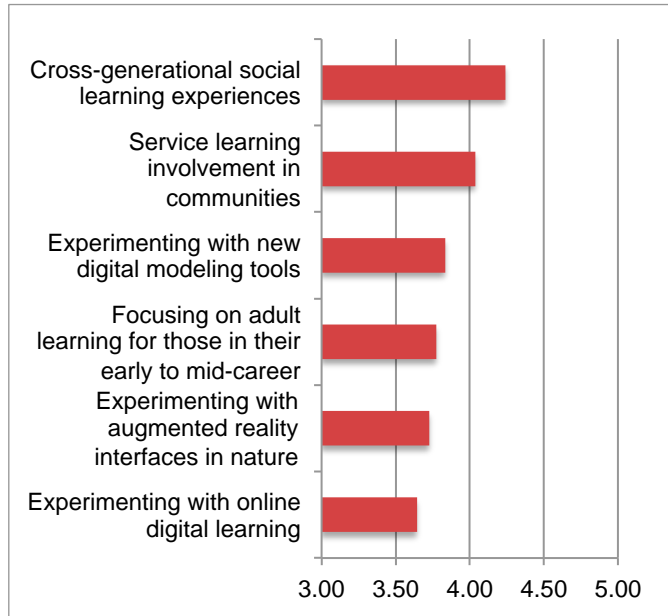


Figure 6.7 Ratings of novel approaches to E→STEM (full scale was 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree).

The survey also utilized the responses from the science educators at the NSTA Workshop (see Section 4, above) and the Partner Representative Interviews (see Section 7, below) to frame several statements for validation of previous findings. The majority of participants agreed that *the current culture of standardized testing in education in America has failed* ($M= 5.74$, $SD= 1.42$). However the greatest consensus surrounded the agreement that *forging new alliances between non-profits working in the Environment and STEM field is required before E→STEM will have impact* ($M= 5.58$, $SD= 1.14$).

exist within Fortune 500 companies, local school boards and state governments (Figure 6.8).

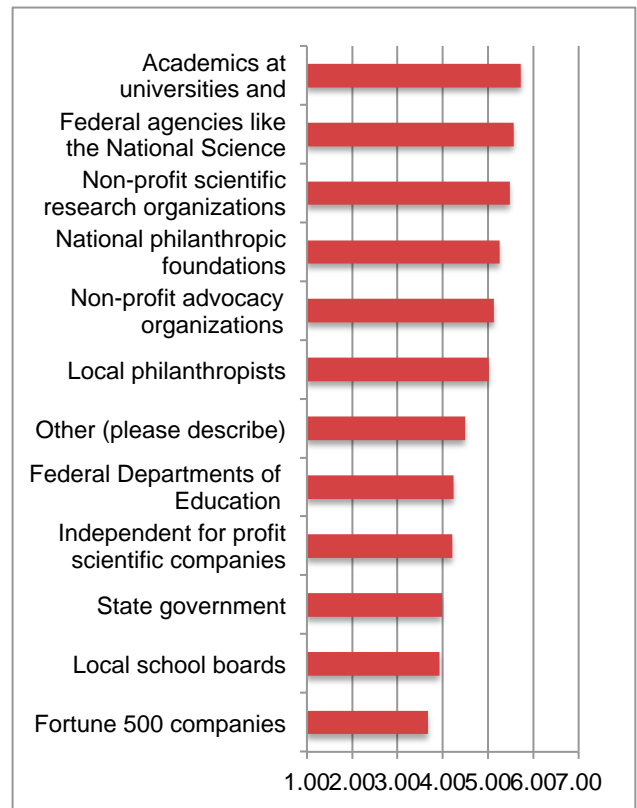


Figure 6.8 Trust in organizational entities to lead innovation in E→STEM initiatives (1 = completely distrust, 4 = not sure, 7 = completely trust).

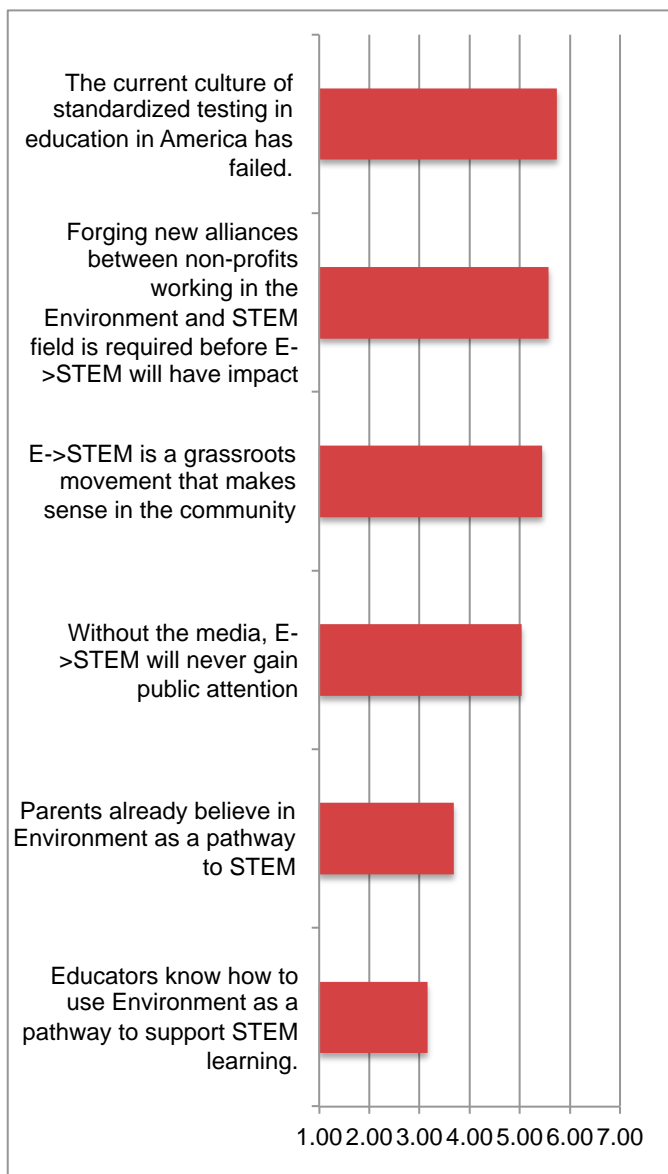


Figure 6.9 Agreement with claims that have been made about STEM education (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = not sure, 7 = strongly agree).

7. Partner Representative Interviews

What are partners' and stakeholders' perceptions of UL as an organization?

What are potential partnerships and collaborators UL would benefit from working with to further E→STEM?

What are the barriers educators see as hindering their ability to create effective E→STEM programs and the solutions to overcoming them?

Overview

To further explore opportunities for innovation in E→STEM, the research team undertook a set of three confidential qualitative discussions with five representatives from project partner organizations. These interviews were used to gather honest independent solutions to barriers educators perceive as stopping them incorporating effective E→STEM programming, while continuing to gather information of programs or initiatives, which exemplify E→STEM. Results of these interviews are summarized in this section.

Partner Representative Survey Instrument

A set of open ended qualitative questions were asked of each stakeholder.

- We've heard that teachers are really getting fed up with being talked at by experts. It seems most teachers just want to use the skills they developed in school to implement E→STEM innovations.
- Can you think about what type of incentives are needed to engage administrators and educators to improve practice?
- We're talking to a number of experts like you and we know you have your ears to the ground on some cutting edge ideas we haven't heard about yet. Can you tell us if there are any smaller initiatives that should be scaled up?

-
- How could a program reach the most students and teachers and achieve the greatest impact, focusing on both quality and quantity?
 - Where do you think we could look at exemplary programs that link formal and non-formal partners?
 - Can you think of lessons we should draw from international programs that break the paradigms that are inhibiting success here in American?

Partner Representative Survey Results

The interviews were synthesized and results for each question are delineated below. All statements were compiled by a NewKnowledge researcher and reflect the views expressed by at least one participant.

We've heard that teachers are really getting fed up with being talked at by experts. It seems most teachers just want to use the skills they developed in school to implement E-STEM innovations.

- Most felt that a focus on helping teachers address the common core standards, and career readiness as identified by National Education Association was possible through E→STEM. One participant highlighted the 18 attributes that the NEA prioritized as the 4 c's of learning (critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, and collaboration).
- Teacher-to-teacher communications and mentoring were seen as valuable, highlighting the potential benefit in teachers working together toward a culminating project.

Can you think about what type of incentives are needed to engage administrators and educators to improve practice?

- There was a sense among these participants that the E→STEM field contains an inherent challenge that does not map against the career aspirations for youth nor is it applicable to
-

business metaphors. Athletics were considered a more valuable metaphor because that language invokes a competitive frame that is local and perceived as more practical or universal and less associated with higher income communities.

- Opportunities may be limited if you don't embrace change as an emotional campaign.
- The 'how' and the 'craft' of teaching needs an advocate. When there are innovative ways to look at the demands of a school day, year, and a child's whole k-12 career, it has the potential to reinvigorate the craft of teaching
- Models themselves can act as incentives. E→STEM and project based learning illustrates this through the motivation and inspiration they foster within students by engaging them on a physical and hand-on level.

We're talking to a number of experts like you and we know you have your ears to the ground on some cutting edge ideas we haven't heard about yet. Can you tell us if there are any smaller initiatives that should be scaled up?

- Although there is a lot of money focused on ad campaigns and Common Core initiatives, the wrong people are trying to solve the problem. We need a powerful marketing campaign to muster support and engage people emotionally.
- Going for Green-STEM is all about the sales pitch, appealing to the interest. It would be good to look at the lexicon of this generation to understand what is effective and inspiring. For example, the National Engineering foundation has recently radically changed the how they frame of engineering as a profession in order to attract women.
- How we talk about these issues affects the way we perceive them and the thoughts we associate with them. These notions need to be imbedded in a culturally significant and relevant narrative in order to engage the relevant generations.

How could a program reach the most students and teachers and achieve the greatest impact, focusing on both quality and quantity?

- It's important to get quality dealt with first. Only until the quality of a program and education is achieved can one look at replicability (quantity).
- Giving teachers a larger forum so they can establish quality and best practice standards whilst being given opportunities to present at conferences around the country will help toward this aim.
- Efforts to motivate teachers and inspire them to engage more with the material they are teaching will bolster their sense of self as related to their occupation.

Where do you think we could look at exemplary programs that link formal and non-formal partners?

- Due to time constraints during the interviews, there were few opportunities to discuss possible collaborations outside of those already established by the partners. The examples given highlighted the value of repeated contact between schools and informal science learning institutions that have recognized missions related to youth education, such as zoos or museums and nature centers. There was a suggestion that long term value was created in a community when staff develop personal relationships that last over many years.

Can you think of lessons we should draw from international programs that break the paradigms that are inhibiting success here in America?

- Finland (done) and Brazil (emerging) are examples given as valuable international programs. They looked at performance internationally, but realized they couldn't compete within the EU and subsequently placed a great amount of effort into their education system. They invested in teachers and only acknowledged the top 10% as eligible to be teachers. They paid them well and worked to professionalize the industry. T
 - Investment into teachers is a way to raise the standard for the whole country..
 - A youth-to-youth campaign may also offer some real value.
-



8. A Blue Print for E→STEM

How can programs be assessed according to these attributes in order to identify key effective and innovative E→STEM initiatives?

The Rubric of Innovation in E→STEM, created from the results of the Blue Ribbon Panel identifies the most important, innovative, and effective attributes of E→STEM programs today. Ranking these categories hierarchically the Rubric for Innovation can be used to assess current programs and initiatives for their potential to facilitate STEM learning, foster a passion for STEM topics in today's youth and nurture a passion for STEM-related career opportunities.

Rubric Design

The Rubric for Innovation was created from feedback from the Blue Ribbon Panel. Its design and structure was informed by six core objectives. To:

- Establish Core Literacies (priority setting)
- Fit Literacies to the Target Audiences
- Highlight Key Vectors (ie, teachers, partners, media, etc.)
- Inform a Diffusion Plan
- Reveal Key Indicators
- Advise a Timeline

Based on feedback from the Blue Ribbon Panel nine categories were created using Concept Systems Global MAX© (Appendix C). Each category was then given three ratings, one for each of the three 7-point Likert scale ratings that each item within the categories were rated on. These three ratings were equally weighted and averaged, resulting in a single rating score for each category. These rankings were then used to sort the nine categories into hierarchical order in

order to create a rubric from which to assess E→STEM programs. 11 programs were chosen and assessed against this rubric as model E→STEM programs (Appendix C):

- Project Lead The Way
- Siemens We Can Change the World Contest
- Girl Scouts E-STEM
- Green Ribbon Schools
- Captain Planet
- National Parks Climate Challenge
- 4-H: Head, Heart, Hands and Health
- NCTAF Learning Studios
- Camp in a Can
- Dreams of Wilmington with Fort Fischer Aquarium
- Bayfield High School Alternative Education Program

Rubric Instrument

Based on the Blue Ribbon Panels ratings of Importance, Innovation and Novelty, NewKnowledge proposes this rubric as a barometer to assess the quality and value of E→STEM programs. When using this rubric, we propose that in order for a program to be considered amongst the leaders in E→STEM, the top three categories (A-C) must be fulfilled, with the fulfillment of each subsequent category further bolstering the efficacy and value of that program. Each category with the Rubric of Innovation is comprised of a number of attributes. The more attributes a program embodies the greater the innovation and strength of that program to align with E→STEM.

The descriptions for each category of the Rubric are listed below. These are followed by the Rubric on the following page.

A. Professional Development

This category represents the most important components of innovation in E→STEM: professional development and the need for collaboration between informal and formal educators. It also includes the need for collaboration between formal educators and practicing professionals. This category consistently emerged across all of the research efforts.

B. Real Connections

Making connections to the real environment was a prevalent theme, indicating that physically spending time in the natural environment was extremely important and a tried and true method of engaging youth in E→STEM. Participants in all of the research efforts called attention to this category.

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Participants indicated that critical thinking and creativity in E→STEM programs are highly important and innovative. A focus on the learning process—whether through student collaborative research, experimental designs, or combining the visual arts with science lessons—showed that there is a need for a variety of approaches to E→STEM learning.

In the Blue Ribbon Panel, 11 statements originally fit into the *Focusing on scientific methods and process to foster critical thinking* category, but the analysis showed that participants identified about half of the statements as most innovative and most important – among those, creative approaches were prioritized. This new conglomerate focuses on the importance of creativity in critical thinking for E→STEM programs.

D. Practical Synthesis

A variety of attributes combined to form the Practical Synthesis category, suggesting that E→STEM learning will focus on the integration of cross-curricular STEM education. Notable ways to achieve this synthesis are through teamwork, economics of the environment, and abandoning standardized testing.

E. Technology and real problems

Participants in several research efforts prioritized technology in several ways, with an emphasis on using it purposively to increase connections with the natural environment.

F. Media and Community

There was an interest in solving real-life problems using free, technically advanced monitoring systems to support community learning. This category places special emphasis on sharing knowledge with social networks, including those in web-based communities.

G. Community and Cross-Generational Learning

Community and cross-generational learning was lacking from the Crowd Sourcing and Literature Review results. However, after adding them in as part of the gap analysis, half of these methods ranked in the experimental area of E→STEM strategies, suggesting the need for research to provide proof of their efficacy.

H. Empowerment

Empowerment of individuals and communities was important for participants in the Blue Ribbon Panel, but was ranked relatively low compared to the other E→STEM components. However one of the statements in the original category ranked very high in comparison with other statements: urban movements are increasingly utilizing the empowerment, health, and social justice approach to engage youth in E→STEM. Blue Ribbon Panel participants closely related the attribute of empowerment with other categories, suggesting that it could be an effective approach for many E→STEM strategies.

I. Digital Tools and Modeling

This category focuses on using digital tools and mobile technologies to interpret natural environments, with an emphasis on engaging with local settings.



RUBRIC

A. Professional Development

Integration of mentors into project development

Engages formal and informal educators

Promotes collaboration between practicing professionals and experienced educators

Provides mentoring for teachers to help them strategize about using the local environment

Provides professional development experimentation for teachers

Encourages teachers to pursue their own life-long development strategy

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in *local* outdoor environments

Utilizes national, state, or private parks as outdoor classrooms

Maximizes time spent outdoors in local environments

Incorporates physical demonstrations of how biodiversity affects local ecological systems

Promotes time in nature, away from computers

Introduces nature to pre-school learners

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Combines performing / visual arts with science lessons

Optimizes individual creativity in experimental design

Emphasizes critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

Incorporates the economics of the environment for practical applications of STEM literacy

Abandons standardized testing in favor of life-long learning track for students

Optimizes teamwork to increase debate skills using scientific concepts

E. Technology and real problems

Uses technology to address local relevant real-life problems

Optimizes the use of modeling tools for local solutions such as alternative energy

F. Media and Community

Provides free technically advanced monitoring systems to real life situations to support community learning

Promotes cross disciplinary collaborative teaching

G. Community and Cross-Generational Learning

Focuses on opportunities to help seniors and young learners work together

Provides practical internship experience with professionals in the field

Focuses on senior citizens' interest in their environmental legacy

Refocuses service learning towards entire families

Promotes synergistic community partnerships

Directs resources to support youth in at-risk communities

Promotes civic group collaborations with learners

H. Empowerment

Focuses on environmental health / justice to empower individuals to engage community issues

I. Digital Tools and Modeling

Utilizes geospatial technologies (i.e. ARC GIS, or Google earth)

Utilizes mobile technologies for interpreting natural environments on site

Appendix A: Programs Analyzed For Background Study and Crowd Sourcing Efforts

Notes. Background Study (B) and Crowd Sourcing (C)

10,000 Environmental Studies Program	C	Beaver Ponds Environmental Education Center	C
10,000 Islands Dolphin Project's "Environmental Studies Program"	C	Biology Levers Out of Mathematics (BLOOM)- US	B
Acting Wild Zoo Theatre Class	C	Biomimicry Education: A sy-STEM-atic approach- US	B
Adopt a Trout	C	Biomimicry Youth Challenge	C
Agency: An Alternate Reality Game for Middle School Environmental Education	C	Bioscience Explorations	B
All annual science fairs leading up to the International Science & Engineering Fair.	C	Biotech Partners	B
All the Rivers Run Level II	C	Breakthrough Collaborative	B
Allegheny Women's Biotech Workforce Collaborative	B	Broadening Advanced Technological Education Connections (BATEC)- US	B
Alliance to save Energy's PowerSave Campus Program	C	Building Math	B
American Chemical Society's Project SEED	B	Camp in a Can	C
American Forest Foundation - Project Learning Tree	C	Camp Oty'Okwa Science Station	C
American Tall Ship Institute (ATSI) Educational Adventures	C	CAPSULE: CAPStone Unique Learning Experience- US	B
Anchorage STReAM Academy	C	Career and Technical Academy Innovations in Teaching and LearningThe Southwest Career and Technical Academy (CTA)- US	B
Aquatic WILD: K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide. (The recently expanded Project WILD Aquatic curriculum).	C	CHANCE (Connecting Human And Nature Through Conservation Experiences	C
ARTS+ACTION Cafeteria Waste Reduction (A+A CWR) - NYC School Program and Multi-media Toolkit	C	Character education through Observation, Reflection, Ecological restoration and Scientific literacy[CORES]	C
ASSET Inc	B	Chemical Circus! Increasing the STEM Pipeline through Service Learning- US	B
Babcock Ranch Community STEM/EEC (E squared C) Sci.-Tech.-Eng.-Math /Envir.-Econ.-Culture & SW FL STEM TEAM	C	Chemistry Facets: Formative Assessment to Improve Student Understanding in Chemistry- US	B
Bayfield High School Alternative Education Program	C	Cherry Street Elementary's School Garden	C
Bayfront Alternative Education Program-US	B	Chippewa Middle School Rain Garden STEAM Laboratory	C
		CimateAudit.org	C

Climate Science Investigation: South Florida (CSI: SFI) – Online Program	C
Coastal Roots	C
Communities of Learning for Urban Environments and Science (CLUES)	C
Community Bottle Block	C
Community Garden	C
Community Resources for Science	B
Cook County Citizen Scientists	C
Copper River Stewardship Program	C
Creating a High Performing STEM School Culture, DSST's (Denver School for Science and Technology)- US	B
Critical Zone Observatory (GEO/EAR/CZO)- US	B
Cultivating Mathematical Habits of Mind in All Students- US	B
Decision Making Curricula for the Great Lakes	C
Deeply Digital Student Engagement and STEM Learning- US	B
Demonstrate to Innovate	C
Desert Diversity Environmental Education Program, Saguaro National Park	C
Design Squad: Inspiring a New Generation of Engineers- US	B
Detroit-Area Pre-College Engineering Program	B
Developmental Approaches in Science, Health and Technology (DASH)	B
Disneynature Educational programs	C
EarthWorks STEM	C
East Africa Biodiversity Food And Education Security Based Conservation Project (BIOSEC)	C
EAST Students Use Technology to Address Local Challenges- US	B
EbD-TEEMS	C
Ecology Explorers, part of the Central Arizona-Phoenix Long-Term Ecological	C

Research project at Arizona State University, sponsored by NSF	
Ecology Project International (EPI)	C
EcoMOBILE- US	B
EcoMUVE Engages Students in Real-World Science through Virtual Ecosystems- US	B
Education Through Exploration: Using STEM to solve environmental problems.- US	B
EE STEAM	C
Energy for ME	C
Engaging Youth Through Engineering (EYE)- US	B
Engineering is Elementary	B
ENTRYPOINT! Internship Program for Students with Disabilities	B
Environment as a Context for Opportunities in Schools (ECOS)	B
Environmental & Sustainability Enhanced Lessons	C
Environmental education in Australian schools	C
Environmental Learning for Kids "Denver Youth Naturally"	C
Environmental Literacy and Inquiry (ELI). http://www.ei.lehigh.edu/eli/	C
EQUALS	B
ESF SCIENCE (Summer Camps Investigating Ecology in Neighborhood and City Environments)	C
eSTEM Academy- US	B, C
Expedition: Yellowstone!	C
Expeditionary Learning - EL schools works with whole schools to redesign curriculum and instruction.	C
Exploring Creative Expression Through Music and Audio Technology- US	B
Extended Day Vegetable Container Garden Project	C

ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp (EMBHSSC) Project	C
Family Math/Matemática para la Familia	B
Fayette Academy Bat STEM Project	C
Floating Wetlands	C
Forest Watch at the University of New Hampshire	C
Foundational Approaches in Science Teaching (FAST)	B
From Local to Extreme Environments (FLEXE)- US	B
Full Option Science System (FOSS)	B
Future Scientists: Sowing the Seeds for Success	B
Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education	B
Girl Game Company	B
Glaciers and Climate Change	C
GLOBE	C
Going Green in Brownfields: A New Diet for Mushrooms	C
Goo to gardens	C
Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS)	B
Green Leadership Academy for Diverse Ecosystems (GLADE)	C
Green Schools National Network - Green Schools National Conference	C
Green Schools STEMBassador Program	C
Greenhouse project	C
Growing Green Leaders at Irvine Nature Center	C
Hands on the Land (HOL)	C
Healthy Habitats	C
High Desert Leapin' Lizards, Inc- US	B
I Love A Clean San Diego Watershed Education Program	C
IcEarth	C

Illinois Math and Science Academy Excellence 2000+ (IMSA E2K+)	B
Inquiry Adventures	C
Institute for Earth Observations	C
Integrating Engineering & Literacy- US	B
iPhone App for School Data Collection and Critical Thinking About Ecology and Biodiversity- International	B
Issues-based Literacy	C
Junior Engineering Technical Society (JETS)	B
Keep America Beautiful's Recycle-Bowl Program	C
Keep It Clean - Neighborhood Environmental Trios (KIC-NET)	C
Kentucky Green and Healthy Schools	C
Kestrel Educational Adventures Place Based Ecology Programs for Schools	C
KIDS for the BAY/Watershed Action Program	C
Kinetic City	B
Kohl's Wild Theater	C
Kū 'Āina Pā: Standing Firmly in Knowledge Upon the Land, teacher training program for school learning gardens.	C
LIFE - Learning in Florida's Environment	C
LiMPETS (Long-term Monitoring Program and Experiential Training for Students)	C
Linking Food to the Environment - making choices and changes in the way we eat (LIFE)	C
Living in Relations- US	B
Logan Rogersville High School Field Research Rogersville, MO	C
Luck School Harvest Garden	C
Macoun Marsh Biodiversity Project	C
Marine Activities, Resources and Education (MARE)	B
Massachusetts Audubon Society Drumlins Farm	C

Math and Science Program for English Language Learners (MSPELL)	B
Math Out of the Box®	B
Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA)	B
McDowell Environmental Center	C
Merck Institute for Science Education	B
MIND Research Institute	B
Mississippi State Univeristy's Entomology and Plant Camp	C
Model My Watershed: Developing a Cyberlearning Application and Curricula to Enhance Interest in STEM Careers- US	B
Modeling Engineered Levers for the 21 st Century Teaching of STEM- US	B
Montana Girls STEM Collaborative	C
Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS)	C
National Engineers Week Future City Competition	C
National Environmental Education Week	C
Nature in the Classroom – Out-in-School Partnerships	C
Navarre Beach Marine Science Station – a student created, student driven program which focuses on ocean conservation	C
NCTAF STEM Learning Studios- US	B
NEXT.cc Offers Students and Teachers an Interdisciplinary Approach to Environmental Design- international.	B
NH Education and Environment Team: Building Vertical Science Literacy through K-8 Teacher Professional Development	C
NOVA Labs: Energy	C
NREL EDUCATION CENTER	C
NWF's Green STEM Initiative	C
Oak reforestation project in Union City, CA	C
Oglebay Institute's REACH Program	C
Omaha Public Schools/Banneker 2000	B
Orange County Ocean Restoration Project	C

Oregon Natural Resources Education Program: Stewardship Schools	C
Oregon Small Woodlands Owners Association	C
Out in School: Modeling Inquiry in Schoolyards	C
Pacific Education Institute http://eeweek.org/webinars/pei_webinar	C
Parks As Classrooms: Cape Cod National Seashore	C
PBIS- Project Based Inquiry Science	C
PEAK Student Energy Actions	C
PENCIL Partnership Program: Private Sector/Public School Partnerships to Improve Student Achievement in STEM- US	B
Plots to Plates Organic Gardens	C
PLT GreenSchools!	C
Portland Metro STEM Partnership	C
PowerSave Schools	C
Preston Middle School STEM- US	B
Project Lead The Way .	B
Project Learning Tree's five GreenSchools! Investigations on Energy, Environmental Quality, School Site, Water, and Waste & Recycling	C
Providence After School Alliance (PASA)- US	B
Reading A River's Vital Signs: Using Remotely Sensed Environmental Data in Classrooms; Hudson River Estuary Program	C
Reforest The Tropics Environmental Education Program	C
Ridgeland High School Aquaponics Project	C
River to the Sea	C
Robert Frost Sustainable Community Support Initiative	C
Round Valley Watershed Education and Training Project	C

Saving the Planet One Vegetable and Fish at a Time	C
School Garden Project's STEM in the Garden Program	C
Science & Spanish Club Network	C
Science Career Continuum (SCC)	C
Science Education for Public Understanding (SEPUP)	B
Science First in Lake County (SFLC)	C
Science Foundation Arizona "STEM" Initiative Wins National Science Foundation Grant to Expand Rural Engineering Education Program- US	B
Science in Motion	B
Seattle Aquarium / Citizen Science High School Nearshore Monitoring Program	C
Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading™	B
SENSE IT Connects Students to STEM in the Real World- US	B
SERC Media Design Workshop- US	B
Shep Run Cross Section Project	C
Smithsonian Quests- Digital Badging Program	C
Society's Grand Challenges in Engineering as a Context for Middle School Instruction in STEM- US	B
Solar Roller Project	C
St. Louis Regional Engineering Academy	B
Stanford Medical Science Youth Program	B
STEM - Connecting us to Ocean Life- International	B
STEM Plus Workshop - Learning to be an Innovator - Level 1	C
STEM to Stern at the Maritime Explorium	C
Stewardship Schools Program:	C
STOMP - Student Teacher Outreach Mentorship Program- US	B
StreamWebs Student Stewardship Network	C

Studio STEM	C
Studying Topography, Orographic Rainfall, and Ecosystems (STORE)	C
Summer Science Academy	B
Take Action: Support Bird Biodiversity	C
taylor science center lobby	C
TCATS - Tuolumne, Calaveras, & Amador Teach Science!	C
TeachUNICEF	C
Techbridge	B
TED-Ed	C
Texas Bioscience Institute	B
Texas Tech University Outdoor School	C
TexPREP	B
The Biodiversity Quest- US	B
The Botanical Research Institute of Texas - BRIT	C
The CLEO Project on Climate	C
The Corps for Education Outside	C
The Earth We Share (TEWS)	B
The EAST Initiative	C
The Greenhouse Project NYC Bringing Sustainability/STEM education to Life through Urban Agriculture- US	B
The HERP Project (Herpetology Education in Rural Places & Spaces)	C
The Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium's BayouSide Classroom Program	C
The Nature Research Center Connects Students and Teachers to Real Scientists in the Field- US	B
The NEA Foundation and the AT&T Foundation- US	B
The OpenLab Network – US	B
The Pacific Education Institute's Puget Sound K-12 FieldSTEM Program	C
The Pine Bush Project	C

The Service-Learning Waste Reduction Project	C
The Story of Soil	C
The UTeachEngineering Project at The University of Texas- US	B
The Virtual Scientist Guest Lecture Series: Bridging the gap between the lab and classroom.- US	B
The Water Investigation's Program	C
Thunder Bay River Watershed Project	C
Tiger Woods Learning Centers	C
TransOptions Junior Solar Sprints	C
Twin State Mercury Project	C
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Schoolyard Habitat Program	C
UC Davis Youth Science Institute	C
UCSC OpenLab - Project: Blue Trail: Imagination + Innovation for Ocean Sustainability- US	B
University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) Master's Projects	C
Urban Advantage: Formal-Informal Collaborations to Improve Science Learning and Teaching- US	B
VBAP (Volunteer Biological Assessment Program)	C
Visualrealization.com	B
Walnut Creek Wetland Center Design Challenge	C

Water Discovery Days at BLM Campbell Creek Science Center	C
Water Quality Monitoring and Education of Allen's Creek - Tampa Bay	C
West Meadow Garden on the Campus of Dr An Wang Middle School, Lowell, MA	C
Where is Waldo? 6th graders Track Eastern Box Turtles at the Lake Raleigh Area, NC	C
Wiki Watershed (Model My Watershed) http://wikiwatershed.org/model.html	C
Wild Discoveries: Wacky New Animals	C
Wild Science Academy at the Phoenix Zoo	C
Wildlands Restoration Volunteers - Youth & Inclusiveness Program	C
Will Steger Foundation's Minnesota's Changing Climate Project	C
Wisconsin K-12 Energy Education Program (KEEP)	C
Woodland Park Zoo's Ready, Set, Discover	C
Woodland Park Zoo's Wild Wise: Coexisting with Carnivores	C
www.builDDDer.com 3d printing for kids.	C
YES-Net	C
You Are About To Enter The Dead Zone!	C
Youth Energy Summit (YES!)	C
Youth Leaders for the Pachamama	C
Zoo Crew Explorers	C

Appendix B. Statements Used in Blue Ribbon Panel

-
1. Integrated cross-curriculum STEM education
 2. Integrating mentors into project development
 3. Optimizing online resources to keep students connected to their learning groups
 4. Focused time spent in local outdoor environments
 5. Expanded efforts to integrate service learning with government conservation priorities
 6. Focus on competitions to support reasoning about science solutions to environmental problems through essays
 7. Optimize geospatial technologies such as ARC GIS and Google earth
 8. Focusing on opportunities to help seniors and young learners work together
 9. Using digital models to replicate complex real-world phenomena
 10. Linking physical fitness with nature learning
 11. Prioritize student-driven research/ self-directed learning plans
 12. Optimize shareware to promote continuous improvement in the learning experience
 13. Blending digital game based learning with tradition EE strategies
 14. Optimizing links between food and the environment
 15. Using global environment data sets like photos to focus on big issues
 16. Optimizing online resources to keep students connected to their projects
 17. Focused connections between scientific methods as a tool to analyze environmental health that impacts learners
 18. Focusing on spiritual connections to nature to support moral decision making in science
 19. Applying free technically advanced monitoring systems to real life situations to support community learning
 20. Optimizing deep, engaged formal/informal educators
 21. Combining performing/ visual arts with science
-

-
- lessons
 22. Optimize individual creativity in experimental design
 23. Using technology to address local relevant real-life problems
 24. Optimize use of online media to share lessons with others across the globe
 25. Practical internship experience with professionals in the field
 26. Optimizing use of national/ state/ private parks as outdoor classrooms
 27. Collaborative between practicing professionals and experienced educators
 28. Place more emphasis on critical thinking skills
 29. Maximizing time spent outdoors in local environments
-
30. Focus on environmental health/ justice to empower individuals to engage community issues
 31. Optimizing the use of modeling tools for local solutions such as alternative energy
 32. Creating imaginary scenarios to solve real-world problems
 33. Investing in afterschool programs to deepen engagement
 34. Optimize mobile technologies for interpreting natural environments on site
 35. Optimize state of the art technology in the classroom
 36. Mentoring teachers to help them strategize about using the local environment
 37. Focus on competitions to make real world solutions, like Solar Decathlon
 38. Cross disciplinary collaborative teaching
 39. Focus on senior citizens' interest in their environmental legacy
 40. Focus on hands-on real learning opportunities
 41. Frequent in person meetings with professional
-

practitioners

42. Focusing on next generation decision-makers (21-35)
 43. Focusing on the economics of the environment for practical applications of STEM literacy
 44. Optimize student collaborative research
 45. Teaching sensitivity to cross cultural differences
 46. Combining latest technology with art exploration about the environment
 47. Using environment to teach moral values
 48. Physical demonstrations of how biodiversity affects local ecological systems
 49. Focusing on the life cycles of flora and fauna to investigate the environment
 50. Reshaping professional development experimentation for teachers
 51. Focusing on real nature experience away from computers
 52. Refocusing service towards entire families in programs
 53. Optimize use of new virtual technologies
 54. Deeply engaging synergistic community partnerships
 55. Abandoning standardize testing in favor of life-long learning track for students
 56. Placing emphasis on community infrastructure
 57. Introducing nature to pre-school learners
 58. Emphasize experiential learning to foster passion and motivation
 59. Optimizing teamwork to increase debate skill using scientific concepts
 60. Directing resources to support youth in at risk communities
 61. Allowing teachers to pursue their own life-long development strategy
 62. Optimizing civic group collaborations with learners
 63. Optimize virtual visits by STEM professionals to the classroom
 64. Focus on adult learning (age 35-55) to create role models
-

Appendix C. Exemplar Programs Assessed With Blue Print For E→STEM Rubric

PROJECT LEAD THE WAY

Sponsors & Partners

AGI, Autodesk, edgcam, intelitek, National Instruments, Parallax Inc., Society of Manufacturing Engineers Education Foundation, Dimensions, VEX Robotics Design Systems, 3M, Bemis Company, Cargill, Chevron Corporation, DEED, Intel, John Deere, Lockheed Martin, and others

Description

This is a nonprofit organization that partners with 3,400 middle schools and high schools across all 50 states to prepare more than 300,000 students to become the most innovative and productive in the world. The hands-on, project-based program engages students by showing them how the materials they are learning in mathematics and science apply to the real world. Students are introduced to the scope, rigor and discipline of engineering, technology, and biomedical sciences and provided with a foundation and proven path to college and career success in STEM-related fields.

The problem-focused, project-based nature of the curriculum necessitates a classroom environment that emphasizes group collaboration and inquiry. In a Project Lead the Way (PLTW) classroom, the teacher is a facilitator and not a conveyor of information. Students make sense of their own understanding by using a variety of sources to obtain information, discussing that information with classmates and the teacher, synthesizing their understanding and then applying it to the project at hand. One of PLTW's strategic goals is to recruit and retain more female and underrepresented minorities to the program.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Integration of mentors into project development

Engages formal and informal educators

Promotes collaboration between practicing professionals and experienced educators

Provides mentoring for teachers to help them strategize about using the local environment

Provides professional development experimentation for teachers

B. Real Connections

Involves spending time in local outdoor environments

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Emphasizes critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

Optimizes teamwork to increase debate skills using scientific concepts

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Promotes cross-disciplinary collaborative teaching

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Provides practical internship experience with professionals in the field

Promotes synergistic community partnerships

Promotes civic group collaborations with learners

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

SIEMENS WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD CONTEST

Sponsors & Partners

Siemens Foundation, College Board, National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), Discovery Education

Description

The Siemens We Can Change the World Challenge encourages student teams, working with a Team Advisor/Mentor, to identify environmental issues of concern and create sustainable, reproducible improvements in their local communities. It is open to all schools in the US or can be applied as a Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) school abroad. The objective of the contest is for teachers, mentors or other adults to work with and supervise teams of 2-4 eligible students in the creation of a contest entry that identifies an issue in their community that needs to “go green” and provides a plan to positively impact that issue and further “green living” in their community. The Challenge takes a scientific approach to the change process emphasizing data collection that helps demonstrate a change has taken place.

Depending on the level of program (Elementary, Middle, High School), applications are judged by the following criteria:

Local Environmental Issue or Problem

Class Advisor/Mentor and Student Effort to Expand the Solution

Community Engagement

Scientific Approach

Creativity/Innovation

Replication/Expansion: "How could other communities do it

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Integrates mentors into project development

Engages formal and informal educators

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in *local* outdoor environments

Incorporates physical demonstrations of how biodiversity affects local ecological systems

Promotes time in nature, away from computers

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Optimizes individual creativity in experimental design

Emphasizes critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Uncertain

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Uncertain

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

Girl Scouts E-STEM

Partners & Sponsors

Alcoa Foundation, AT&T, Dell, Dove, Herford N. Elliott Trust, Ingersoll Rand, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Kappa Delta Sorority, Lockheed Martin, MetLife Foundation, Motorola Solutions Foundation, New York Life Foundation, Woman's Day and government agencies.

Description

This program offers three journeys: It's Your World—Change it!, It's Your Planet—Love it!, It's your Story- Tell It!, which engage girl scouts from across the globe (including 2.3 million girl members) in girl-led activities, learning-by-doing processes, and cooperative learning practices. STEM experiences are framed within the context of leadership: As girls participate in Girl Scouting, they develop leadership skills to make the world a better place. Research shows girls are more interested in STEM careers when they know how their work can help others.

Girl Scouts offers a safe, supportive place for girls to seek challenges. The girl-led process encourages girls to decide which topics they want to explore and how they want to approach them through a learning-by-doing process. This process involves a reflection activity that asks girls to think about how a given project worked and what they would do differently in the future—a key skill in scientific testing and conducting experiments. The cooperative learning process gives girls the opportunity to develop leadership and STEM skills in a way that will feel most comfortable.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Integrates mentors into project development

Engages formal and informal educators

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in local outdoor environments

Utilizes national, state, or private parks as outdoor classrooms

Maximizes time spent outdoors in local environments

Incorporates physical demonstrations of how biodiversity affects local ecological systems

Promotes time in nature away from computers

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Optimizes individual creativity in experimental design

Emphasizes critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

E. Technology and real problems

Uses technology to address local relevant real-life problems

F. Media and Community

Promotes cross disciplinary collaborative teaching

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Refocuses service learning towards entire families, and promotes synergistic community partnerships

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

Green Ribbon Schools

Partners & Sponsors

Numerous partners and sponsors, including UL and NAAEE

Description

The U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) recognition award honors public and private schools across the nation that are exemplary in reducing environmental impact and costs; improving the health and wellness of students and staff; and providing effective environmental and sustainability education, which incorporates STEM, civic skills and green career pathways.

Elements and pillars of green ribbon schools are:

Reduced Environmental Impact and Costs

Improved Health and Wellness

Effective Environmental and Sustainability Education

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Promotes collaboration between practicing professionals and experienced educators

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in *local* outdoor environments

Maximizes time spent outdoors in local environments

Incorporates physical demonstrations of how biodiversity affects local ecological systems

Promotes time in nature away from computers

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Emphasizes critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

Optimizes teamwork to increase debate skills using scientific concepts

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Promotes cross disciplinary collaborative teaching

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Promotes synergistic community partnerships

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

Captain Planet

Partners & Sponsors

Ted Turner and the Turner Foundation

Description

The mission of the Captain Planet Foundation is to give the next generation of environmental stewards an active understanding and love for the natural world in which they live. This program of funding and supporting hands-on environmental projects is designed to encourage innovative initiatives that inspire and empower children and youth around the world (over 7 million youth to date) as they work individually and collectively to create environmental solutions in their homes, schools, and communities. Captain Planet serves as a catalyst to getting environment-based education in schools, and to inspire youth and communities to participate in community service through environmental stewardship activities.

Best practices for excellence in projects funded by Captain Planet include outdoor learning with curriculum standards in environmental education (and multiple disciplines), opportunities for students to be engaged in authentic science practices, hands-on learning experiences, inquiry-based learning; environmental stewardship projects, where students apply what they learn to real-life solutions, longevity and lasting value, with an emphasis on durable purchases with grant funds, sustainability, evidenced by matching funds, community support, and a plan for continuation after the grant, reduces waste, adapts and re-purposes materials, cost-effectiveness, measurable outcomes, affecting a significant number of children and improving the state of the environment, replicates proven success.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Integrates mentors into project development

Engages formal and informal educators

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in local outdoor environments

Maximizes time spent outdoors in local environments

Promotes time in nature away from computers

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Optimizes individual creativity in experimental design

Emphasizes on critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

Abandons standardized testing in favor of life-long learning track for students

Optimizes teamwork to increase debate skills using scientific concepts

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Promote cross-disciplinary collaborative teaching

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Promotes synergistic community partnerships

Promotes civic group collaborations with learners

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

National Parks Climate Challenge

Partners & Sponsors

Aramark, Coca-Cola, L.L.Bean, UL, Benadryl, Disney

Description

The goal of the nationwide Parks Climate Challenge program is to train teachers to educate over 15,000 students about climate change using national parks across the nation as classrooms. This will be accomplished through in-person trainings that take place in select national parks during the summer months, organizing the best tools from those trainings in this online resource and allowing teachers to self-train. These two training delivery mechanisms (in-person and online) provide participating teachers the opportunity to learn how to teach as well as the resources to teach climate change in the classroom using national parks. Both methods also encourage teachers to take an additional step by developing hands-on service projects with their students through a national park experience. Recognizing that not every teacher can bring their students to a national park, the model is flexible enough to accommodate in-park service as well as service projects that are directed at learning through national parks, but take place outside of their boundaries.

The foundation of the Parks Climate Challenge program uses the ability of national parks to educate and inspire students as stewards of these protected lands. By teaching about climate change with a hands-on, science-based field curriculum, students will be able to think critically about climate change.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Engages formal and informal educators

Promotes collaboration between practicing professionals and experienced educators

Provides mentoring for teachers to help them strategize about using the local environment

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in *local* outdoor environments

Utilizes national, state, or private parks as outdoor classroom

Maximizes time spent outdoors in local environments

Incorporates physical demonstrations of how biodiversity affects local ecological systems

Promotes time in nature away from computers

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Optimizes individual creativity in experimental design

Emphasizes critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion, motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

Incorporates the economics of the environment for practical applications of STEM literacy,

Abandons standardize testing in favor of life-long learning track for students

E. Technology and real problems

Uses technology to address local relevant real-life problems

F. Media and Community

Promotes cross disciplinary collaborative teaching

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Uncertain

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain



4-H: Head, Heart, Hands and Health

Partners & Sponsors

Walmart, JCP, Toyota, Tractor Supply Company, NOYCE Foundation, Monsanto, New York Life Foundation, Lockheed Martin, Cargill, Altria

Description

4-H'ers participate in fun, hands-on learning activities supported by the latest research of land-grant universities that are focused on three areas: healthy living, citizenship, and science. 4-H reaches 7 million young people in more than 70 countries. Youth experience 4-H by becoming a member of a 4-H club, attending a 4-H camp, or joining school-based or after-school 4-H programs. 4-Hers can compete with their projects in contests at the local, state, regional, or national levels and also attend conferences and events. 4-H'ers across the nation are responding to challenges every day in their communities and their world. It is the nation's largest youth development organization. More than 6 million 4-H youth in urban neighborhoods, suburban schoolyards and rural farming communities stand out among their peers: building revolutionary opportunities and implementing community-wide change at an early age. 4-H fosters an innovative, "learn by doing" approach with proven results. It has been shown that 4-H youth do better in school and are positive assets for their communities.

The support of adult volunteers and mentors encourages young people in 4-H to work collaboratively, take the lead on their own projects and set and achieve goals with confidence. 4-H'ers chart their own course, explore important issues and define their place in the world.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Uncertain

B. Real Connections

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Abandons standardized testing in favor of life-long learning track for students

D. Practical Synthesis

Uncertain

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Uncertain

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Promotes synergistic community partnerships

H. Empowerment

Focuses on environmental health / justice to empower individuals to engage community issues

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

NCTAF Learning Studios

Partners & Sponsors

NASA, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Deerbrook Charitable Trust

Description

Spanning 9 high schools and 11 middle schools across Maryland, 200 teachers and 30 STEM experts have worked with approximately 4,000 students in NCTAF STEM Learning Studios. This program creates cross-curricular, interdisciplinary teams of 4-6 teachers who collaboratively develop and implement hands-on projects. These teams of teachers in high-needs schools work with STEM professional volunteers from the community, who become part-time, long-term participants in schools. Built on 3 proven strategies (project-based learning; collaborative teaching; and well-structured participation by STEM professionals), Learning Studios emphasize the interconnectedness of STEM subjects and utilize practicing scientists and real-world resources. Projects have included a quest to quantify school energy use and building fuel cells with a NASA engineer.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Engages formal and informal educators

Provides professional development experimentation for teachers

B. Real Connections

Uncertain

C. Critical Thinking and Creativity

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Uncertain

G. Community and Cross-Generational

Uncertain

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

Camp in a Can

Sponsors & Partners

Iowa Governor's Council for STEM

Description

Camp in a Can provides educators with themed toolkits for E→STEM lessons and hands-on activities with a focus on making connections . Originally developed for summer camp leaders, it has been expanded to be included in Iowa state school curricula, with the potential to be expanded to other states. Camp in a Can was nominated the most number of times in the Crowd Sourcing Survey. Camp in a Can was developed and is now used widely in Iowa by teachers and informal educators for preschool through middle school students.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Uncertain

B. Real Connections

Spending time in *local* outdoor environments

Introduces nature to pre-school learners

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Hands-on real learning opportunities

Emphasis on experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Integrates cross-curricular STEM education

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Uncertain

G. Community and Cross-Generational Learning

Uncertain

H. Empowerment

Uncertain

I. Digital tools and modeling

Uncertain

Dreams of Wilmington with Fort Fischer Aquarium

Sponsors and Partners

President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, United Way, North Carolina Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Recovery.gov, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

Description

An arts-focused organization partnered with the North Carolina Aquarium to combine resources in the arts, sciences, and conservation education to address the disjuncture among young urban underserved communities, and their history and their future. It focuses on 8 to 17-year-olds from underserved communities in Wilmington, NC. Integrating ocean themes across art disciplines, marine educators immersed youth, teaching artists, and DREAMS staff in coastal learning experiences for a full academic year. This is a free program for all participants, providing exceptional arts and science experiences for everyone.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Promotes collaboration between practicing professionals and experienced educators

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in *local* outdoor environments

Utilizes national, state, or private parks as outdoor classrooms

Incorporates physical demonstrations of how biodiversity affects local ecological systems

Promotes time in nature, away from computers

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Combines performing / visual arts with science lessons

D. Practical Synthesis

Abandons standardized testing in favor of life-long learning track for students

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Promotes cross disciplinary collaborative teaching

G. Community and Cross-Generational Learning

Promotes synergistic community partnerships

Directs resources to support youth in at-risk communities

H. Empowerment

Focuses on environmental health / justice to empower individuals to engage community issues

I. Digital Tools and Modeling

Uncertain

Bayfield High School Alternative Education Program

Sponsors & Partners

Uncertain

Description

Bayfield's Alternative Education program uses place-based projects to teach about science concepts and the process of science. Using the environment to immerse students in science, projects not only help to teach about immediate surroundings on the shore of Lake Superior, but also provide a service for a variety of local agencies and organizations. Several students have participated in competitions with their research projects and have qualified for national symposiums and awards. The program targets gifted as well as at-risk high school students at Bayfield High School, working with no more than 20 students each year.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

A. Professional Development

Uncertain

B. Real Connections

Encourages spending time in *local* outdoor environments

C. Creativity in Critical Thinking

Optimizes individual creativity in experimental design

Emphasizes critical thinking skills

Provides hands-on real learning opportunities

Provides opportunities for student collaborative research

Emphasizes experiential learning to foster passion and motivation

D. Practical Synthesis

Abandons standardized testing in favor of life-long learning track for students

E. Technology and real problems

Uncertain

F. Media and Community

Uncertain

G. Community and Cross-Generational Learning

Provides practical internship experience with professionals in the field

Promotes synergistic community partnerships

Promotes civic group collaborations with learners

H. Empowerment

Focuses on environmental health / justice to empower individuals to engage community issues

I. Digital Tools and Modeling

Uncertain



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North American Association
for Environmental Education

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knowledge.org



NewKnowledge Report #PRCO.106110.06

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