

# Master Plan for Environmental Literacy in Oklahoma

Produced by  
**OKCEL**

The Oklahoma Consortium  
For Environmental Literacy  
2005





# History of the OKCEL Master Plan

The environmental literacy Master Plan for Oklahoma is the culmination of two years of careful deliberation by over 100 individuals representing schools at all levels of education, businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations, which actively participated in its creation with simultaneous implementation through OKCEL—the Oklahoma Consortium for Environmental Literacy. Funding for the Plan’s development came from EETAP (Environmental Education and Training Partnership) which is underwritten by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Education through a cooperative agreement with the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Beginning in the fall of 2003, the founding grant project manager Suzanne Spradling, Ph.D. led a two day Fall Institute at the Oklahoma City Zoo where vision and mission statements for the OKCEL Master Plan were developed by the 60-plus people in attendance. The trust and confidence in the process was evidenced by the scope of participation and the diversity of interests represented. The vision for the Master Plan created at the Institute was:

***To increase sustained positive  
environmental behaviors through  
the cooperative efforts of an  
inclusive and diverse  
environmentally literate  
community***



Our mission defined how this vision would be implemented:

***To promote environmental literacy  
through the cooperative actions of  
the entire environmental education  
community***

During the Institute and later at the December meeting in 2003, participants talked about what an environmentally literate citizenry would look like. What elements of environmental education would be in place? The following list details what we hoped Oklahomans would come to embrace as a way of life:

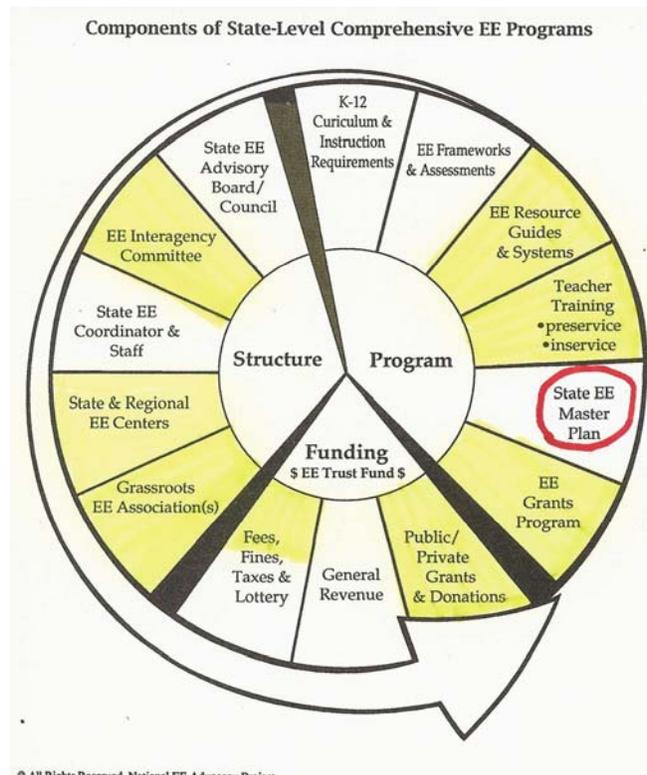
1. Oklahoma has leaders of merit, who have a broad and deep concern for our state's environmental health.
2. Forum conferences are held yearly around the state on environmental issues.
3. The majority of Oklahomans embrace environmental education and conservation as evidenced by our recycling habits.
4. Relevant community-based programs incorporate environmental education into the fabric of the educational outreach to all citizens with special sensitivity to populations formerly underserved by environmental education.
5. Continuity, commitment and concern define Oklahoma's environmental education, constantly evolving into relevant, innovative, state-of-the-art programs, which excite learners who are eager to implement ideas set forth in these progressive experiences.
6. The majority of teachers, administrators, parents and students expect and embrace environmental education at all levels of learning.
7. Environmental education and conservation are considered a way of life in Oklahoma, as important as loving the outdoors, hiking, hunting, fishing or camping.
8. Oklahoma's legislation has earmarked money specifically for environmental education, which is considered a must for every child in every school district.

9. An environmental education position is designated on the state Board of Education.
10. All citizens have access to an up-to-date statewide environmental education searchable data base,.
11. Oklahoma has a thriving environmental education grants program.
12. Every community and/or school district has an environmental education coordinator to help with curriculum integration.
13. Our initial Master Plan initiative has expanded ten-fold over its original goals. Many programs have completed the action steps established with the original goals.
14. Under the Secretary of Environment we now have an office for environmental education.
15. Educators have access to all levels of government as well as curriculum support through district and state environmental education centers.
16. Oklahoma is moving away from being a predominantly disposable society.
17. Oklahoma is listed as one of the top ten states in recycling.
18. Strong partnerships for environmental education exist among schools, communities, nonprofit organizations and state/federal agencies.
19. Environmental education programs are coordinated for teachers at all levels of education.
20. Environmental education guidelines have been standardized.
21. Youth participation in environmental education has increased every year as has involvement from diverse and frequently underserved populations.
22. Widespread collaborative fundraising occurs annually for environmental education programs, positions and facilities.
23. Every Oklahoman has a strong awareness of Native American cultures, which is reinforced in quality environmental education programs. Environmental education courses in Oklahoma are inspiring and filled with enthusiastic learners of all ages.



24. Advocates for environmental education come from all segments of society.
25. Talented environmental education teachers are state certified in environmental education.
26. Current, relevant issues involve and engage students in the problem solving required for an equitable resolution.

Building on these detailed descriptions of the future of environmental education in Oklahoma, the Consortium began culling through other states' environmental education/literacy master plans to determine what areas might be applicable to Oklahoma. We also reviewed categories to identify what elements of the State Level Comprehensive Program model from NEEAP (National Environmental Education Advancement Project) were already in place in our state. Highlighted areas in the model below show what we have developed in Oklahoma. As you can see, a state master plan is a key component of program development for environmental education.



Finally, at the December 2003 meeting, initial categories to consider for inclusion in the Oklahoma Master Plan were identified as:

- Assessment
- Education and Training
- Funding
- Communication
- Coordination
- Literacy

Based on these preliminary recommendations, facilitators and participants with the Consortium met for two days in June 2004 to begin the detailed process of writing the Master Plan. Because of time constraints and revolving participation throughout this process, we decided to begin with four broad areas of focus. These included:

- Outreach facilitated by Mary Coley
- Public Relations (later named EL Connections) facilitated by Suzanne Spradling
- Resources facilitated by Susie Shields and Ellen Bussert
- Implementing and Sustaining the Master Plan facilitated by Allison Brody, David Walker, Pat Kelly

Each focus group developed goals which were prioritized using a method called weighted voting. The top goal then had an accompanying action plan, which the group stepped out and began to implement; in some cases almost immediately after the June Clinic.

Our action plans had timelines and assignments as to who would be doing what to achieve their group's first goal. In other words, we were creating an active document, not one confined just to paper. The Oklahoma Master Plan for Environmental Literacy has been designed



for a three ring binder so it can continue to expand over time, which has been demonstrated, since initial goals in some groups have already been achieved.

During 2004-05, our four focus groups made a concerted effort to meet on a bi-monthly basis to finish writing action plans for the original goals developed at the June 2004 Clinic. On March 29, 2005 we finished all preliminary work on this phase of the Plan. You'll find all the goals and action plans listed in the section beginning on page 11.

As you read the goals and action plans from each focus group, you will see variations in how their portion of the OKCEL Master Plan was written. Each area reflects the dynamic personalities participating in the team process, again demonstrating how alive the development of this document was.

Kathy Draper,  
OKCEL Master Plan Project Manager, 2004-05

# Why a Master Plan?

OKCEL (the Oklahoma Consortium for Environmental Literacy) believes in establishing common ground among environmental education practitioners to create a framework for a comprehensive and collaborative statewide initiative, which addresses a broad range of environmental concerns. In doing so OKCEL hopes to gain the broad grassroots support and visibility needed to raise environmental education's stature among key decision makers. This Master Plan provides the structure for such a comprehensive effort.

Our Master Plan outlines an agenda in which many organizations' environmental education strategic plans and targeted actions can be included. The following are some of the ways we envision implementation:

By joining forces through consistent collaboration we will maximize the educational effectiveness of limited human and material environmental education resources.

Through this Master Plan we will be able to alert more citizens to the importance of environmental literacy (EL) in the state and nation. We will be able to facilitate their active participation in EL implementation.

Implementing the Master Plan will encourage programs to educate populations that have historically been underserved.

By continuing our efforts through a Master Plan we will facilitate interaction and cooperation among the numerous agencies, organizations, school and businesses in Oklahoma working on environmental education and/or management, conservation and protection.



**Master Plan Draft  
for Environmental Literacy  
in Oklahoma**

*Goals and Action Plans*





# Outreach Goals

1. Facilitate collaboration between Environmental Education providers by open communication to create a cohesive Environmental Literacy message across Oklahoma.
2. Recruit and maintain community partners including individuals and groups in all 77 Oklahoma counties.
3. Through community activities and events, broaden the environmental literacy of diverse Oklahoma audiences by promoting and distributing balanced environmental information including local, state and regional issues.
4. Determine the environmental habits, beliefs and concerns of Oklahomans 14 and older with a bi-annual survey distributed in 25 urban and 25 rural communities beginning in 2006.

## Action Plans for Attaining Goals

**Goal One: *Facilitate collaboration between Environmental Education providers by open communication to create a cohesive Environmental Literacy message across Oklahoma.***

1. Identify statewide providers of Environmental Education and their basic program information (content).

Get lists from:

- Internet searches
- Government agencies
- Municipal programs
- State Chamber of Commerce (events and providers)

- Yellow pages
  - Museums, zoos and nature centers
  - Non-profit groups and societies
  - Word of mouth
2. Create a cohesive message and a slogan for Oklahoma's Environmental Literacy efforts.
  3. Create forums for communication with providers
    - Select dates and locations
    - Address OKCEL resource availability issues
    - Plan agenda and ground rules for providers
    - Invite providers
  3. Hold forums both virtual and actual
    - Agree on meeting ground rules
    - Share basic content of programming
  4. Share message and slogan of OKCEL as well as database information.

**Goal Two: *Recruit and maintain community partners including individuals and groups in all 77 Oklahoma counties.***

1. Identify possible partners in each county
  - Weather watchers
  - Science teachers and science clubs
  - Retired educator association members
  - 4H and Scout leaders
  - Home school educators
  - Church youth groups
  - Garden clubs
  - OSU extension agents

(Note: local newspapers could be a source of names)



2. Confirm available resources from OKCEL to proceed.
3. Contact potential partners with OKCEL message and database information.
4. Identify local motivators with partners
5. Confirm available resources for potential partners to use to enlarge the network (ex. postage)
6. Maintain partnerships through communication and continued involvement.

**Goal Three: *Broaden the environmental literacy of diverse Oklahoma audiences by promoting and distributing balanced environmental information including local, state and regional issues through community activities and events.***

1. Research local environmental issues with county partners and environmental education providers and others.
  - Compile a list of existing annual local events
  - Determine resource availability from participating partnerships for event inclusion
  - Booth fees
  - Printing
  - Give-away items
  - Volunteers
2. Select events to participate in for the coming year (either existing or new) according to audiences desired. Audiences include:
  - Youth groups
  - Religious groups
  - Corporate entities
  - Tribal groups
  - Elderhostel classes

- Environmental education facilities
- Sign up for event
- Plan OKCEL participation
- Recruit volunteers
- Show up and count contacts made
- Provide sign-up sheets for the OKCEL listserv and volunteer force

***Goal Four: Determine the environmental habits, beliefs and concerns of Oklahomans 14 and older with a bi-annual survey distributed in 25 urban and 25 rural communities beginning in 2006, and evaluate change in those habits, beliefs and concerns over time.***

1. Determine the details of the survey
  - Information to be learned
  - Content questions needed to achieve those results
  - Process/timeline for administering the survey.
  - Statistical analysis plan
2. Determine the costs of the survey
  - Development
  - Administration
  - Analysis
3. Administer the first survey.
4. Analyze the first survey batch.
5. Utilize the results of the first survey.
6. Continue with survey process and statistical analysis every two years.



# EL (Environmental Literacy) Connections

## **Team Description:**

Working with the general public and key decision makers to promote environmental literacy and get ongoing commitment for the actions we want.

**Goal One:** *To enable a personal connection to the natural environment within the context of the community and to build an understanding of natural resources as a life support system.*

1. Promote an essay contest where students (K-16) respond to the question: *"Where do you go in Oklahoma to connect to nature?"* To be coordinated through either the public library system or the public school libraries.
  - a. Contact library director
    - Define contest rules and judging criteria
    - Find sponsor for prizes
    - Find publisher or producer for the winning essays
    - Promote and publicize contest
  - b. Promote book list of readers' favorite nature literature
    - Contact libraries to publish the list
    - Post on OKCEL website
    - Submit to environmental publications/ organizations
  - c. Promote Nature Month at public libraries

**Goal Two: *To promote training for teachers in integrating environmental literacy into all content areas as aligned to P.A.S.S. skills***

1. Partner with Oklahoma Historical Society to design oral history unit investigating environmental changes and natural resources in Oklahoma communities
  - a. Contact the Oklahoma Historical Society
    - Research subjects already recorded in oral history
    - Research new possible subjects for oral histories related to the environment
    - Contact NPR local affiliates, KOSU, KGOU about airing oral environmental history bits
    - Promote articulating P.A.S.S. correlation with existing national environmental programs
    - Promote teaching an environmental tradition, incorporate into Oklahoma history
    - Investigate opportunities for integration of environmental literacy
  - b. Identify teachers who are currently integrating environmental literacy in their curriculum.
2. Identify community/state leaders, contact them and engage them in environmental literacy activities/projects.
3. Utilize the media to promote environmental literacy through recognition and accurate/entertaining environmental information (Media bites- PBS, NPR)



# Resources

**Goal One:** *To enhance environmental literacy through increased awareness, knowledge, access and use of existing environmental information*

## Action Plans for Attaining Goals

**Task I: Develop list of topic areas/keywords/subjects**

**Task II: Compile resource information for database**

- A. Gather and compile existing resource information for development of database
- B. Review existing information sources and identify gaps
- C. Compile gaps identified by team and additional providers suggested by the OKCEL Steering Committee
- D. Solicit information from additional sources identified by team and OKCEL Steering Committee
- E. Include speaker contact for the website in cooperation with the Oklahoma Environmental Education Coordinating Committee

**Task III: Designing the database**

- A. Forward existing resources/topic areas to webmaster to build the data base
- B. Team will provide glossary definitions coinciding with topic areas. By March 4 team members will submit three (willing) advance users for feedback on data base.
- C. E-mail the testers with the site and questions to investigate.
- D. Schedule a conference call to discuss user feedback. By April 28 2005, data base will be ready to unveil to OKCEL Steering Committee.

**Task IV: Operation and maintenance of website (ongoing)**

**Goal Two: *To translate public service information in searchable database to Spanish***

## Action Plans for Attaining Goals

**Task I: Identify priority information to translate; focus on fact sheet with general information materials to help general citizenry**

- A. Talk to other agencies at OKEECC meeting March 2
- B. Each agency will send top three publications most beneficial to citizens by April 1, 2005.

**Task II: Identify translation options and cost (by April 27, 2005)**

- A. Investigate OU possibilities
- B. Other possibilities??

**Task III: Select translation options and begin translating**

**Task IV: Add list of data available in Spanish to website**



# Implementing and Sustaining the OKCEL Master Plan

## Team Description:

Targeting and managing resources to ensure the successful outcomes of team action plans for all defined goals.

**Goal One:** *Biannually, beginning in October 2004, we will define the projected budget needs of each Consortium focus group, identify funding sources and in-kind contributors, and implement fiscal administration.*

## Action Plans for Attaining Goal One

- By August 13, 2004, create a budget template for focus groups to fill out.
- Beginning in Oct. 2004, request budget needs from each Consortium group with specific project timelines.
- Compile requests into a single budget.
- Identify sources of funding and donations
- Match budget requests to possible sources
- Retain a grant-writer
- Approach sources

**Goal Two: *By January 2005, we will create and maintain a "welcome area" to the Consortium, starting with a bulletin board on the website and a PDF flyer that will solicit and inspire membership and a pledge of support to the Consortium's goals. Membership retention and growth will be accomplished through touting our achievements, posting meeting highlights and schedules, and previewing pending activities.***

## Action Plans for Attaining Goal Two

- Post flyer on website.
- By August 10, 2004, begin design bulletin board as a "welcome visitor" area. Final draft to Project Manager by October meeting. Modify brochure into a PDF flyer to include a pledge of support.
- Send regular updates to webmaster, including touting our accomplishments, posting meeting highlights, and detailing pending activities.



# OKCEL Master Plan Partners

- **American Indian Institute for Progress**
- **Audubon Society**
- **Broken Arrow Public Schools**
- **City of Oklahoma City-Storm Water Quality**
- **City of Tulsa-PACE**
- **City of Tulsa-Wet in the City**
- **Conferences of Churches**
- **Environmental Education Training and Partnerships (EETAP)**
- **General Federation of Women's Clubs**
- **Intertribal Environmental Consortium (ITEC-30 tribes)**
- **Keep Oklahoma Beautiful (KOB)**
- **Langston University-Environmental Resources Center**
- **Leopold Education Project (LEP)**
- **MESONET**
- **Mid-DeI Schools**
- **OGE Energy**
- **Oklahoma State University-College of Education**
- **Oklahoma Association for Environmental Education (OKAEE)**

# OKCEL Master Plan

## Partners

- **Oklahoma City Beautiful**
- **Oklahoma City Zoo**
- **Oklahoma Climate Survey**
- **Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC)  
Project Wet**
- **Oklahoma Coordinating Committee for  
Environmental Education**
- **Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food  
and Forestry-Forestry Services (ODAFF)**
- **Oklahoma State Department of Education**
- **Oklahoma Department of Environmental  
Quality (DEQ)**
- **Oklahoma Department of Tourism and  
Recreation-State Parks**
- **Oklahoma Environmental Education  
Coordinating Committee (OKEECC)**
- **Oklahoma Office of the Secretary of the  
Environment (OSE)**
- **Oklahoma Science Teachers Association  
(OSTA)**
- **Oklahoma Senate**
- **Oklahoma State Department of Education  
(SDE)**
- **Oklahoma State University Cooperative  
Extension Service (OSU CES)**



# OKCEL Master Plan Partners

- **Oklahoma Sustainability Network**
- **Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB)**
- **Opportunities Industrial Center (OIC) of Oklahoma County, Inc.**
- **Oxley Nature Center**
- **Project Learning Tree (PLT)**
- **REYAP-Retired Educators of Youth Agricultural Programs**
- **Sam Noble Museum of Natural History**
- **Sierra Club-Oklahoma Chapter**
- **St. Gregory's University**
- **The M.E.T. (Metropolitan Environmental Trust)**
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife**
- **United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)**
- **Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge**

