

Bay Area Environmental Education: How Do We Know We're Making a Difference?

FINAL REPORT
Of the Bay Area
Environmental Education
Evaluation Learning Community
July 2004

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Summary

Through a collaborative learning process, a group of Bay Area environmental education professionals and representatives from the East Bay Community, Marin Community, Peninsula Community and The San Francisco Foundations have developed a regional framework that outlines how environmentally-responsible behavior can be promoted through environmental education.

This common framework will allow environmental education organizations to align efforts more readily. The framework also provides a basis for considering how systematic collection of evaluative data can then inform future program planning and delivery. The intent is that this effort will enable program providers to improve programs, coordinate efforts, and make a stronger collective positive impact.

This report documents the work of the learning community, describing how six key program strategies form the core of the regional framework and the focus of evaluation design. Participants in the learning community drew the following six strategies from their own professional knowledge, the research literature, and presentations by resource people:

- Implement Best EE Practices
- Target Specific Behaviors
- Disseminate Core EE Messages
- Increase Cultural Competence
- Promote Collaboration/Partnerships
- Increase Evaluation Capacity

The report provides details on the learning community's development of the following items:

- A *Regional Framework* that depicts the relationships between the six key program strategies and desired outcomes,
- An *Evaluation Questions Matrix* that lays out possible foci for assessing each of the strategies,
- *Key Attributes* that characterize high-quality implementation of the strategies,
- Four *Evaluation Design Options* that would increase the evaluation capacity of the Bay Area EE community, and
- *Recommendations for Action* beyond the Learning Community.

Introduction

If environmental education¹ provides people with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment, will new patterns of behavior towards the environment result? If in fact, environmental education experiences work, how much is needed, for how long, and under what circumstances? Bay Area environmental educators – and their funders – are focusing ever more so on these and other similarly vexing evaluative questions.

As the field of environmental education develops, practitioners naturally are seeking ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their programs. Environmental educators recognize that large scale impact cannot be achieved by organizations working separately, especially at a time when funding resources are dwindling. How can more be accomplished with less? What can be done better together?

At the same time, supporters of environmental education – be they individual donors or institutional funders – are increasingly looking for measurable results from the programs and organizations in which grant investments are made (see sidebar).

This situation has motivated a group of Bay Area environmental educators and foundation officials to engage in a facilitated learning process that is intended to help integrate evaluation into the core of environmental education work so that improvements to programs can be achieved.

This report summarizes the work of the learning community, providing a framework for joint action that promotes environmentally-responsible behavior and proposing evaluation approaches to measure the impacts of that joint action.

Seeking Measurable Results

"We screen out things that are not measurable, and there are lots of important things you can't measure," [Moore Foundation President Lew] Coleman said. "We end up saying 'no' to a lot of things that are important."

For instance, after almost a year and a half of discussion, the foundation decided it would not make a big investment in environmental education for youth because it's not always clear if investments in environmental education result in changing a person's behavior, Coleman said."

Source: "Moore's New Laws"
SF Business Times
October 23, 2003

¹ Adapted from goals developed at the world's first intergovernmental conference on environmental education, organized by the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in cooperation with the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) and convened in Tbilisi, Georgia (USSR) from October 14-26, 1977.

Background on the Learning Community

Origins

Beginning in August 2002, a group of more than 25 Bay Area environmental education (EE) program providers and evaluators engaged in a series of conversations about the need for evaluation in the regional EE community. Participants in these meetings expressed a strong shared interest in collaboration to learn about evaluation because:

- No definitive evidence exists that environmental knowledge and awareness leads to pro-environmental behavior; in fact, “Most researchers agree that only a small fraction of pro-environmental behavior can be directly linked to environmental knowledge and environmental awareness.”²
- While evaluation will primarily serve the environmental education community, evaluation results will be useful to respond to funder requirements and to those who question the value of environmental education.

Goals

Four of the Bay Area’s community foundations – East Bay Community Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Peninsula Community Foundation and The San Francisco Foundation – also saw the value in this endeavor and co-funded the design and implementation of a learning community, whose goals would be:

- To develop a common understanding of the process whereby environmentally-responsible behavior can be promoted through environmental education so that program providers can improve programs, coordinate efforts and make a stronger collective positive impact
- To increase the capacity for evaluation of EE in the San Francisco Bay region.

Environmental education providers reacted positively to the proposed learning community. One provider observed that it is “powerful and exciting to think that we will be crafting together something that will help us; we couldn’t do it alone.” Another saw this as an “opportunity to share a common understanding and approach when we’re talking about results...this will make us more effective and empowered.”

Participants

Efforts were made to constitute the learning community with representatives of organizations that reflected a cross-section of the Bay Area’s EE community by geography, audience, approach and other key dimensions. Staff from the following organizations, as well as the sponsoring foundations, participated in the learning community:

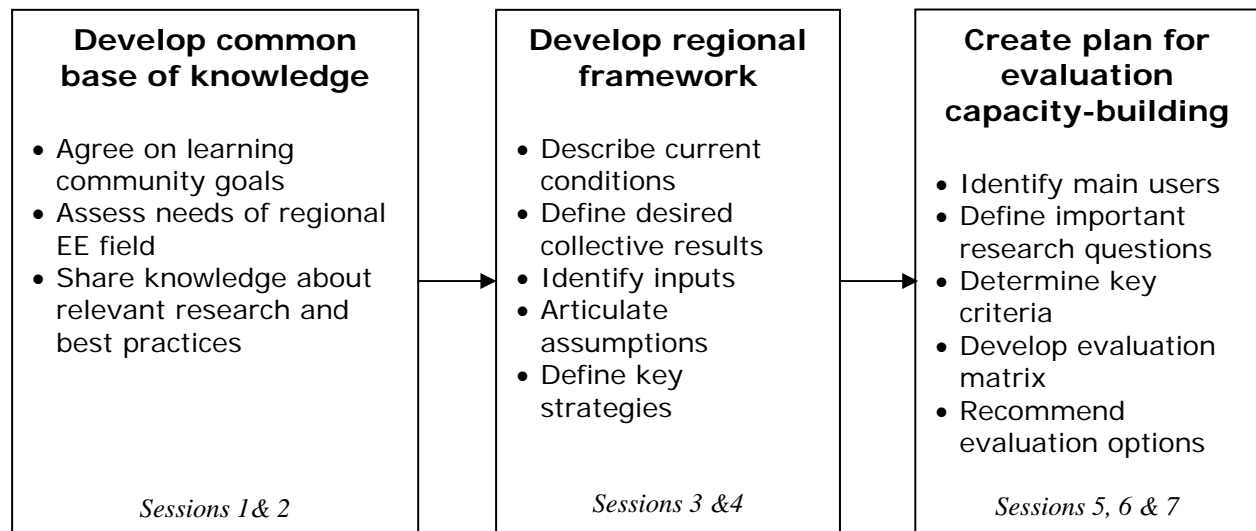
- Adopt-A-Watershed
- Audubon Canyon Ranch
- California Regional EE Community
- Community Resources for Science
- Coyote Point Museum
- Environmental Careers Organization
- Environmental Education Council of Marin
- Golden Gate Audubon Society
- Golden Gate National Parks
- Headlands Institute
- Hidden Villa
- Lawrence Hall of Science
- Literacy for Environmental Justice
- Ma'at Youth Academy
- San Francisco Zoo
- San Jose Children's Discovery Museum
- Save the Bay
- XCEL Academy

² Kollmuss, A. & Julian Agyeman. “Mind the Gap: why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior?”, *Environmental Education Research*, Vol. 8, No., 3, 2002, pp.250.

A roster with participants' names and affiliations can be found in Appendix A.

Process

The learning community took place over seven sessions from June 2003 through May 2004. The first two sessions focused on creating a common base of knowledge about environmental education research and practice. Sessions 3 and 4 were devoted to creating a common regional framework that would both conceptually and visually display program outcomes and results and the strategies that lead to these results. Between the fourth and fifth sessions, participants were surveyed to learn more about their current data collection and analysis activities. The final three sessions then focused on identifying key evaluation questions and designing a plan to increase capacity for evaluation of environmental education in the San Francisco Bay region. Between the fifth and sixth sessions, forums were held with a broader set of environmental education practitioners to solicit feedback on the collaborative's work to date.



These sessions used a combination of methods to accomplish the goals for the learning community:

- discussion of reading and other background materials
- presentations by resource people
- sharing of professional knowledge by participants, and
- interactive activities to build knowledge by and among participants.

See Appendix B for a list of resources used during the learning community.

Toward a Common Framework

Current Status of Bay Area EE

At the outset of the learning community, participants examined the current status of Bay Area environmental education. Drawing information from a variety of sources, participants noted the following points:

- There is a rich array of EE providers; over 200 organizations providing programs by some counts
- However, these organizations typically operate in a fragmented and piecemeal manner
- EE is seen as supplement to classroom curricula and implemented as a one-time club/class activity
- As a result, EE is underutilized because teachers are unaware, not trained and not supported
- Rarely are efforts coordinated to network providers in order to develop partnerships, leverage resources, and avoid duplication
- Most popular topics are solid waste, gardens and watershed studies practiced mostly in elementary, charter or private schools, or environmental academies.
- EE community has not been successful at including diverse groups.
- In sum, program delivery is not aligned across providers, program exposure across the population is sporadic, and program impact is uneven.

Building the Framework

Learning community participants worked together to craft a regional framework that could guide the Bay Area EE community – as individual organizations as well as collectively – in aligning efforts to become more effective and thereby, lead to a greater cumulative impact. While not every organization would be expected to carry out all aspects of the framework, each organization should see be able to its role in the context of this larger collective framework (see page 9 for resulting framework).

“It’s unlikely that any one of our programs can do it all, yet at the same time, it doesn’t mean we aren’t doing anything important. All programs have an impact; it’s all important.”

The regional framework shows the relationships among program activities, strategies and results. The learning community developed the framework using a format (see diagram at right) that relies on the use of data to inform and monitor program design and delivery³. An important aspect of this framework is the distinction between community-level and organization-level framework elements and measurement data.

Community indicators (measures that quantify and track community-level conditions such as environmental quality data or consumption patterns) inform the determination of desired results and monitor progress toward achievement of

	FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS	MEASUREMENT DATA
COMMUNITY-LEVEL	Desired Results	Community Indicators
	Motivating Conditions and Cause	
ORGANIZ'N-LEVEL	Strategies	Performance Measures
	Activities	

³ Adapted from Harvard Family Research Project, “Learning from Logic Models in Out-of-School Time.”

those desired results. Community-wide effort is required to move and reflect substantial changes, i.e., EE programs alone will not be sufficient to make these changes come about but ought to contribute toward those changes.

These indicators can tell us: Are we doing the right things? Does our program strategy need to be modified? Are our programs contributing to the desired long-term result?

Organization-level elements - program strategies and activities that work toward achieving the desired results – are monitored by measures of productivity and changes that come about as a result of the program’s work. These performance measures typically reflect smaller changes than community indicators but track changes that programs can directly influence. These measures are typically considered in two ways:

Measures of Effect (outcomes): Changes in the target populations (i.e., children in environmental education programs) that come about as a result of program strategies and activities. Measures of effect often reflect changes in knowledge, skills, attitude, or behavior.

Measures of Effort (outputs): Direct outputs of program activities such as what and how much the program accomplishes. Measures of effort can include number of classes, materials developed, trainings offered, etc. or include measures of customer satisfaction.

These measures will tell us: Are we doing things right? Is the strategy working as intended? What have we learned and how does our work need to be modified for better results? What changes can be attributed to our programs?

Using this format as a guide, the learning community members worked through the different framework elements to develop a regional framework that captures the group’s understanding of how EE can contribute toward increasing environmentally-responsible behavior. The resulting framework (see page 9) can be explained as answers to a series of questions (*italicized words refer to sections of the diagram on previous page*):

What will be the Impact? (*Desired Results*)
Bay Area residents impact the quality of the natural and built environment through their individual actions. The cumulative impact of 6.7 million residents’ behaviors – driving, eating, shopping, voting, giving, etc. – is considerable. To address this impact, Bay Area EE organizations, working individually and collectively, seek to increase voluntary environmentally-responsible behavior over the long-term (7-10 years out) by influencing awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and intentions to act.

Which Targeted Behaviors? (*Community Indicators informing Desired Results*)
Knowing that identification of specific behavioral outcomes is necessary to promote environmentally-responsible behavior change, EE organizations would refer to regional

Selected Sustainability Indicators

- Transportation
 - Commuting*
 - Vehicle Miles Traveled*
- Natural Assets
 - Protected Land*
 - Brownfields*
 - Water Use per capita*
 - Ecological Health of the Bay*
 - Ecological Footprint*
- Resource Use
 - Energy Use*
 - Carbon Emissions*
 - Ozone*
 - Particulate Matter*
 - Waste Disposal and Diversion*
- Civic Engagement
 - Voter Participation*

*Source: Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities
<http://www.bayareaalliance.org/indicators.pdf>*

sustainability indicators to inform the choice of behavior categories to target. For instance, if air quality indicators in the region were improving but water quality indicators were getting worse, programs would deduce that they should allocate more environmental education resources toward changing behaviors that impact water quality. EE providers would use these community-level indicators to inform the design and delivery of EE program strategies and activities.

What Needs to Change? (*Motivating Conditions and Causes*)

In order to achieve the desired impact, participants in the learning community believe that these key underlying conditions need to be addressed:

- EE is currently perceived narrowly by multiple constituencies:
 - EE does not resonate among the broad public
 - EE is not culturally relevant
 - EE lacks broadly understood definition
- Lack of collaboration: There is currently not enough connection across organizations/programs to provide a continuum of experiences
- Lack of professional development in best practices for effective EE
- Lack of research and practice that ties EE to academic standards
- Not enough focus in EE on promoting responsible environmental behavior

What is the Context? (*Community Indicators that Inform Strategies*)

The Bay Area is endowed with the following resources that can be tapped:

- A population of 6.7 million residents that is diverse along socio-economic as well as racial/ethnic dimensions
- Over 200 organizations that provide EE programs
- Funding (albeit not enough!) to support EE
- Knowledge, based on local experience and national research, to implement EE effectively
- A region of extraordinary natural and cultural resources

What Needs to Happen? (*Strategies and Activities*)

To address the changes in the regional context, learning community participants identified a set of essential and amplifying strategies that need to be implemented. Essential strategies are aimed at individual-level behavior change. These include:

- Identify and implement a common set of best practices for effective environmental education – the adoption of program standards and organizational competencies will result in greater influence on individual attitudes and confidence about environmentally-responsible behavior
- Strengthen EE providers' ability to influence specific behavioral outcomes – incorporating social marketing approaches that help remove barriers and

Six Critical Pathways: Strategies to Outcomes	
Essential Strategies	
Implement Best EE Practices	}
Target Specific Behaviors	
Disseminate Core EE Messages	
Amplifying Strategies	
Increase Cultural Competence	}
Promote Collaboration/Partnerships	
Increase Evaluation Capacity	
	Greater organizational capacity
	Consistently higher quality EE delivery
	Better EE program linkages
	Increased adherence to common priorities
	Shared knowledge and influence
	Greater reach to more diverse audiences
	Bigger influence on policy agenda
	Continuous improvement in env. behavior

- provide incentives for individuals to adopt behavior changes
- Develop and disseminate core EE messages that are delivered through multiple media and social arenas to promote greater public understanding and support for EE and influence social norms for more responsible behaviors.

EE organization(s) applying these strategies in concert will more effectively encourage adoption of environmentally-responsible behavior on an individual level. To scale up the impact of the essential strategies over a larger population, EE organizations will have to bring about organization-level changes through implementation of amplifying strategies. These include:

- Increase cultural competence of EE organizations, which would enable EE providers to more effectively reach a larger segment of the diverse population and therefore, inform and influence greater behavior change
- Promote collaboration among EE providers and with community partners (schools, after-school programs, community-based organizations, etc.), which would deepen and broaden the reach of environmental education
- Increase evaluation capacity among EE providers, which would facilitate greater learning, reflection and improvement in practice.

Activities that advance this set of essential and amplifying strategies would be implemented by individual EE organizations independently as well as in coordinated efforts.

What will Result? (*Performance Measures*)

With effective implementation of the essential strategies, EE organizations and their supporters can expect to see certain measurable results over time:

- Greater organizational capacity and higher quality program delivery through alignment with best practices
- An increase in environmentally-responsible behavior among program participants
- An increase in public awareness of EE

Moreover, with the effective implementation of the amplifying strategies, even greater results can be expected:

- Better program linkages among EE organizations through collaboration
- Consistently higher quality EE program delivery through collaboration and evaluation
- Sustained networking among organizations to increase knowledge sharing and influence
- Increased adherence to a common set of priorities among community of EE providers
- Bigger influence on the agenda of policy makers and/or the general public
- More culturally competent EE organizations that allow more equitable access to natural, cultural and educational resources
- Continuous improvement in environmentally-responsible behavior on a regional level.

The following sections of this report discuss various considerations for measuring these expected results.

Using the Regional Framework to Develop Evaluation Questions

Using the regional framework, EE program providers can now refer to a common understanding of how activities lead to results, and ask questions, seek answers, make changes based on what is learned, and improve program planning and delivery on an individual organization basis as well as collectively.

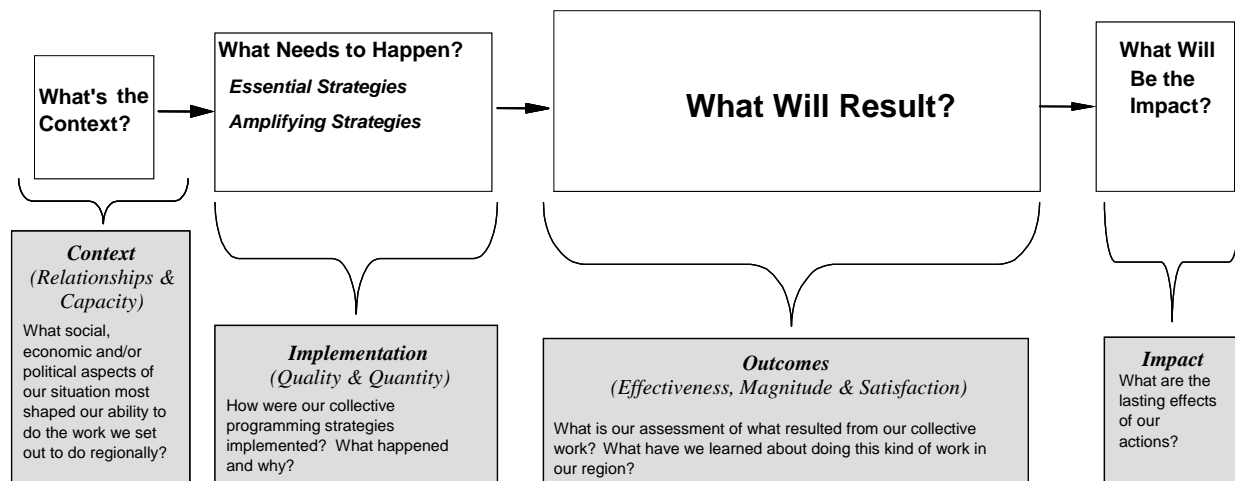
Different Sections, Different Questions

Different sections of the regional framework suggest different categories of evaluation questions⁴. When focusing on the “What’s the context?” section of the framework, questions typically would focus on relationships and capacity: the social, economic and/or political aspects of the situation that most shaped ability to do the intended work. An example includes: “What kind of relationships do EE providers have with target populations?”

“Implementation” questions that address the “*What needs to happen?*” section usually focus on quality and quantity of products and services. These look at how the strategies and activities were implemented - what happened and why. An example includes: “To what extent did programs reach target populations?”

“Outcomes” questions addressing the “*What will result?*” section emphasize effectiveness, satisfaction and magnitude of change. These questions assess progress toward desired results. Examples include “What behavioral changes did we observe in the target populations?” and “What have we learned from doing this kind of work that will improve our future program planning and delivery?”

“Impact” questions examine what lasting changes in the community result from programs.



⁴ Adapted from *Logic Model Development Guide*, Chapter 4. published by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. <http://www.wkcf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf>

Different Audiences, Different Questions

Furthermore, in framing questions, it is important to bear in mind who will be the users and what will be the uses of the information collected to answer the questions. Accordingly, the learning community participants identified who they considered to be key stakeholders and agreed to categorize them into four primary audiences:

- Program participants
- Internal audience (staff, management, board of EE organization)
- Supporters (foundations, donors)
- External audiences (media, elected officials, general public, environmental advocacy groups)

The following table lists the evaluation questions that learning community participants believed to be the most useful to address, by framework section and primary audience:

Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Component				Evaluation Audience			
	C	A	O	M	P	I	S	E
How can this program help educate and influence our community towards better quality of life?	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
How has this program acknowledged my behaviors as they relate to the environment? How can I apply the lessons I learned? How has my participation in this program impacted me?	X		X	X	X	X		
To what extent are we reaching diverse audiences? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inclusive, culturally competent ▪ How will it benefit people served 		X	X		X	X	X	X
How do we know and how do we measure if our intended outcomes are being met?			X	X	X	X	X	X
How do we maximize impact? How can we have the greatest impact? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is unique/who else is doing? ▪ Collaboration/linkage 	X		X	X		X	X	
How does your program link to (or compete with) other programs along a continuum of learning? Is there a regional strategy? Where does this program fit on a continuum of learning? How does this program connect to other EE resources & program?	X		X		X	X	X	
How are you making institutional change?			X	X		X	X	X
How does the program contribute to students' academic achievement?			X		X	X	X	X
How do you determine need for program? Did the program satisfy the need?	X	X				X	X	

Key: Under Component, C=context, A=implementation of Activities, O=outcomes, M=Impact
 Under Audience, P=program participant, I=internal, S=supporter, E=external

An Emergent Evaluation Questions Matrix

Correlating the categories of evaluation questions with the various essential and amplifying strategies suggests a matrix of key evaluation questions (see chart below). All of these evaluation questions are relevant at the individual organization level as well as on the

collective level. The evaluation questions identified by the learning community above would fall primarily under the questions in the cells highlighted in blue.

Evaluation questions by strategy and framework section			
Context	Implementation	Outcomes	Impact
What shaped our ability to do the work (individually and collectively)?	How well were strategies implemented?	What resulted from our work?	What are the lasting effects of our actions on community/environment?

ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES (pathways to individual-level behavior change)				
Identify and implement a common set of best practices for effective EE	What is EE orgs' organizational current capacity to implement best practices for effective EE?	To what extent do EE orgs meet program standards for effective EE practice?	How effectively are EE programs influencing behaviors?	How effectively are EE programs contributing toward better quality of life?
Strengthen EE providers' ability to effect specific behavioral outcomes	What is EE orgs' current capacity to address specific behavioral outcomes?	To what extent are EE orgs addressing specific behavioral outcomes?	To what extent has learners' intention to act in environmentally-responsible ways improved?	
Develop/disseminate core EE message	What is EE orgs' current capacity to communicate about EE?	How well have EE orgs promoted understanding of EE among public?	To what extent has public support for EE increased?	

AMPLIFYING STRATEGIES (pathways to organizational-level change that improve effects of essential strategies)				
Increase cultural competence of EE providers	What is EE orgs' current cultural competence?	To what extent are EE programs reaching diverse audiences?	To what extent do diverse audience segments act in environmentally-responsible ways?	
Promote collaboration among EE providers; Reach out/engage community partners	What is EE orgs' current capacity for collaboration/partnership?	To what extent are EE programs linking to amplify impact?	To what extent has learners' EE experience become more continuous?	
Increase capacity for evaluation	What is EE orgs' current capacity for evaluation and assessment?	To what extent have EE orgs integrated evaluation methods and tools?	To what extent has evaluation led to learning and program improvement?	

Different Strategies, Different Evaluation Criteria

As EE organizations seek to answer these evaluation questions, it is important to define criteria for each of the strategies so that there are consistent bases for evaluation across programs over time. What attributes characterize high-quality implementation of the six strategies?

Learning community members developed criteria for the three strategies considered to be the most influential among the essential and amplifying strategies:

- Identify and implement a common set of best practices for effective EE

- Increase cultural competence of EE providers
- Promote collaboration among EE providers; reach out/engage community partners

Effective EE practice, be it program delivery or professional development, should address these attributes⁵:

- **Learner-Oriented:** Supports the development of personal meaning through the learning process, with emphasis on age-appropriateness and ongoing (even life-long) learning
- **Promotes Wonder:** Incorporates inquiry and discovery-based approaches that build appreciation for the natural and built environment
- **In Context of Place/Community:** Places learning in the context of the local, relates directly to the learner's life and culture, and encourages civic engagement
- **Action-Oriented:** Incorporates approaches that are hands-on, address real problems, and build confidence and hope
- **Focus on Relationships:** Forges connections across and outward from specific areas of study – integrates across issues such as water quality, energy production and economic development; crosses disciplinary boundaries of academic subjects such as science and language arts; connects classroom and out-of-school learning; relates the local to the regional and global.

Organizations that are culturally competent⁶ should have the following qualities:

- **Value Diversity:** Articulates a core commitment to respecting cultural difference
- **Capacity for Self-Assessment:** Possesses ongoing willingness to reflect on what it means to be culturally relevant
- **Consciousness of Cultural Dynamics:** Recognizes socio-economic and political factors that affect interactions among different cultural groups
- **Institutionalization of Cultural Knowledge:** Integrates more culturally appropriate approaches and practices into operations and programs
- **Adaptability to Diversity:** Possesses versatility to adapt program operations and activities to different cultural situations.

Effective collaboration⁷ and partnerships to facilitate continuity and consistency of environmental education exposure call for the following traits:

- **Shared Purpose:** Common understanding of mutual benefit that can only be gained through joint work
- **Mutual Respect, Understanding and Trust:** Members see each other's value and can build meaningful relationships
- **Appropriate Composition:** Inclusion of a cross-section of stakeholders so as to confer legitimacy
- **Open Communication:** Enables frequent sharing of information
- **Self-Governance:** Members develop and accept clearly-defined roles and responsibilities
- **Synergistic Climate:** Promotes exchange/reciprocity of services and supports to achieve shared purpose.

⁵ Drawn from various sources, including: NAAEE Guidelines for Excellence, Center for Ecoliteracy, State Education and Environment Roundtable, learning community participants' own experience

⁶ Based on "How is Cultural Competence Integrated in Education?" Mark A. King, Anthony Sims & David Osher (http://cecp.air.org/cultural/O_integrated.htm), and learning participants' own experience

⁷ Drawn from *Collaboration: What Makes it Work?* (Amherst Wilder Foundation), *How to Make Collaboration Work* (David Straus), and learning participants' own experience

Drawing from the professional literature, criteria for the other strategies can be similarly formulated.

To influence specific behavior outcomes⁸, strategies should satisfy the following conditions:

- **Audience-centered:** Identifies and focuses upon target audience in culturally and age-appropriate ways
- **Understand context:** Considers the social context and political and/or economic variables that influence behavior in the particular audience
- **Clearly addresses barriers to change:** Factors such as norms and convenience are taken into account so that actions are reasonably easy to take
- **Incentives for change:** Convey clear and compelling reasons, including perceived benefits and rewards relative to costs, for taking action.

To develop and disseminate positive messages to the public⁹, whether through the media or influential social arenas such as places of worship, civic organizations and community centers, the following should be addressed:

- **Audience-centered:** As with the behavior change and effective EE strategies, identifies and focuses upon target audience in culturally and age-appropriate ways
- **Clear objectives:** Keep in mind what change you intend to bring about in the audience
- **Research-driven message development:** Clear, consistent and believable messages that gain attention of audience, repeat most important ideas, and use credible sources of information
- **Multiple levels of engagement:** Delivery of messages so as to be accessible in many ways

To effectively use evaluation for learning and program improvement¹⁰, these criteria should be considered:

- **Clear purpose:** Intended for organizational learning; should be useful to organization's leaders and managers
- **Feasibility:** Realistically matches the organization's capacity to carry out evaluation
- **Collaborative Design:** Involves all key stakeholders to ensure buy-in and support for evaluation process
- **Accuracy:** Reveals and conveys reliable and valid information as sound basis for organizational and programmatic decision-making
- **Culture of inquiry:** Frequent and ongoing data collection and analysis to provide comparative and timely information for decision-making

⁸ Drawn from *Measuring Results*, Cheslock N. and Schneider, B., and *Fostering Sustainable Behavior*, Doug McKenzie-Mohr, www.cbsm.com

⁹ Drawn from "Development of an Evaluation Checklist for Communicating About Environmental Education" by Melissa J. Dark and Robert H. Holsman, and Health Communication Message Review Criteria, The Health Communication Unit at the Center for Health Promotion at University of Toronto

¹⁰ Drawn from *Evaluative Learning*, The TCC Group, and *Standards for Evaluation*, Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, American Evaluation Association

Four Evaluation Design Options to Consider

Taking into account the current data collection and evaluation practices and needs as expressed by learning community participants¹¹ and the emergent evaluation questions matrix, several approaches can be taken to increase the evaluation capacity of the Bay Area EE community.

“Do it Yourself” Tool Kit

Evaluation tools and methods that address the various cells of the evaluation questions matrix can be collected in a Web-accessible tool kit so that EE organizations can access and use the tools by themselves. The user would be able to search the on-line database using the following search criteria:

1. The tool's *name*
2. The tool's *author*
3. The *type* of tool (interview protocol, written survey, etc)
4. *Age* range of program participants relevant to the tool
5. *Program* focus (recycling, conservation, etc) relevant to the tool
6. The *strategy* that the tool addresses
7. The *framework* that the tool addresses
8. The *evaluation criteria* the tool addresses
9. The *time* necessary to implement the tool
10. Who *submitted* the tool

Trainings in basic evaluation techniques and/or technical assistance/implementation grants can be offered to support the adaptation and application of these tools.

Sample tools include:

Evaluation Tool	Strategy	Framework Section
<i>Organization Assessment Tool (OAT)</i> , National Environmental Education Advancement Project	Effective EE Practice	Context (Capacity)
<i>Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence</i> , North American Association for EE	Effective EE Practice	Implementation
<i>The Secondary School Environmental Literacy Assessment Instrument</i> , Marcinkowski, T. and L. Rehrig	Effective EE Practice	Outcomes
<i>Evaluation Checklist for Communicating About EE</i> , Dark, M and Holsman, R.	Develop EE message	Implementation
<i>Guide to Planning and Implementing Cultural Competence Organizational Self-Assessment</i> , The National Center for Cultural Competence (Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development)	Increase Cultural Competency	Context (Capacity)
<i>Evaluating Collaboratives: Reaching the Potential</i> , University of Wisconsin Extension	Promote Collaboration	Implementation
<i>WK Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook</i>	Increase Capacity for Evaluation	Context (Capacity)

Some 60 evaluation tools and methods that are relevant to the evaluation questions matrix have already been identified.

¹¹ A survey was administered to learning community participants to: (1) gauge current evaluation capacity of the organizations and (2) learn what data the organizations are currently collecting related to the consolidated logic model. See “Current Data Collection and Evaluation Practices: A Summary of Survey Findings” for results, which include information on key users and uses for the data.

While this approach can be implemented fairly easily and increases individual organizations' evaluation capacity, it does little to promote coordination among EE organizations and would not aggregate data to monitor collective impact.

Focusing on Key Evaluation Questions

This approach would focus on the key evaluation questions that emerged from the learning community (the blue cells in the matrix). Indicators based on key criteria for the relevant strategies would be developed. EE organizations would then voluntarily collect data on these criteria using the same set of evaluation tools, and compare findings.

This approach would address the organizations' interests but since the questions focus mostly on the outcomes section of the framework, there would be less feedback to the organizations on program capacity and implementation.

Measuring Population Impact

This approach would identify and track a sample of participants from various EE programs. An impact tool, such as the Ecological Footprint, would be used to measure the change over time. Interviews/focus groups would then be conducted to learn what factors contributed most to behavior change.

The change in participants' behavior will be better understood using this approach; however, tracking program participants over time is challenging.

Testing the Framework

Using Bay Area Alliance Sustainability Indicators, categories of behaviors would be defined by which to inventory EE programs, e.g., programs that address air quality, water quality, land resources, etc. Clusters of organizations/ participants by category of behavior outcome would be organized to implement and monitor the framework strategies. Evaluation of the context and implementation of essential and amplifying strategies would be conducted. Case studies and interviews would then be used to draw out lessons for program improvement that would be useful to other EE programs. Based on these lessons, cadres of "critical friends" could be trained to observe programs and offer technical advice to a wider set of EE organizations.

This approach would yield comprehensive information across the framework sections and emphasize ongoing learning through collaboration, but would be costly both in time and money.

Recommendations for Action beyond the Learning Community

As the learning community approached its completion, participants brainstormed recommendations for continuing the work started and/or accelerated through this process.

Dissemination of Framework and Evaluation Design Options

Each of the participating organizations agreed to reflect on how their current program strategies and activities align with the framework and articulate how the framework will help them improve their work.

The documentation of this learning community will be disseminated to regional EE organizations and funders. They will be engaged through convenings and encouraged to consider how the framework and evaluation design options might apply to their work. These convenings would be hosted by the organizations and funders that participated in the learning community; for instance, the East Bay Community Foundation might convene a briefing among its EE grantees to introduce and discuss the framework and evaluation options. The learning community sponsors might host a briefing with other funders to consider how this work might inform their future grantmaking, hopefully resulting in collaborations with other funders to apply the framework. In particular, funders might prioritize support of the dissemination and adoption of the framework through the implementation of essential and amplifying strategies.

Development of Evaluation Tool Kit

An Access database will be developed to collect various evaluation tools to help EE providers in their evaluation efforts. A "tool" refers to surveys, interview protocols, program guidelines, focus group protocols, etc. that providers can use to gather data about what they are evaluating. The learning community hopes to make this database Web-accessible eventually.

In addition to the database of evaluation tools, the website might also feature a way for users to submit reviews/feedback about the tools, as well as a general evaluation resource section aimed at environmental education providers so they may both implement and understand their evaluations better. The database might contain the following information in an easy to navigate format:

1. Readiness/preparing for evaluation: questions an organization should ask before embarking on an evaluation
2. Pros and cons of different types of tools, broadly speaking
3. Examples of different evaluation research questions
4. Case studies of organizations pursuing a particular evaluation question and the tools used
5. Evaluation reports that use the specific tools
6. Logic model explanation, including explanation of the Bay Area Environmental Education Evaluation Learning Community's regional framework
7. Professional evaluation resources, such as consultants and funders
8. A FAQ section that leads to the tools in the database. (For example, "Do you want to know what your program participants learned? Click here for a survey to find out.")

Interested EE providers would need to work together to take this idea forward and find a host for the Web-site as well as the necessary funding to build and maintain the site. Interested funders might consider investing in the development of this resource.

Ongoing Evaluation Capacity-building

Learning community members expressed great interest in nurturing a culture of reflection and shared learning within the regional environmental education community. Various ideas for moving this forward include:

- Establish an ongoing EE evaluation membership organization to share knowledge and sharpen practice
- Define “environmental behavior change” categories from relevant sustainability indicators and form specific affinity clusters for these specific categories
- Begin to incorporate common evaluation questions across EE programs
- Develop a “Kids” version of the ecological footprint
- Design and implement a pilot longitudinal study

Learning community participants suggested the following recommendations for consideration by the funding community:

- Fund technical assistance for adoption of do-it-yourself evaluation tools
- Fund affinity clusters to pilot test the framework theory
- Fund the knowledge transfer from those who do evaluation to other providers
- Catalyze support for tools development, adoption and diffusion.

Conclusion

Through a collaborative learning process, EE professionals and funders have developed a regional framework that outlines how environmentally-responsible behavior can be promoted through environmental education. By better understanding the relationships among resources, activities and results, EE providers can improve what they do. The existence of this common reference point will allow EE organizations to align efforts more readily. This framework also provides a basis for considering how systematic collection of data can then inform future program planning and delivery. The intent is that this effort will enable program providers to improve programs, coordinate efforts and make a stronger collective positive impact.

APPENDIX A: Roster of Participants

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Criteria for selection

The following criteria were considered in identifying prospective participants:

- Approach: Nonformal, Formal, Coordinated.
- Audience: specific population (e.g. low income) and age (Pre-K, elementary, middle, high school, college, adult)
- County: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara
- Organizational Type: Institutional, Non-profit (local, regional, state, national)
- Organizational Capacity: years of EE programming, diversified income sources
- Number served and/or average hours per student
- Primary Agent: Environmental Education Professionals, Teachers, Combination (schools, community, and EE organizations together)
- Venue: School-based, center-based, field-based, community-based

APPENDIX B: Resources

On Environmental Education Practice

Advancing Education through Environmental Literacy

This booklet from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) is an introduction to using the environment as a context for learning and a means to help students develop essential skills. It comes with a CD-ROM, Meeting Standards Naturally, that offers a compendium of free activities to help educators promote academic excellence and environmental literacy.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/2003archie_enviro/2003archietoc.html

Building Capacity: Community-based Environmental Education in Action

Reports on four programs that effectively used Community-Based Environmental Education. Addresses programs on: urban environmental health and public health, wetland resource management, county-wide groundwater quality, and youth-oriented lake water quality

<http://www.uwex.edu/erc/pdf/EPA8.pdf>

EE Programs for Elementary Students in Alameda County

This report examines the intersection between the array of environmental education programs and the world of elementary public school education in Alameda County. Gaps and opportunities are analyzed by Community Resources for Science.

<http://www.crs-science.org/rd.html>

Elements of Effective Environmental Education Programs

Overview that includes history, key elements and recommendations for effective EE

<http://www.rbff.org/educational/BPE3.pdf>

Finding Out What Matters for Youth/Community Action Framework for Youth Development

Describes a method of sorting what we know in youth development and putting it together in a way that: 1) helps us understand – in succinct terms – the pathways that lead youth to the outcomes we want; and 2) tells us what requires most attention at each of the steps along these pathways.

<http://www.ydsi.org/YDSI/pdf/WhatMatters.pdf>

Fostering Sustainable Behavior: Introduction to Community-based Social Marketing

This online book details how to uncover the barriers that inhibit individuals from engaging in sustainable behaviors. Further, it provides a set of "tools" (prompts, norms, incentives, convenience, etc.) that social science research has demonstrated to be effective in fostering and maintaining behavior change.

<http://www.cbsm.com/Chapters/introduction.htm>

Meeting Standards Naturally

This on-line version of a CD-ROM discusses what "environmental literacy" means; shows how using the environment as a context for learning can promote academic achievement and help educators meet national and state education standards; and provides 43 sample K-12 curriculum activities that demonstrate how environmental lessons can support specific grade level education standards.

http://www.eetap.org/html/meeting_standards_naturally.php

Mind the Gap: Why do People Act Environmentally and What are the Barriers to Pro-Environmental Behavior? by Anja Kollmuss and Julian Agyeman. This article from the journal Environmental Education Research reviews various theoretical frameworks that describe the linkage between knowledge, awareness and behavior. The authors critique commonly used models and suggest their own to illuminate the complex set of relationships that are core to achieving impact through environmental education.

National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education

Guidelines for development of balanced, scientifically accurate, and comprehensive environmental education programs. These guidelines help educators develop meaningful environmental education programs that integrate across and build upon high standards set by core disciplines
<http://naaee.org/npeee/>

Nature Net Southcentral

Great example of coordination among many different EE providers - Nature Net is "one-stop shopping" for environmental education resources for teachers and families of South-Central Wisconsin and beyond!
<http://www.naturenet.com/teachers2001.html>

Non-science teacher perceptions of environmental education

The results of a study released by EETAP confirm the challenge that environmental educators face when trying to reach non-science middle and secondary school teachers. In general, environmental education (EE) appears to these teachers to be associated most often with current environmental issues or as an extension of science. There was almost no immediate recognition by the study group of the value of EE for achieving general learning goals. The most apparent implication of the results suggests that the best way to talk about EE is to not call it EE.
<http://www.eetap.org/Focus%20Group%20Report.pdf>

Place-based Education: Connecting Classrooms & Communities by David Sobel is "about a revolution in education that is connecting students to their neighborhoods, communities, and ecologies, and equipping them to be homecomers, stewards, citizens, and more. It is about joining heads, hands, hearts, and the places in which we might dwell with competent affection. (David Orr)" Ordering details can be found at:
http://www.oriononline.org/pages/ob/nls/index_nls.html

Supporting Community-based Environmental Education – Discussion Paper

Briefly summarizes the results of a 1996-98 investigation into strengthening locally-based environmental decision-making through partnerships among USDA Cooperative Extension, US EPA, and communities
<http://www.uwex.edu/erc/pdf/EPA1.pdf>

The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place

David A. Gruenewald of Washington State University argues that "critical pedagogy" and place-based education" can be fused into a pedagogy that can "help to reframe and ground today's tiresome debates over standards in the lived experience of people and the actual social and ecological contexts of our lives."

On Measuring Outcomes

Bay Area Indicators: Measuring Progress Toward Sustainability

Inaugural report on indicators used to measure the current status and gauge progress (or lack thereof) toward a more sustainable future in the region
<http://www.bayareaalliance.org/indicators.pdf>

Learning from Logic Models in Out-of-School Time, a brief from the Harvard Family Research Project, is a short, useful “how-to” guide to developing logic models.
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/learning_logic_models.html

Logic Model Development Guide, published by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is a comprehensive, “how to” guide to developing logic models.
<http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf>

Measuring Results by Nicole Cheslock and Barbara Schneider examines theories, empirical evidence and evaluation methods that support behavior change strategies in four fields: environmental education, museum education, health education and social marketing. The comparisons across fields offer new insights into ways to make environmental education more effective at bringing about behavior change. This paper was commissioned by the Coevolution Institute.

On Cultural Competence

Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg: Five Stages Toward Cultural Competence by Jerome H. Hanley. Useful advice from the journal *Reaching Today's Youth* (5 pages)
<http://www.cyc-net.org/reference/refs-culturalcompetence.html>

Definitions of Cultural Competence, compiled by Tawara D. Goode, National Center or Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Child Development Center. An introduction to basic concepts (3 pages)
http://cshcnleaders.ichp.edu/ILSCPWorkshop/BaltimoreMeetingMaterials/T_Goode_definitions.pdf

Diversity in Outdoor / Environmental Education, a web-page maintained by The Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education
<http://www.aeoe.org/news/online/diversity/>

How is Cultural Competence Integrated in Education? on the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice web-site. Examples of operationalizing cultural competence in school settings (9 pages)
http://cecp.air.org/cultural/Q_integrated.htm

Steps to Becoming Culturally Competent Communicators

Special issue of GreenCOM newsletter devoted to multicultural environmental education and communication. As environmental communicators, we must be aware of how culture, along with gender and other factors, influences how people interpret our messages.
<http://www.greencom.org/greencom/pdf/hn-v6n2-eng.pdf>

Re-evaluating our Purpose: Environmental Education and Diversity

is a short dialog between two senior staff at IslandWood, a new environmental education center in the Puget Sound region. The article was published last May by New Horizons for Learning, a Seattle-based nonprofit that aims to reinvent learning.
http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/environmental/matsumoto_poppo.htm

APPENDIX C: Selected Learning Community Evaluation Results

Sixteen participants responded to a survey that asked for feedback on the learning community experience. Here are some selected results:

Participants generally found the learning community to be an effective learning experience. 86% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The sessions provided me with opportunities to learn and improve practice." Similarly, 86% agreed or strongly agreed with "The sessions challenged me to grow and develop."

Asked what was most valuable about the learning community, three respondents noted:

- "Connecting with like-minded colleagues around a shared framework of values/ expectations to push towards an increasingly collaborative approach to EE in the Bay Area."
- "The actual logic model is the most valuable outcome to my work with EE groups in the Bay Area. It serves as a framework for teaching organizations about basing an evaluation on a logic model and it is something that resonates with program providers."
- "Understanding gained from working with this group of peers to articulate goals, best practices, and evaluation tools."

Respondents shared the following as specific changes that resulted from participating in the learning community:

- "I have started to work with the logic model to identify program strengths, weaknesses and to find organizations to link our programming for a more effective regional effort."
- "It has strengthened our evaluation component and helped us to step back and look at the program from a more strategic vantage point. We have made significant changes to our program this year, due in part to the learning community. For example, we have changed our focus from school based programming to family based programming."
- "Using the logic model approach for grant proposals, evaluation planning, and organizational development - working with new partners on collaborative approaches - incorporating research background and framework outcomes into community projects/dissemination"

Quite a number of participants commented on how the learning community promoted greater regional networking and collaboration, with several specific examples cited on new working relationships. Here are percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with related statements:

- 100% - "The sessions promoted dialogue among participating organizations"
- 94% - "I am better able to understand how our work fits within the larger context of Bay Area environmental education"
- 78% - "I am able to see where my organization fits in the regional framework (logic model)"
- 60% - "I am better able to identify opportunities for cooperation, coordination, or collaboration that will strengthen our organization's efforts"

Participants also reported being in a somewhat better place with evaluation but cited the need for more technical assistance, guidance and other supports to apply what was developed:

- 54% - "I am better able to articulate a theory of change that details how our work leads to desired outcomes in our program participants."
- 54% - "I am better able to implement evaluation strategies, methods, and techniques that enhance the quality and effectiveness of my programming"
- 50% - "I am better able to identify our organization's evaluation needs"



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