Coordinated by the Michigan Alliance for Environmental & Outdoor Education (MAEOE) and Michigan Technological University and supported with a grant from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium

Bringing Environmental Education to (Detroit/Pontiac) Urban Schools Initiative
FINAL REPORT (8/5/10)

Summary: A total of 47 Detroit and Pontiac teachers participated in 8 environmental education teacher training workshops offered from January to April 2010 with funding from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium. These teachers teach a majority of African American students since African Americans comprise 81% of the population of the City of Detroit and 47% of the population of Pontiac.

The Michigan Alliance of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) partnered with Michigan Technological University to submit a grant proposal to the Michigan Space Grant Consortium in Fall 2008 to design and implement the first-of-its-kind Environmental Education (EE) & Urban Schools Teacher Training Initiative. The grant targeted Michigan’s two largest urban public school districts in Detroit and Pontiac.

In November 2009, at Belle Isle Nature Zoo in the heart of downtown Detroit, the EE & Urban Schools Teacher Training Initiative was put in motion. The program was awarded a $10,000 grant from the Michigan Space Consortium, administered by Michigan Technological University, and coordinated by MAEOE past President, Joan Chadde.

The need for this initiative was and is great, as we have most recently observed with the oil spill disaster in the Gulf, and the recent oil spill in our very own state, impacting the Kalamazoo River. The need to have all students at an early age exposed to environmental education is no longer an option, especially in urban areas where the largest numbers of people reside.

The forty-seven teachers that took part in the EE & Urban Schools Initiative were not transported to pristine natural areas far away from their schools’ urban setting of grass and pavement to learn how to teach environmental science. Rather, they were introduced to lessons and activities that they could teach right in their schoolyard or nearby. Teachers participating in the program had the opportunity to attend the 2009 MAEOE Fall conference at the University of Michigan Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center, plus eight different workshops held from January to April 2010 that included: Grant-Writing (2x), Winter Ecology, Project Learning Tree Early Elementary, Creating Schoolyard Habitat, Taking Kids Outdoors, and Flying Wild. The workshop activities included learning to use a GPS unit, frog sampling, water quality monitoring, and taking a snowshoe walk, just to name a few. Workshops took place at a variety of locations, including Belle Isle Nature Zoo (Detroit), Pontiac Middle School, Crockett High School (Detroit), Hawk Woods Nature Center in Auburn Hills, and lastly O.W. Holmes Elementary School in Detroit where many teachers became inspired to plant gardens in their own schoolyards.

Workshops Offered & Participant Numbers

1) Oct. 8-10, 2009 - MAEOE Conference (U-Mich Dearborn) – 13 participants
2) Nov. 9, 2009 - EE & Urban Schools Kickoff Meeting ~ 6-8 pm (Belle Isle Nature Zoo, Detroit) – 26 participants
3) Jan. 27, 2010 – Grant Writing Workshop ~ 4-6 pm (Pontiac Middle School) – 5 participants
4) Jan. 28, 2010 – Grant Writing Workshop ~ 4-6 pm (Crockett HS, Detroit) – 5 participants
5) Feb. 13, 2010 – Winter Ecology Workshop ~ 9:00-4:00pm (Belle Isle Nature Zoo in Detroit) – 20 participants
6) Feb 20, 2010 – PLT Early Elementary ~ 9:00-3:00pm (City of Auburn Hills Community Center) – 35 participants
7) March 27, 2010 – Creating Schoolyard Habitat ~ 9am-3pm (O.W. Holmes, Detroit) – 21 participants
8) April 17, 2010 – Taking Students Outside ~ 9:00-4:00 pm (Belle Isle Nature Zoo, Detroit) – 20 participants
9) April 21, 2010 – Flying Wild/Project Wild ~ 4-8 pm (Westfield Center, Trenton) – 27 participants
10) Oct. 8-10, 2010 - MAEOE Conference (U-Mich Biological Station, Pellston) - TBD

Teachers were able to earn SB-CEUs at the workshops or one graduate credit through Michigan Tech at no additional cost. Thirteen teachers opted to earn the one Michigan Tech credit, which required them to create
lesson plans, field trip plans, or write a reflection paper. These are posted on the Michigan Alliance for Environmental & Outdoor Education website to share with other teachers.

The EE & Urban Teachers Initiative also provided mentors for urban teachers, matching up experienced environmental educators with teachers looking to improve their EE teaching skills. The Initiative also provided classroom supplies to teachers to help them with implementing what they learned at the workshops, as well as, a $200 field trip stipend to practice what they learned with their students. The field trip destinations included Hawk Woods Nature Center, University of Michigan Dearborn Environmental Interpretive Center, Michigan Sea Grant research vessel in the Detroit River, Ford Rouge Factory & Living Roof, Detroit Zoo, Belle Isle Nature Zoo, Howell Nature Center, Apple Island, and Camp Tamarack.

The overall goal of the program was to increase teachers’ interest and ability to teach environmental education, and to help their students become better stewards of the environment while meeting science curriculum benchmarks…and to have fun learning outdoors!

An end of year survey conducted online, with 19 teachers responding, found that: they most valued the teacher training workshops, classroom supplies, stipends for field trips, the MAEOE membership, and a registration/lodging stipend to attend the MAEOE conference. 95% prefer all-day Saturday teacher workshops, which is what was offered during the past school year.

We are excited to that this program will continue for the 2010-2011 school year with funding from the U.S. Forest Service Urban Connections Program.

Detroit Public School teacher Joe Paxton emphatically stated in his evaluation, “This program must continue! It is an invaluable resource to the teacher. I have teachers in my school asking me how I was able to be a part of this program and want to know how they can take part. The workshops are loaded with information and are just plain fun!” Well, Joe, we were so impressed and energized by the first group of teachers who took part in the EE & Urban Teacher Initiative that we are anxiously awaiting the next group!

To learn more about the Initiative, visit: [http://www.michiganenvironmentaled.org/Enviromental_Education_Urban_Teacher_Initiative.html](http://www.michiganenvironmentaled.org/Enviromental_Education_Urban_Teacher_Initiative.html)

Some workshop evaluation comments:

- Super fun learning experience
- Book stipend was over the top great!
- Practical, fun and enjoyable. Could we do this again next year?
- These workshops were great so far and I would love for it to continue.
- Please continue these workshops next year. They were wonderful
- Please repeat this workshop. It was wonderful!
- It opened my eyes to the wonderful things happening in Detroit Public schools. It has invigorated me to do more in the area of plants and outdoor experiences
- Hopefully, this program will be continued next year. I am working to increase my knowledge of working with students outdoors, so I can do it more often.
- I would really like to see this continue for several more years! Thanks!!
- I have gained useful information on how to plan a successful outdoor lesson.
- The GPS and ideas for outdoors can be incorporated into my science classroom
- We want these workshops to continue (13).
- We need ongoing support to help us get our students outside.

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