

Environmental Education Research Committee of the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Meeting

Committee members: Scott Ashmann, Jennie Lane (Chair), Dan Sivek
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Summary Report April 2009

Background

WEEB research committee was created to address the following goal and sub-goals 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 project funds resulted in the development of a Wisconsin Environmental Education Research Database (WEERD). In January 2009, WEEB allocated additional funds for the committee to hire a Web technician to convert the database into a searchable page on the WEEB Web site.

Progress Report

The Committee hired Mike Debot to convert the WEERD to an online, searchable database. His contract was signed at the end of February and he recently began work on the project. The committee met to identify search categories that should be on the Web site. Abbie will share the committee’s recommendations with Mike and report back.

The committee would like a one-page search site that includes options for the user to input one or more of the following: name, research title, and key words. Similar to the WEEB search tool, there would also be the ability to search within one or more categories. These categories include publication type, study population, study purpose, and EE topic, facility, and methods. With the exception of the last category, the user can only select one criterion per category. This suggestion was made because there are so few entries in WEERD at this time, if the search is too selective, the search results would be null. The committee was also curious about the user being able to select and save results (e.g., to “shopping cart”) for future reference. As this last request was not part of the contract, it may not be possible under the current grant funds.

The committee will meet again in July to review the design (although earlier versions will most likely have been reviewed electronically prior to July). When the committee meets in July, they will know if their presentation proposals they submitted to the North American Association for Environmental

Education fall conference were accepted by. The committee will work on a report on the development of WEERD and a report of the analysis of the research synthesis to report to WEEB and to present at the conference.

The committee also revisited steps needed to maintain and sustain WEERD, including having graduate students input new data and having WEEB grant review criteria include a review of the literature. Scott Ashmann will include a question on his WEEB funded survey of institutions of higher education asking them about notable EE research their staff or students have conducted. When the database is posted on the website, reviewers will be welcome to submit suggestions for additions. The committee will need to establish contact information and who would process the suggestions—probably something in conjunction with the graduate students/faculty who are inputting updates.

The committee discussed activities beyond WEERD (e.g., goal VI.3 Conduct ongoing inventories and assessments of the status and needs of EE providers). There is also the issue of WEEB providing committees with supportive funds to conduct activities. The committee has previously discussed subgoal VI.3 of the WEEB 2010 plan and recognize that it will require significant amounts of time and funding.

Next Steps

- Scott Ashmann will include a question about EE research in his WEEB-funded survey to teacher training institutions.
- The committee will review WEERD database posted on WEEB.
- The committee will communicate with WEEB to ensure acceptance of WEERD.

Potential Agenda Items for July 10

- Final Review of WEERD on WEEB Web site
- Prepare final report for WEEB on initial grant (and possibly second grant).
- Discuss implementation and maintenance of WEERD (Targets B & C of Operational Plan)
- Determine plans for NAAEE presentations if accepted.
- Based WEEB support, plan next steps for committee (develop new operational plan)