Moving the Classroom Outdoors

By Herb Broda, Ashland University

Yes!! Spring is here! Although outdoor learning works in any month of the year, warmer days definitely tempt us to think more about how to weave the schoolyard into the curriculum for a welcome change of pace and place. Always keep in mind that outdoor learning activities do not have to take up large amounts of time. In fact, the goal should be to integrate brief outdoor activities seamlessly into traditional lesson plans.

For example, let’s take the topic of parallel lines. A typical progression might be:

1. Introduce the concept indoors using diagrams, pictures, a dictionary definition and possibly a printed activity.

2. Move outdoors for a 15-20 minute activity where students find examples of parallel lines in nature. Add an interesting twist by having children find macro examples (tree branches, power lines) as well as micro examples (veins on a leaf, stripes on a flower or insect).

3. After the brief activity, move back indoors and continue to reinforce the concept through additional visual resources, and then assess student understanding of the concept.

Notice how the outdoors makes the abstract concept much more real by helping students see concrete examples of parallel lines in nature. An added benefit is that students have moved and experienced the concept in a new environment (a change of pace and place). It only takes a few minutes to reinforce indoor learning through a connection with nature. Give it a try!

The use of the outdoors surrounding the school to enhance instruction in a variety of content areas can be thought of as schoolyard-enhanced learning. Although I hesitate to add another definition to the education lexicon, I feel that there needs to be a term that designates this specific aspect of the outdoor education concept. I see schoolyard enhanced learning as an instructional strategy used to teach concepts and process skills from a variety of content areas by utilizing the school site or adjacent areas.

I have intentionally used the term “schoolyard” rather than “playground”. Although play areas for both unstructured and structured play are very important, we need to focus on the entire school site as a possible instructional venue. The schoolyard needs to be viewed as more than just a play area; even the edges and unmowed areas can become sites for academic learning, reflection, community involvement, and recreation. My hope is that teachers will examine the curriculum and determine which learning objectives can be enhanced through the use of an outdoor setting.

You can find out more about schoolyard enhanced learning and find great ideas on Herb’s website http://movingtheclassroomoutdoors.com/

More information available about each opportunity at www.eeco-online.org

**OEEF Grant**
Letter of Intent due July 8
Grant Due July 15
www.epa.state.oh.us/oeef/

**OEEF Grant Writing Workshop**
Ohio EPA, Dayton, April 22

**Dig Deeper: Soils**
June 12, SW Ohio. Soils for 6th grade educators.

**Raising the Standards**
June 17, 18, 19 at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and Kelleys Island

**Wonders of Wetlands (WOW)**
June 17-19, Geauga & Portage Counties

**Advanced WOW**
June 23-25 at Old Womans Creek National Estuary, Huron

**Healthy Water Healthy People Facilitator Workshop**
Friday, June 20 at Toledo Botanical Garden.

**101 Conference**
Oct 3, 4, 5 at Camp Kern in SW Ohio
Beyond the Blacktop: A Student’s Perspective

By Noah Henderson, 5th Grade Student, Ridgeway Elementary, Hamilton

Beyond the blacktop, there is an orchard that has been given up for a forest behind Ridgeway Elementary School in Hamilton, Ohio. As you walk through these woods, there is nothing more relaxing than the sounds of birds chirping on a pretty spring day. The trails at the back of the elementary, there is the sound of birds chirping, the breeze blowing through the leaves in the tree tops, and animals making their sounds on a beautiful spring day. There has been wonder of what Ridgeway will do with this old orchard. Some people want to build an amphitheater and some people want to build outdoor classrooms for music, inspiration and for reading a good book. The idea for the orchard is to do both! The plans are to build benches to sit, observe nature’s beauty instead of doing papers in the classroom. For the amphitheatre more benches will be built for sitting and a theater will be built for shows. This will provide great opportunities for students. The estimated time to build everything is at least one month, so it will be done by the end of the school year. So beyond the blacktop there is definitely more to happen in this old orchard. Ridgeway wants to do anything to get this done.

Beyond the Blacktop

By Suellen Albert and Terry Haynes-Toney, Ridgeway Elementary, Hamilton

Imagine a woodland filled with native trees, vegetation and wildlife under a canopy of stars. Deer, birds, opossum, raccoons, squirrels and rabbits feed on nuts, berries, fruit, and grasses. This emerging wooded area was once a pasture, possibly an orchard, now it is part of an elementary school yard.

Ridgeway Elementary is a K-6 school in Hamilton, Ohio. Built in 2009, the school enjoys a balance of a suburban and rural setting. At the back of the property, there is a wooded area, filled with trees, shrubs, and understory plants. Administrators, teachers, students, and parents saw potential in this site, and came together to create an outdoor learning area complete with trails. Community members and organizations contributed their knowledge and resources to help guide the process.

Metro Parks of Butler County joined with teachers and students to identify trees and shrubs. A team of naturalists, teachers, and students walked the woods to identify and tag native trees. Maple, ash, dogwood and buckeye are the predominant species of native broadleaf trees. Red cedar and gray twig dogwood are prominent conifers and shrubs. It was discussed that this young succession wooded area would provide ideal habitat for migrant and wintering birds, possibly the saw-whet owl. Also noted, was the number of apple and pear trees identified. This led to speculation about the history of this area. The three Timberman brothers, early pioneers that farmed this region in the 1800’s, owned land in this area. Are these trees remnants of a pioneer orchard? Other identified trees are willow and osage orange, used by native people for medicinal purposes and for crafting bows. Students walk these trails to learn about the history of this region and to wonder about the lives of the people who came before us.

This rich habitat is ideal for bird watching. Grants awarded through the ODNR Division of Wildlife and Butler Soil and Water have made possible the participation in The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Projects’ FeederWatch and NestWatch. Nest boxes line the wooded areas. Trails enable students the opportunity to discover nests built in trees and thickets or on the ground. These citizen science activities enable our students to observe bird behavior and trends, record their data, and submit their records to Cornell’s online database. Some sixth grade students are using this journey of discovery to design their own experiments, which are then showcased in our city wide Science Fair.

This outdoor educational resource is utilized beyond the branches. The ridge provides a prime spot for watching the night sky. At Ridgeway, Astronomy Night is an eagerly awaited, inquiry-based presentation led by an Outreach Program provided by The Cincinnati Observatory and our Ridgeway teachers. Students and families can attend a presentation on a variety of astronomy topics followed by a star or night sky viewing party. Grants from Target, Hamilton Community Foundation and the Cincinnati Observatory enabled us to purchase telescopes and binoculars to enhance the hands-on learning of planets and other cosmic “stuff”. With our new trails, Astronomy Nights have been enriched by adding night hikes. Students and families can experience our quiet, nocturnal world in a safe and familiar setting. In the works are plans for a Ridgeway “Owling Adventure”.

Our Ridgeway family benefits greatly from these woodland trails. We value and protect what we know and understand. These experiences will lead to knowledge and understanding that will enable our students to make informed decisions while building childhood memories that they will cherish for years to come.
Ohio Environmental Education Fund

OEEF grant guidelines and funding priorities have undergone substantial revision. Please read the guidelines carefully before beginning an application. The requests for OEEF general grant and mini grant proposals are now open in the eBusiness Center. The Letter of Intent to Apply must be submitted prior to submitting a grant.

The Ohio Environmental Education Fund grant program is administered by Ohio EPA and awards general grants of up to $50,000 and mini-grants between $500 and $5,000. The grants are funded by half of the civil penalties OEPA collects for air and water pollution control violations. Eligible recipients include environmental groups, public and private schools, colleges, local governments, among others.

For more information, please contact the Ohio EPA Office of Environmental Education

Phone: 614-644-2873 Email: oee@epa.state.oh.us Web: www.epa.ohio.gov/oee

Grant Writing Workshops
Contact the Office of Environmental Education for details and registration. See contact details above.

The “101 Alternatives to the Chalkboard”

39th Annual Educators’ Conference
Inquiry and Awareness
Balancing content and Science-Based Inquiry in our changing environmental education landscape

Friday to Sunday, October 3, 4, 5 of 2014
At YMCA Camp Kern (32 miles northeast of Cincinnati)
5291 St Rt 350 Oregonia, Ohio 45054

$82 includes all sessions, food, and lodging.
$42 for Saturday only (lunch and dinner included)
EECO member discount - $67 for full conference, $32 for Saturday only
Scholarships and reduced rates are also available, call or email for details
For registration, info on being a presenter, and for more information, contact Dave Moran at Camp Kern, 513-932-3756 x1527 or dmoran@daytonymca.org

Julie Zickefoose: Keynote Speaker
Artist, author and naturalist, Julie Zickefoose will be presenting on Friday and Saturday evenings as well as offering a session during the day on Saturday. Julie has been a major contributor to Bird Watcher’s Digest since 1986, and has painted 24 covers for the magazine. Her own books include Letters from Eden and The Bluebird Effect: Uncommon Bonds with Common Birds. And her commentary has been heard regularly on National Public Radio.

This event made possible by YMCA Camp Kern, the Environmental Education Council of Ohio, and the Ohio Environmental Education Fund

In Northwest Ohio
the Warbler Capital of the World
May 6-15
Details about locations, workshops, fieldtrips, and other special events will be posted on
www.biggestweekinamericanbirding.com
Recipe for a School Land Lab

Partly in response to publication of Richard Louv’s *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, many schools may be considering how to make better use of outdoor learning areas. A lot of great resources are easily accessible in Ohio and nationwide, so no need to reinvent the wheel! Here are some how-to suggestions, Web links, and funding sources, compiled by the Ohio EPA Office of Environmental Education.

**Ingredients:**

- 1 great idea
- 1 underutilized area on the school grounds, or in a nearby park
- 1 enthusiastic teacher, parent, or student, to get the project rolling
- 1 support committee of enthusiastic teachers, parents, students, neighbors and administrators
- 1 copy, *Twenty/Twenty Activities and Projects for WILD School Sites*, available in WILD school site workshops sponsored by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife.
- 1 list of Web-based resources (see blue box)
- 1 list of potential funding sources (next page)

**Directions:**

Use the existing site to meet some of your current educational objectives. Identify potential learning opportunities.

Involve your students in conducting an inventory of soil and topographic features, plant, animal, and habitat resources on the site. Involve students in researching what laws, ordinances and school regulations apply to the site. Project WILD’s *Science and Civics: Sustaining Wildlife* is an excellent resource on how to do this.

Recruit a support committee of neighbors, parents, students, teachers and administrators. Don’t forget the grounds crew, so they know not to mow down the butterfly garden! Don’t forget the neighbors, who may mistakenly think your prairie plants are just weeds, and who might help protect against vandalism after hours and during school vacations. Request a copy of the Habitats for Learning video from oeef@epa.state.oh.us, it’s a good tool for explaining to the PTO and others just how valuable outside learning can be.

Check out what they did over there, on the list of Web-based resources above. The Michigan State University’s 4-H children’s garden is a wonderful source of inspiration and ideas, and some existing school land labs around Ohio have developed great Web sites. If there’s no room on the school grounds, contact your local parks. The City of Toledo Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry developed school land labs in city parks, and a terrific “Park It!” curriculum. Contact Dennis Garvin at 419/936-2876 for advice.

**Web Resources**

- 4-H Garden at Michigan State University [http://4hgarden.msu.edu/tour/overview.html](http://4hgarden.msu.edu/tour/overview.html)
- Chester Elementary land lab near Wooster, Ohio [www.northwestern-wayne.k12.oh.us/Chester/Landlab/main2.html](http://www.northwestern-wayne.k12.oh.us/Chester/Landlab/main2.html)
- Classroom Feeder Watch at Cornell [http://birds.cornell.edu/cfw/](http://birds.cornell.edu/cfw/)
- Monarch Watch at University of Kansas [www.monarchwatch.org](http://www.monarchwatch.org)
- National Audubon Society – resources for bird watching and habitat [www.audubon.org/educate/](http://www.audubon.org/educate/)
- National Gardening Association (includes grants) [www.kidsgardening.com](http://www.kidsgardening.com)
- North Carolina’s Environmental Education Garden [www.ee.enr.state.nc.us/garden/gardenbackground.htm](http://www.ee.enr.state.nc.us/garden/gardenbackground.htm)
- Ohio Division of Wildlife, wildlife diversity resources [www.ohiodnr.gov/wildlife/resources/default.htm](http://www.ohiodnr.gov/wildlife/resources/default.htm)
- Project WILD grants and resources for Wild School Sites [http://www.projectwild.org/WILDSchoolSites.htm](http://www.projectwild.org/WILDSchoolSites.htm) and [www.dnr.ohio.gov/wildlife/Resources/wildschools/default.htm](http://www.dnr.ohio.gov/wildlife/Resources/wildschools/default.htm)
- Raptors in the City (includes Cleveland peregrines) [http://raptorsinthewcity.homestead.com/index.html](http://raptorsinthewcity.homestead.com/index.html)
- Sandusky Plains Environmental Education Center at Elgin High School (Marion County) [www.intelligent-web-design.com/SPEEC/index.htm](http://www.intelligent-web-design.com/SPEEC/index.htm)

**Continued at foot of next page**
Greenworks Grants of $200 - $2,000 are available from Project Learning Tree at the national level, for projects involving youth, adults in communities, with positive environmental effects. Someone trained in Project Learning Tree activities should be involved. www.plt.org  Tip: Request a letter of support from Sue Wintering in the Ohio PLT office, 614-265-6657 or plt@dnr.state.oh.us.

WILD School Sites grants of up to $500 are available from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, with applications accepted between January 1 and May 31, www.wildohio.com, click on Wild Resources and then Educator Resources. At least one member of the project committee must have completed either Project WILD, Growing Up WILD or Science and Civics training. Tip: Submit early, only twenty are available.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program award grants between $5,000 and $20,000 for wetland, riparian, or coastal habitat restoration projects that include education and community stewardship components. Deadline mid-February each year. Tip: work with partner organizations. http://www.epa.gov/wetlands/restore/5star/

Lowe’s Outdoor Classroom Grant Program was created to provide outdoor, hands-on science education to students in grades K-12 and assist schools in enhancing their core curriculum in all subjects. This program was created to provide schools with additional resources to improve their science curriculum by engaging students in hands-on experiences outside the traditional classroom. All U.S. K-12 public schools are welcome to apply. http://www.toolboxforeducation.com/

Toyota Tapestry grants up to $50,000 and mini grants up to $2,500 are available to science teachers and administered by the National Science Teachers Association, http://www.nsta.org/pd/tapestry/?lid=tnav

American Honda Foundation Grants to K-12 and higher education programs in the fields of youth education (up to 21) and scientific education. http://corporate.honda.com/amERICA/philanthropy.aspx?id=ahf

Ohio Environmental Education Fund mini grants of $500 - $5,000 are offered by the Ohio EPA Office of Environmental Education, with application deadlines around January 15 and July 15 every year. Projects must show how education activities will align with Ohio’s Academic Content Standards. Construction activities are not eligible. Larger grants up to $50,000 are also available, but much more competitive. Tip: Contact the OEEF staff for a pre-review. (614) 644-2873. http://epa.ohio.gov/oee/EnvironmentalEducation.aspx

Ohio EPA 319 grants (named for Section 319 of the Clean Water Act) pass federal funds through to local watershed organizations to improve water quality. These sometimes include funding for education components. http://www.epa.ohio.gov/dsw/nps/index.aspx Contact your local watershed coordinator. via the Ohio Watershed Network, http://ohiowatersheds.osu.edu/

US EPA Environmental Education grants are awarded through both the national Office of Environmental Education www.epa.gov/enviroed/grants.html and smaller grants (but less competition) through the Region 5 office in Chicago. Application is usually announced in the Federal Register in September, with deadlines in November. Tip: Pay attention, this program’s funding is perennially in jeopardy in the federal budget process.

Youth Garden Grant Program of the National Gardening Association offers $500 gift cards from The Home Depot to schools and community organizations with child-centered outdoor garden programs. http://www.kidsgardening.org/

Other Sources of funding at the local level:
Wal-Mart stores, Target, BP stations, Kraft Foods. Wendy’s restaurants and grocery stores may not offer cash but may provide food or other supplies.
Boy Scouts: Eagle Scouts have to complete a community service project, and often perform construction or maintenance in parks and other outdoor learning sites.

Recipe for a School Land Lab (Continued)
Enhance the existing site as needs arise: e.g., attend to poison ivy, pick up litter, mulch muddy areas, hang a bird feeder.
Develop a long-range plan for that matches site development with the overall curriculum. Check out the integrated and subject-specific activities for science, math, social studies, language arts, art and music, health and physical education in Habitats for Learning. Keep notes on how and why you did what you did, for a Land Lab User’s Manual.
Seek donations of materials and labor from parents, students, local businesses, and even eagle scouts. Apply for grants if needed, from some of the sources on the attached list of funding sources.
Measure, dig, plant, observe. Season with changing weather, wildlife and vegetation. Complete the User’s Manual for new teachers and students coming to the school.
A Tree Grows in Lancaster

By Dave Moran, Camp Kern

The year is 1977, a third grade girl marches out onto the playground with her classmates, they follow her past the swing set and past the ball field. A faint odor of fish grows stronger as the kids edge toward the forbidden zone where the grass gives way to trees. On the other side of the fence sits Thimnes’ Fish Shack. These would be Hansel and Gretels are now in the forest, led there by one of their own. She introduces them to her tree, not just any tree, but her own personal tree. It has clearly been an acquaintance of long and intimate standing. “All of you need to find your own trees” the girl instructs. Kids scatter, each adopting a tree. This peculiar outing turns into a daily ritual for our third grade girl and her classmates as they spend some time every day visiting with their trees.

Leap forward to 2003. Our third grade girl has just accepted the job of leading a prominent environmental education organization. “Looking back, it was one of the most influential experiences that led me to where I am today,” says EECO Executive Director Brenda Metcalf about this childhood stepping stone to her career.

Authors such as David Sobel in his book Childhood and Nature and Richard Louv in Last Child in the Woods examine the need for the exact sort of experience that Brenda had and shared with her classmates. Getting kids out of the classroom does not have to include the hassles and expense of a bus trip, nor is a formal land lab required. It doesn’t have to include a lesson plan or even a teacher. But as educators and advocates for environmental education, we usually can’t help but get involved and the prospect of free-range third graders may even worry some of us. Still, there is much to be found in unplanned, unsanctioned, and unforgettable playground adventures. And as for Brenda, when asked recently about her arboreal childhood companion, she smiled saying “the school has been torn down, the fish shack is gone, but my tree is still there.”

Wonders of Wetlands Workshops

The Wonders of Watersheds (WOW) Workshop: Outdoor Explorations for Classroom Applications, Tuesday, June 17 - Thursday, June 19, 2014 is a 3-day program held in Geauga and Portage Counties. ($85)

The Advanced Wonders of Watersheds, Monday, June 23 – Wednesday, June 25, 2014 is an intensive 3-day program at Old Woman Creek National Estuary in Huron, Ohio. ($275)

These workshops are open to educators of all grades and disciplines, proven as effective, engaging trainings, and offer affordable graduate credits through Ashland University. Through outdoor learning and inquiry experiences, we can help your transition to tackle the standards!

For more information visit www.geaugaswcd.com or contact Gail Prunty at 440-834-1122 or gprunty@geaugaswcd.com. Don’t delay... Registration deadline is May 15th!

Dig Deeper: Soils Workshop

June 12, 9 am - 3:30 pm
Scarlett Oaks Campus, Sharonville, Oh

This workshop is specifically feared towards 6th grade science and focuses on:

- Soil is unconsolidated material that contains nutrient matter and rock
- Rocks, minerals and soils have common and practical uses.

The workshop will include hands-on activities, technical resources, and guest speaker/soil scientist Matt Deaton from ODNR.

Cost: $20 includes teacher resources, snacks, drinks, & a book for the classroom. Please bring a packed lunch, reusable utensils and a drink.


For More Information: Lynn White at (513) 785-6666 or Gwen Roth at (513) 772-7645
Building Trails for Learning

By Tim Prange, with Rural Action’s Ohio Stream RestoreCorps

What do Pulaski, Mattock and McLeod have to do with environmental education? Are they a) early leaders in the EE movement b) towns that have adopted a comprehensive environmental education plan or c) tools used in trail building? If you answered “c” you are correct. Incorporating trail building or trail maintenance into a school’s curriculum may not seem like a logical fit, but the hands-on learning it provides is something that is lacking in many schools today.

Rural Action has been working with local middle and high schools, designing lesson plans that incorporate trail building with invasive species removal, interpretive signage design, and tree/plant identification. Buckeye Trail Association has been a key partner to help select a trail path and flag it, as well as providing instruction on trail-building techniques. Proper use of tools and tool safety is also covered and emphasized.

Trail building isn’t the only focus of our time spent in the field. We work closely with teachers from the beginning to align to units of study and tie into state standards. Depending on the grade level, we can gear the entire trail building activity to focus on ecosystems, impact of human activity on the land, or biodiversity.

Trimble High School science teacher Amrik Brar was awarded a Trailblazing Teacher Award from the Center for Green Schools for involving his class in creating a trail behind the high school. The students named it the “Muddy Boot Trail” because they had to brave inclement weather to get it finished.

This April, we will be building a trail behind New Lexington Middle School, with the 6th grade students. The students will rotate through three stations: trail building, invasive species removal, and tree identification. Sixth grade science teacher Jake Rehyer had previously used the forested area with his students, but wanted to establish a trail system that could be used by other classes and grade levels. His hope is that not only science classes but language arts or math classes utilize the area for journaling or measurement activities.

Having access to a wooded or grassland area next to the school makes incorporating trail building easier, but this shouldn’t deter schools from participating in trail building. Contact a local park or nature preserve and find out if they have any need for either trail building or maintenance. Ohio Department of Natural Resources’ Wild School Site grant program or local donations oftentimes can be used to purchase materials.

Trail building, maintenance, and restoration offers the opportunity to get students outside working on a project that offer immediate tangible results. They will be using trails or visiting them often, giving them a sense of ownership and civic learning in the process. It’s also a great avenue for service learning projects and a much needed release for all that youthful energy. So grab a mattock and hit the trails.

Great Resources

Habitats for Learning, a Planning Guide for Using and Developing School Land Labs, Diane C. Cantrell, Joe E. Heimlich, and Dave Landis, 1995, published by Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Water Resources and Ohio EPA Office of Environmental Education, available at http://epa.ohio.gov/oeef/oee_publications.aspx. This great resource was created through an Ohio Environmental Education Fund grant to EECO. It’s an oldie, but a goodie.


What are WILD School Sites?  
The In’s and Out’s of Ohio’s WILD School Sites Program

By Jen Dennison, ODNR Division of Wildlife

So you want to create a schoolyard habitat? Or is it more of a land lab? How about an outdoor classroom? What’s the difference? Really, there isn’t much difference in any of these sites. Nor are WILD School Sites, which is what the Ohio Division of Wildlife calls over 400 sites across the state that have developed wildlife habitat on their school grounds. These habitat improvement projects are then used in their curriculum to help students understand not just science, but all subjects. Here are the basics of the WILD School Site program:

1) Consultations: If you’re in the planning stages of your outdoor area, contact us at 1-800-WILDLIFE and we’ll put you in touch with your district education specialist to come and help you with the planning of your site. Our specialists can help you figure out the best locations for butterfly gardens, bluebird box trails, prairies, and more. We can also give you suggestions on how to use those projects in the curriculum. We’ll bring you a plethora of materials, funding information and more!

2) Workshops: Part of the reason that some schools’ outdoor classroom projects are so successful is because it becomes part of the school’s culture to utilize these areas on a regular basis. What better way to help win over the entire staff of your school than through a workshop! These workshops are free, they can be as long as you need them to be, and are a lot of fun. We try to help your staff understand the importance of these areas, how they can be involved, what everyone’s roles can be, and we help your staff understand that it can’t be just one person’s project. If that person leaves, so goes the site. These workshops are inspiring, hands-on, and very enlightening to the amount of work, time and effort it takes to develop an outdoor classroom.

3) Grants: The Ohio Division of Wildlife issues up to 40 grants each year to schools that are interested in developing outdoor spaces. These grants are $500 even and can be used towards the development of habitat and the purchase of materials and equipment to promote usage of the areas. The four main requirements are a) someone on the planning committee has to have attended one of the Project WILD suite of programs in the past, b) the students need to be involved as much as possible, c) primary use of the funds has to go to “on-the-ground” habitat improvement, and d) you must show how the outdoor classroom will be used in your programs or curriculum. Grants are available Sept 1st through May 31st each year. Any educational organization, formal and non-formal, can apply.

4) Certification: Once your site is up and running and it’s being used on a regular basis, you can apply for certification. The application is found online at www.ohioprojectwild.org under the WILD School Sites tab. Upon the approval of your application, your education specialist will come and “inspect” your site, to see what you’ve been up to. Once the inspection takes place, we’ll return to dedicate your site as an official Certified Ohio WILD School Site. There are currently 136 certified sites across Ohio, and we add more every year!

So if you’d like to join those educators who are benefiting every day from the easy access of their own outdoor classrooms, give us a call at 1-800-WILDLIFE and we’ll be glad to help you make your school a WILD School Site!

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EECO Membership Survey

EECO always wants to understand how to better serve its members: We’re all in this together! Please let us know what EECO can do for you by participating in a very short survey http://tinyurl.com/mtot56f.

Thank you!
1. You don't need a trail or a park nearby, just get outside! Just taking children through a meadow, in the woods, near a creek or in a garden will do. What matters is that your class is getting outside to learn; it doesn’t really matter where you do it!

2. Start out small. Begin time outdoors with your class with short time periods. Get them used to getting dirty, using their senses and making observations. Most teachers find that young children need lots of time to explore freely in a new place before focusing on more specific tasks.

3. Go over the rules and boundaries each time. Set the expectations for safety and behavior before you leave the classroom. Make it a point to say The Watcher’s Promise together. Learn to identify poisonous plants and animals.

4. Integrate, integrate, integrate! After your class is used to your new outdoor space, take the concepts you are working on and use them in the natural area. Whether it is writing, math, geography or other science concepts you can almost always find a way to take it outdoors.

5. Choose a tree and begin there with a consistent focus. Whether you are going to a park or out in the schoolyard, it helps to begin with a routine. Sitting under a class tree silently and making observations for several minutes is a great way to begin. This helps young students to focus on “being scientists,” rather than just playing.

6. Bring notebooks and pencils. There is always something interesting to write down or collect. Not only will this keep your students hands busy, but it is a great way for them to experience what scientists do on a daily basis. And it helps students remember what they learned!

7. Be prepared. Let administration know when you are heading outdoors with your class and bring along a bookbag with a small first aid kit, some tissues and wipes, a cell phone and extra pencils.

8. Spend time reflecting. As teachers, we are often so rushed to cram everything in that we forget this important part of learning. Even if it occurs the next day, spend time discussing what students observed and learned during the outdoor lesson.

9. Use technology! Bring digital or Flip cameras out on the trail to record what happens. It is so fun to watch the videos and also helps students remember important details. Flip Cams are easy enough for young children to use, easy enough for teachers to upload quickly and relatively inexpensive.

10. Learn to let go and live in the moment. This is perhaps the hardest thing for teachers to do, but the most important if you want to have fun outside with your students! If you have prepared sufficiently, let go of your worries and concerns. It is normal for us to leave the nature trail with a few scrapes from thorn bushes, a wet pants leg from the creek and dirty clothes. This is all part of being in nature. Let the kids and parents know about these possibilities ahead of time. Then relax, let go of the small things and concentrate on having a fun learning experience.

New Professional Development Offerings

The Ohio Resource Center has just launched its new webpage for professional development. As a professional development provider, ORC now offers face-to-face, online, or blended presentations and workshops that address your needs in K-12 content and pedagogy. ORC will customize programs to meet your specific needs, or you can choose from a library of current topics and offerings. Browse through the PD webpage at http://ohiorc.org/professional-development/ and see ORC offerings with previews of professional development presented by ORC content specialists and other experts in the discipline. Current offerings include the following:

- Anita Gonzalez with sessions on graphic novels or literacy strategies for after-school programs
- Terry Shiverdecker on upcoming seminars on argumentation and Jessica Fries-Gaither on science and literacy
- Tracy Cindric on citizen science problem-based learning to support Next Generation assessments
Healthy Water, Healthy People (HWHP) Facilitator Workshop

*Friday, June 20, 2014, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.*

**Toledo Botanical Garden**

5403 Elmer Drive, Toledo, Ohio 43615

HWHP is an innovative water quality education program sponsored by Project WET and the Hach Scientific Foundation, offering hands-on activity guides, testing kits, training, and much more. Recommended for middle and high school teachers, students, scout groups, 4-H, and home schooled groups. All activities are correlated to the National Science Standards and the Ohio Academic Content Standards for science and social studies.

Participants will be provided instruction on activities in the morning and will peer teach in the afternoon. Everyone in attendance will receive the HWHP Educator Guide, Test Kit Manual, and training materials valued at $50.00 - FREE!

For more information and to register by e-mail, please contact: Dennis Clement, Ohio EPA/OEE @ 614-644-2048 or dennis.clement@epa.ohio.gov.

Our local host will be the Toledo Botanical Garden.

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Raising the Standards

*Presented by NW Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Districts*

*June 17, 18, 19 at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and Kelleys Island*

**Cost:** $120 for 3 days or $60 per day. Cost includes meals, refreshments, and all workshop materials. Register by May 9 and save $10 on the 3 day registration.

**Register:** Please contact Fulton SWCD at 419-337-9663 for registration information. Please register by May 30.

**What to Bring:** rain gear, boots, binoculars, camera, mug, etc. This is an outdoor environmental workshop so please dress appropriately.

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OKI Regional Council of Governments Wants to Know

*What Do You Think?*

The OKI Regional Council of Governments is updating a policy plan to improve quality of life and service to the public in southwest Ohio, northern Kentucky, and southeast Indiana, and they want to hear from you. Issues in the plan affect everyday life in the region, such as:

- congestion on roadways
- the attractiveness of communities for business and job creation
- housing for all ages, income levels and family types and
- adequate water and sewer facilities.

The draft plan and questions to invite feedback are available on-line. To find out more and share your opinions, visit [www.howdowegrow.org](http://www.howdowegrow.org)
### EECO Regional Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Linda Pettit, Franklin SWCD T:614-486-9613 <a href="mailto:linda-pettit@franklinswcd.org">linda-pettit@franklinswcd.org</a></td>
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<td>12 - NE Ohio</td>
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</tbody>
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### EECO Officers, Advisors & Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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### EECO Board Members

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<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Betsy Banks</td>
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