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**WA Environmental Education Partnership Receives Federal Funding**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has approved funding for an additional two years for the Pacific Education Institute. The grant will help the organization demonstrate the value of environmental education to the state's education system by demonstrating student achievement in disciplines as a result of rigorous environmental education (EE). The main activities of PEI include teacher improvement in curriculum integration, instruction and assessment.

A consortium of Washington environmental educators created the Pacific Education Institute (PEI) to improve environmental education in Washington. The U.S. EPA provided financial support to Washington and seven additional states to advance environmental education in these states. These eight states receive U.S. EPA funds through the Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP) based at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

“We have seen a great success in the first two years of the EETAP grant,” said Margaret Tudor, Co-Director of the state-wide grant. “We established environmental education standards and initiated research on how students’ success rates in various curricula can increase because of quality environmental education.”

“We will build on that base to work with several districts and will create measurable assessments of each district’s progress,” said Tudor.

PEI will receive \$60,000 to support their work through September, 2005. With these grant funds, PEI has created three School/Community Hubs with three major school districts and area colleges. The Hubs will create a network of educators exemplifying the best in EE around education reform goals. PEI currently works with the Tacoma School District, the Cle-Elum-Roslyn School District, and the West Valley School District. Three additional Hubs will be selected in the fall of 2004.

“The consortium members knew at a gut level that environmental education was not only good for teaching about the natural environment, but also resulted in students who think critically, make informed decisions, and are contributing members in their communities,” said Lynne Ferguson, Co-Project Manager of the Washington EETAP grant. “Our group will provide statistically sound evidence that using the environment as a context to integrate the curriculum improved student learning in classrooms.”

PEI receives additional funding or support from many organizations, including the Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), OSPI and the University of Washington.

The National Environmental Education Advancement Project (NEEAP), one of eight national EETAP partners, manages the EETAP States Program. “Washington is taking a research and assessment based approach to increasing quality environmental education in school disciplines,” said Jeremy Higgins, NEEAP Outreach Coordinator. “It is exciting to see their success, and important to share this information with educators and administrators throughout the state.”

For more information about NEEAP or capacity building related activities, visit the website <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/neeap/>.

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