

# IMPLEMENTING THE ELP: Schools and Classrooms



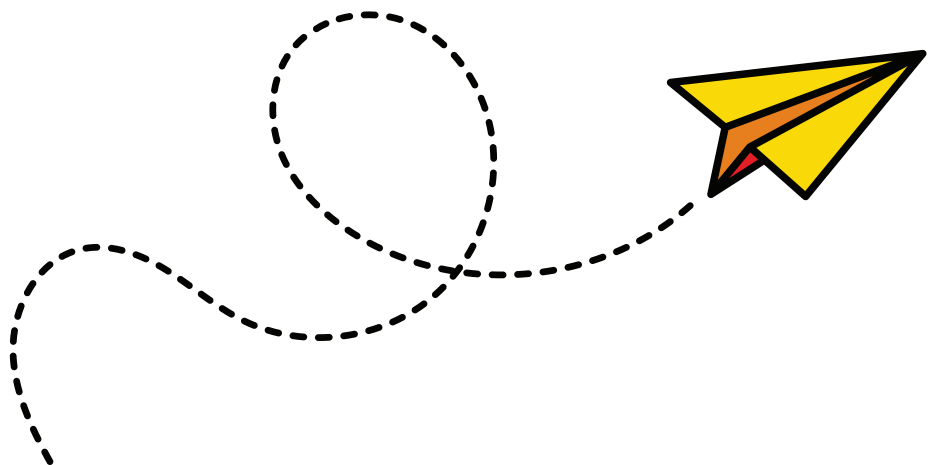


# Suggested Strategies



- 1 Teach multiple disciplines, including math, science, social studies, civics, English language arts, and art through an environmental lens. Integrate content from high-quality environmental education materials that correlate to the Standard Course of Study into the curriculum.
- 2 Weave environmental topics throughout the curriculum to provide a unifying theme that students can relate to, and as research suggests, to enhance learning. Maximize the potential of environmental education by providing students with connected, sustained opportunities to participate in direct outdoor learning experiences, citizen/community science, and classroom activities that increase awareness of environmental topics and content knowledge.
- 3 Create instructional ties to outdoor learning areas, including, but not limited to, student service learning, integration across content areas, safety education, healthy lifestyles, physical activity, nutrition, place-based education, project-based learning, citizen/community science, STEM initiatives, and nature play.
- 4 Participate in professional development opportunities focused on designing school grounds that incorporate natural areas, outdoor classrooms, outdoor teaching methods and best practices for outdoor learning.
- 5 Encourage extracurricular student academic and service-oriented environmental clubs. Provide professional development and additional compensation for club advisors. Participate in environmental competitions such as Science Olympiad, Envirothon, Blue Heron Bowl, and International Earth Science Olympiad, etc.
- 6 Provide students with opportunities to explore environmental solutions using new technologies in engineering, environmental science, sustainable energy, ecotourism, geosciences, biotechnology, forestry, agriculture, and other STEM fields.
- 7 Integrate outdoor field trips, service-learning experiences, and on-site outdoor learning experiences into the regular school curriculum at every grade level. Collaborate with local environmental education centers and public lands to offer events or other activities that focus on students' local natural resources and help students explore natural spaces close to home.

- 8 Provide students with equitable and culturally relevant environmental education experiences. Use the NAAEE Guidelines for Excellence in environmental education for support.
- 9 Use the school building to implement and teach sustainable practices such as energy and water conservation, air quality improvements, recycling, and food waste reduction efforts such as composting.
- 10 Support teacher participation in the NC Environmental Education Certification Program and provide incentives for teachers to complete their certification.
- 11 Partner with community organizations to provide service-learning projects and internships in STEM fields. Encourage students to complete service learning related to environmental issues in districts that have a community service graduation requirement.
- 12 Incorporate funds for environmental education into proposals for state and federal funding (e.g., ESSA funds).
- 13 Connect with agencies that provide information and data on the regional and local environment, such as air and water quality and land use. Incorporate the use and interpretation of this data into science and other school lessons and projects.
- 14 Encourage guidance counselors and CTE (Career and Technical Education) teachers to share various environmental career opportunities, two- and four-year degree programs, internships and college visitation opportunities with students.



**15** Seek funding, support and resources for designing, creating and using new areas for outdoor learning, or for the use of existing areas that include some of the following components:

- Use of native plants when possible.
- Restoration and creation of natural habitats that support pollinators and other wildlife
- Areas for unstructured play and exploration.
- Creation of gardens and other natural learning areas.
- Demonstration projects that enhance and demonstrate environmental quality best practices (e.g., stormwater management, erosion control, rainwater harvesting).
- Creation of outdoor gathering spaces that integrate nature.
- Use of model green schools program guidelines.
- Training on best practices for outdoor learning.
- Use of local rocks and minerals.
- Design of ADA-accessible outdoor classrooms, trails, facilities, and signage
- Develop partnerships with community organizations to support school ground improvements.
- Develop plans that thoroughly consider the administrative and staff support necessary for ongoing maintenance and protection of outdoor learning areas.

**16** Participate in “green school” programs such as the EnviroSmart Schools Program administered through Catawba College’s Center for the Environment, the US Department of Education’s Green Ribbon Schools program, the Schoolyard Habitat certification program through the National Wildlife Federation, and other credential programs that recognize and provide incentives to schools that are pursuing environmental literacy and sustainability initiatives.

**17** Participate in established programs that enhance outdoor learning environments for students of all ages, such as UTOTES (Using Outdoors to Teach Experiential Sciences), NWF Certified Wildlife Habitats, etc. Work with the school’s parent-teacher association or organization for support.

**18** Partner with educators looking for community-based partnership projects required for NC Environmental Education Certification to develop outdoor classrooms and learning labs, trails, weather stations, and gardens at their schools.

