



EEAC

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

GLOBE NY Metro



Help fight “Nature Deficiency Syndrome” and take your students **Into the Woods**. That’s the challenge in the four-year, \$1.2 million Environmental Literacy grant award, GLOBE NY Metro at Queens College received from NOAA last year.

The program entitled Into the Woods is led by GLOBE NY Metro partnered with the Wallerstein Collaborative at NYU, the Bronx River Alliance, Urban Rangers and CEI-PEA (Center for Educational Innovation-Public Education Association) Children First Network. The project aims to improve environmental literacy among New York City elementary students by improving the environmental literacy of their teachers. Peter Schmidt, Associate Director of GLOBE NY Metro and lead author of the proposal, plans on doing that by actually getting the teachers into the woods and natural areas around their schools. After running dozens of professional development workshops and teacher training programs about working outdoors with students, he was struck by how teacher

certification programs across the country failed to give elementary classroom teachers any training in working outdoors with students or any background on how they might use the natural environment as a resource in their teaching.

With **Into the Woods**, the teachers sign on for three years. During the first year, 11 days, usually weekends, are devoted to field trips to different natural areas around the city for teachers, immersing them in activities and exposing them to content background so that they are comfortable in these environments. Many of the activities are related to subjects and topics they have to cover in class, but the major focus is on getting field experience.

In year two, the program starts to link outdoor experiences to the teachers’ required scope and sequence as they begin to develop lessons and units using outdoor experiences to replace more traditional sit-and-read classroom-bound

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activities. All of the partners are in agreement that none of the strategies and ideas being introduced and advocated will be adopted unless they rigorously address student performance and relate directly to the required curriculum. The project is not looking to add new requirements to the teachers' day but to replace some traditional activities with more effective ways to communicate, motivate and teach students a broad variety of subjects. Ideally, at the end of the program, teachers will see the outdoors as an extension of the classroom.

As teachers begin to move their students outdoors, they will work with representatives of the Wallerstein Collaborative to develop service learning projects linked to the natural environments around the school. Also, there will be staff available from GLOBE NY Metro and the Bronx River Alliance to accompany teachers on field trips with their students and to help in classrooms as the participating teachers begin to introduce the new concepts and activities into their teaching.

A key component of every workshop is introducing teachers to individuals and organizations in their local areas which offer resources that will help them integrate outdoor activities into meaningful experiences and lessons for their students so that they will be supported in their efforts after the grant ends.

Currently completing the first Cohort (series of sessions), the recruitment for Cohort 2 is now underway. Ideally, we would like to have more than one teacher, 2nd through 5th grade, from the same school. Also, we are particularly interested in teachers who are not currently comfortable working outdoors. If you are interested, please contact Peter Schmidt at: peter.schmidt@qc.cuny.edu.

