

OEEF's Preferred Characteristics for Projects Targeting Preschool- through University-level Audiences

Notable redesign and restructuring of educational institutions is underway in Ohio and nationally. These trends in educational reform are based on years of research and innovation. Ohio's Learning Standards, developed by the Ohio Department of Education <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio>, are a result of the state's efforts to improve elementary and secondary education.

Environmental Education can be an outstanding vehicle for implementing many aspects of educational reform efforts for all grade levels. The development of meaningful learning experiences that focus on environmental issues not only supports educational reform efforts but also contributes to an improved environment. To be eligible for OEEF grant funding, materials and activities for the K-12 audience in formal settings **must** be aligned with the Ohio Department of Education's Ohio's Learning Standards. These learning opportunities contribute to the development of learners who:

- take the major responsibility for their own learning
- view knowledge as integrated and holistic
- enjoy and value participatory learning
- have developed a variety of strategies for identifying issues and solving problems
- can work effectively with others, individually and in small or large groups, and value diversity in backgrounds and ability levels
- understand how curriculum topics are related to the real world
- continually develop and use inquiry skills
- make evidence-based decisions
- have the knowledge and desire to become actively involved in various groups and in the community
- are aware of and use their multiple intelligences
- view the whole community, natural and built, as a site for learning
- can assess their own progress
- are lifelong learners

OEEF will support projects that provide meaningful learning experiences for preschool through university-level audiences. Applications should demonstrate how the following learning opportunities have been built into the educational program.

- Opportunities are provided for learners to become actively involved in examining and resolving environmental issues.
- Learners participate in as many aspects of selecting, planning, doing and evaluating the learning experience as possible.
- Learning experiences are designed for learners to work individually or in small groups more often than in large groups.
- Learning experiences engage learners in hands-on activities and thinking processes.
- Learning experiences emphasize the process of inquiry rather than knowing a "right" answer.
- Learning experiences draw upon multiple intelligences of learners.
- Learning experiences use resources and sites outside of the classroom.
- Learning experiences are developed and implemented collaboratively among teachers and outside resource people, if outside resource people are used.
- Educational programs are interdisciplinary and/or thematic.
- Educational programs include authentic and diverse assessment, which focus on expected outcomes of the learner.
- Educational programs and/or activities are replicable in other settings.
- Learning experiences used to educate teachers are consistent with the learning experiences teachers subsequently will use to educate their students.
- Teachers have a major responsibility and commitment in the planning and execution of any pre-service and in-service activity.
- Teachers use quality educational practices that will result in the learners acquiring lifelong skills and abilities in pre-service and in-service activities.
- Pre-service or in-service programs are conducted over an extended period of time and include one or more follow-up sessions.