

Handout B

K-12 Environmental Education: Guidelines for Excellence Summary¹

Strand 1: Questioning, Analysis, and Interpretation Skills

Environmental literacy depends on the ability to ask questions, speculate, and hypothesize about the world around you, seek information, and develop answers to your questions. You must be familiar with inquiry; master fundamental skills for gathering and organizing information; and interpret and synthesize information to develop and communicate explanations.

Strand 2: Environmental Processes and Systems

Environmental literacy is dependent on an understanding of the processes and systems that comprise the environment, including human social systems and influences. You understand how changes in one system (hydrosphere, atmosphere, geosphere, and biosphere) results in changes in another. You understand how human activities affect environmental quality and long-term sustainability at local, tribal, national, and global levels. These understandings are based on knowledge synthesized from across traditional disciplines and are grouped in three sub-categories:

- 2.1—Earth’s physical and living systems
- 2.2—Humans and their societies
- 2.3—Environment and society

Strand 3: Skills for Understanding and Addressing Environmental Issues

Skills and knowledge are refined and applied in the context of environmental issues at varying scales. Environmental literacy includes the abilities to define, learn about, evaluate, and act on environmental issues. You can investigate environmental issues; consider evidence and differing viewpoints; and evaluate proposed action plans, including likely effectiveness in specific environmental, cultural, social, and economic contexts. You can analyze the intended and unintended consequences of your own actions and actions taken by other individuals and groups, including implications for long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability. These skills are grouped in two sub-categories:

- 3.1—Skills for analyzing and investigating environmental issues
- 3.2—Decision-making and action skills

Strand 4: Personal and Civic Responsibility

Environmentally literate community members are willing and able to act on their own conclusions about what should be done to ensure environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. As you develop and apply concept-based learning and skills for inquiry, analysis, and action, you also understand that what you do individually and in groups can make a difference.

¹ Download a copy of the full document, K-12 Environmental Education: Guidelines for Excellence, at https://cdn.naaee.org/sites/default/files/eeepro/products/files/k-12_ee.lr_.pdf