

# K-12 Environmental Education Family Guide

The state of Wisconsin sets expectations, or standards, for what every student will know and be able to do in school. This guide is designed to help you understand those standards and partner with teachers to support your child's learning in grades kindergarten through twelfth. If you have questions about this information or your child needs extra help, please talk to your child's teacher.

## Environmental Education

In grades K-2, exploring the world should focus on local natural and built environments, including school grounds, neighborhood, and community.

### Ideas of What I Might Learn and Do in Grades K-2

#### *I can...*

Explain my understandings, views, and beliefs about nature, people, and systems in my community.	Talk about how different people feel about or view the environment.
Make observations in my community and identify relationships between people and the environment.	Explore outdoors and explain how things change over time and describe patterns and ask questions about what I observe.
Explain where our food and water comes from and that trees provide the oxygen we need to breathe.	Explain how my actions impact others.
Spend time outdoors and notice how being outdoors makes me feel.	Discuss resources, services, and jobs that are dependent on the environment.
Identify how different species depend on different things in the environment for survival.	Describe how plants and animals get what they need to grow and thrive.

### Questions to Support Learning

- What did you notice about your time outdoors today? How was it different than the last time you were out there? How was it similar?
- What do you notice? What observations can you make? Can you describe it?
- What does that make you wonder about? Can you think of any questions you can ask that we can answer through observations?
- How is this the same or different from...? Can you compare this to something else? What have you heard about this before?
- What do you think is the explanation for...? What do you think caused it to be like that? What type of animal do you think it was? And why?
- What is your evidence for that? What makes you think that? Show me what you mean.

Questions come from the BEETLES Project [Instructor Support for Guiding Explorations](#) (PDF).

## Environmental Education

In grades 3-5, exploring the world should focus on local natural and built environments, including school grounds, neighborhood, and community.

### Ideas of What I Might Learn and Do in Grades 3-5

#### *I can...*

Describe how my experiences shape the way I understand the world.	Explain how both living and nonliving things are needed for survival and recognize how organisms depend on other organisms in a variety of ways (i.e., seed dispersal, decomposition, etc.).
Describe characteristics and relationships between people and the environment where I live and explain how those relationships create a sense of place.	Demonstrate how Wisconsin's environment has shaped the state's people, cultures, and places.
Identify places in the community to increase my wellness and creativity and stretch my mental and physical limits through activities in and about nature.	Describe how resources needed for survival come from ecosystem functions and services which can be impacted by diversity (e.g., balance of producers and consumers needed for a healthy, diverse food chain or the impact of soil, water, and air quality on life).
Analyze a familiar system (such as a playground), by breaking it down into parts, relating ideas, identifying smaller systems within, and consider how different perspectives might think about the system.	Explain cause and effect relationships about discoveries and technologies that influence the characteristics and quality of natural systems and develop new ideas to achieve different outcomes.
Describe how perspective consists of both a point and a view and if the point changes, the view will change too.	Investigate the differences between renewable and nonrenewable natural resources and how access to natural resources necessary for survival influences interactions between and within geographic regions.

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## Environmental Education

In grades 6-8, students engage in more abstract thinking and expand perspectives, looking at regional and world environmental and sustainability issues.

### Ideas of What I Might Learn and Do in Grades 6-8

#### *I can...*

Explain why people feel differently than I do about issues.	Evaluate sustainability issues from multiple perspectives, including unstated, absent, or under-represented perspectives, and assess how perspectives impact outcomes of the issue.
Use personal experiences and primary sources to identify and explain relationships between the environment and geography of a locality.	Describe cycles (e.g., water, matter, and atmospheric gas cycles) and flows (e.g., energy flow) of Earth's systems.
Design and implement a personal wellness plan that uses nature and outdoor activities to develop well-being, mindfulness, confidence, and self-regulation and explain how personal well-being impacts a society's well-being.	Demonstrate how sustainability is a constantly changing relationship between ecological, social, and economic systems and explain how sustainable solutions vary based on those systems.
Identify and analyze the relationships between living and nonliving parts in an ecosystem and describe how these relationships affect the sustainability of the systems.	Participate effectively with others to discuss a sustainability issue, consider alternatives and a variety of perspectives, and balance interests for the sustainability of natural and cultural systems.
Analyze the impact of security, resource scarcity, cooperation, competition, and conflict on natural and cultural systems and describe local, state, tribal, and national governments' roles in setting and enforcing environmental policies and encouraging sustainability.	Explain my civic responsibility and advocate for change for a sustainability issue in my school or community for the common good.

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## Environmental Education

In high school, the focus expands to earth level systems-level thinking, including community, national and global networks, impact, and responsibilities.

### Ideas of What I Might Learn and Do in Grades 9-12

#### *I can...*

Explain my perspective on relationships among well-being, equity, social and environmental welfare, economic health, and concern for living beings.

Design a solution for a natural resource scarcity issue using available resources in a different way or developing a new resource, and analyze intended and unintended consequences on sustainability in natural and cultural systems.

Explore outdoors to investigate and analyze my curiosities about patterns, develop new questions, draw conclusions, or formulate new ideas or solutions.

Compare parallel historical and contemporary sustainability issues, articulate the stated and unstated perspectives, analyze and weigh relevance of sources to determine how the author, context, audience, and purpose affect the reliability, limitations, and usefulness of a source, and critique the balance of stakeholder interests in the outcome.

Reflect and share about how my experiences influence my perspective, curiosity, the pursuit of knowledge, and respect for others and the environment.

Examine your civic ideals and explain the impacts of personal and collective responsibility on the environment and community in order to develop solutions that minimize negative impact on natural and cultural systems.

Analyze impacts of relationships between my community's natural and cultural systems and global systems from both current and historical perspectives.

Explain how concepts such as biomimicry, cradle-to-cradle principles of manufacturing, "Triple Bottom Line" business framework, slow vs. fast economic or food systems, carbon sequestration, mitigation technologies, and carbon markets are viewed as solutions for sustainability.

Compare and contrast the competitive, predatory, and mutually beneficial interactions between different species and ecosystems and evaluate the impacts of each on the system.

Plan, execute, and evaluate a project that would bring awareness to a sustainability issue and contribute to creating a sustainable environment.

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