

Environmental Education Research Committee of the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Meeting

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Progress Report October 2008

Background

WEEB research committee was created to address the following goal and subgoals of the EE 2010 Report:

Goal VI: Develop a research and evaluation agenda for environmental education (EE).

- VI.1 Establish and convene a research working group to identify a research agenda for EE in Wisconsin.
- VI.2 Assure that all EE programs and curricula are based on research findings.
- VI.3 Conduct ongoing inventories and assessments of the status and needs of EE providers.

The committee submitted to and received a grant through WEEB to meet Goal VI within the WEEB 2010 report. The funds will enable the committee to conduct an “Inventory of EE Research in, about, and for Wisconsin.” The goals of the grant were as follows:

Primary Goal: To help assure that WEEB funded EE programs are grounded in findings from both educational and scientific research and evaluation.

Ancillary Goal: To help ensure that environmental educators and supporters of EE are aware of and have access to prior research conducted in the field of environmental education in Wisconsin.

These goals relate to the WEEB 2010 subgoal VI.3 in that the project will provide an inventory of the status of EE in Wisconsin. It will also be used to help assure EE programs and curricula are based on research findings, thus addressing subgoal VI.2. Finally, it will help the research committee identify a research agenda in Wisconsin, meeting the parameters described in subgoal VI.1 as well as the overall committee goal VI.

Progress Report

- The committee hired a database consultant who created a database modeled after the “abstracting tool” developed by the committee during the pilot. The database was completed in July
- The committee hired a research assistant, Abbie Enlund, in August to research and identify published research about EE in Wisconsin. Abbie has been entering essential (abstract) information about the research into the database.
- There are 181 entries in the database and the entries are nearly complete (side note: the database was developed in July 2008 by a database consultant hired through the grant; it resides on the WCEE shared drive).
- The next step will be to have others review the listing of authors and titles to see if anything major has been left out. Other possible steps might include to contact environmental education departments at the other UW schools to see if there are other theses that should be included that

weren't and to use the UWSP admission records to separate out the traditional EE graduate student theses from the teacher's master project option.

Future meetings

The committee will meet on December 11 to review the results of a preliminary analysis and synthesis of the database conducted by the research assistant. The outcome of this meeting will be an overview report on the status of published EE related research in Wisconsin. This report will be used to guide the committee in its future steps to address WEEB's 2010 research goal.

- The committee will develop an Operational Plan which will include Targets, Action (how achieve target), Who, Vehicle to carry out, and timeline.
- The committee believes that there could be opportunities for publishing research as a result of this project. Ideas included 1) a report of the inventory process 2) a report on the synthesis of the inventory—including a gap analysis 3) Investigate long-run outcomes of projects described in database thesis and 4) encourage graduate students and other researchers to publish

Potential application of the database

The committee recommends that information about the database be highlighted on the WEEB Web site grants pages. In future grant cycles, determining if previous research exists and citing the research (in reference to the database) could be considered as a grant review criteria.