

Connecting Educators

A Network for the Use of School Teachers and Educational Organizations



The Project

Environmental Education (EE)

Tbilisi Declaration (1977): “environmental education... both inside and outside the formal school system.” (Hungerford et al., 2005)

- Currently the definition for EE is not agreed upon and many variations exist. (Knapp 2000)
- Success relies on integrating EE into **all subject** and adding **informal learning environments**.

Informal Learning Environment (ILE)

- An organization that is physically outside the classroom.
- Connected to and organized through the student’s formal education.
- Demonstrates ability and desire to cater to student learning through educational resources and opportunities.

My Question

How do informal learning environments in Portland initiate and foster relationships with formal learning environments?

Interviewed 6 Organizations in Portland:

- Oregon Zoo
- Lan Su Chinese Gardens
- Multnomah County Library, School Corp
- A-WOL Aerial Dance Studio
- Portland Center Stage
- Oregon Rail Heritage Center



The Findings

- Informal learning experiences are often **episodic**: one-time experiences, not connected to long-term in-class learning.
- To avoid this, experiences must be incorporated **post, during, and after** by school teacher. (Bozdoğan’s 2008)
 - School teachers face many constraints such as budget, standardized tests.
- **Cost** is the primary barrier to accessing ILE.



Key Interview Points

- All ILE **expressed a willingness** to work with schools and share their resources.
- ILE that have an **employee specifically working with formal educators**, have more resources available and regular interactions with schools.
- ILE that do not have this position are unable to due to **lack of funds**.
- All ILE understand the constraints school teachers face and that their opportunities must fit within **school curriculum**.

The Outcome

- A prototype **website** for school teachers to easily access information on ILE.
- Currently includes 13 organizations in Portland. (*logos on poster*)
- Each profile has 3 sections:
 - Logistics
 - Resources and Opportunities
 - Curriculum Connections
- Curriculum Connections made with Next Generation Science Standard (NGSS) for K and 6th Grade through C-maps:

How resource will help students reach Performance Expectation

Kindergarten NGSS Performance Expectation

Organization Resource or Opportunity

How resource will help students reach Performance Expectation

6th Grade NGSS Performance Expectation

Sources Cited

- Bozdoğan, Aykut E. 2008. “Planning and Evaluation of Field Trips to Informal Learning Environments: Case of the ‘energy Park.’” *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education* 4 (2): 282–90.
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