

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (1986, R1990, R2000, R2001, R2007)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that the health of the Earth's environment depends upon humanity's awareness and understanding of the role ecosystems play and our actions to support and enhance the quality of all life.

The Society supports development and use of varied educational efforts that promote an understanding of the interdependence between natural and built environments. The highest priority programs should focus on the young, policymakers and on environmental resource managers.

Rationale

Environmental education is "... the educational process dealing with man's relationship with his natural and man-made surroundings, and includes the relation of population, pollution, resource allocation and depletion, conservation, transportation, technology and urban and rural planning to the total human environment." (Public Law 91-515, Environmental Education Act.)

Key lessons to convey also include understanding the interrelationships between natural systems (such as climatology, geology, hydrology, and all plant and life) and human health, safety and welfare.

The evidence of ecosystem changes witnessed by the presence of countless degraded environments speaks to the need for increased public understanding and action. To minimize further degradation and to improve environmental quality now and into the future, we need to assure that the next generation of consumers, policymakers, designers, and managers, thinks and acts in an environmentally responsible manner. The environmental education process presents a means of direct action by connecting individual efforts to a global context. By first educating, we can help change the way consumers, businesses, and governments impact the environment for generations to come.

People of all ages urgently need a vision of the world where they are active participants. The benefit of hands-on experiential learning has been well documented by professional educators. Outdoor learning can also develop problem solving and critical thinking skills. Learning in environments such as an outdoor classroom, about the interrelationship between natural systems and human welfare, health and safety, nurtures the kind of well rounded citizens, manager, designers and policymakers we want our children to become.