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## Environmental literacy and sustainability plan released

*Plan aims to increase overall academic achievement and save schools money*

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers announced the completion of Wisconsin’s first plan to address environmental literacy and sustainability for schools. The plan provides strategies for statewide collaboration to increase student academic achievement, improve student health, and save schools money through education for environmental literacy and sustainability.

“It is more important than ever that we work together to provide low-cost, high-return learning opportunities that help to prepare every student for success in our rapidly changing world,” said Evers. “This plan suggests ways to share information and experiences on how schools and districts have achieved cost savings through educational projects that reduce consumption and increase efficiency. It also emphasizes increased collaboration to advance student academic achievement in core subject areas.”

*Wisconsin’s Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools* was developed by a 20-member steering committee of the Wisconsin No Child Left Inside Coalition. The coalition is made up of more than 100 businesses, health, youth, faith, recreational, environmental, conservation, and educational groups representing over 70,000 people in Wisconsin. The coalition formed in response to a growing amount of research that indicates that children are spending more time indoors “plugged in” to electronic media and less time outdoors than ever before. Studies show that this shift to a more indoor and sedentary lifestyle is having dramatic health effects on the mental and physical well-being of young people. Research also indicates that time spent learning and playing outdoors can produce health benefits for children such as reducing the incidence of obesity, symptoms of attention deficit disorders, and stress.

“Education for environmental literacy and sustainability provides an avenue for meeting the standards and benchmarks schools are required to reach in ways that are locally relevant and engage student interest,” said Randy Champeau, director of the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education. “This education helps students understand the basic life support systems of the planet and how they can play a role in maintaining the health of these systems now and in the future.”

(more)

“When school administrators, teachers, and students begin to think in a systems approach, real benefits of energy savings and gains in academic achievement can be realized,” added Victoria Rydberg, environmental education consultant at the Department of Public Instruction. “Schools across Wisconsin are demonstrating this success by raising student achievement in core academic areas while also developing environmental literacy.”

The goals of the plan call for collaboration to

- prepare students to understand, analyze, and address the major environmental and sustainability challenges facing Wisconsin, the United States, and the planet;
- provide field experiences as part of the regular school curriculum and create programs that contribute to healthy lifestyles through outdoor recreation and sound nutrition; and
- create opportunities for enhanced preparation and ongoing professional development for teachers and school leaders by improving environmental and sustainability subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills in teaching about the environmental and sustainability issues, including the use of interdisciplinary, field-based, and research-based learning, effective assessment practices, and innovative technology in the classroom.

“The challenges and opportunities of our modern world require innovative and cooperative solutions to ensure Wisconsin students graduate ready for the workforce or further education,” Evers said. “This plan provides a vital road map for advancing education, environmental literacy, and sustainability that can increase student academic achievement in core subject areas and contribute to the fiscal well-being our schools.”

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**NOTE:** This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011\\_121.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_121.pdf). Information about environmental education in Wisconsin, including a link to *Wisconsin’s Plan to Advance Education for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability in PK-12 Schools*, can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/cal/environmental-ed.html>.