

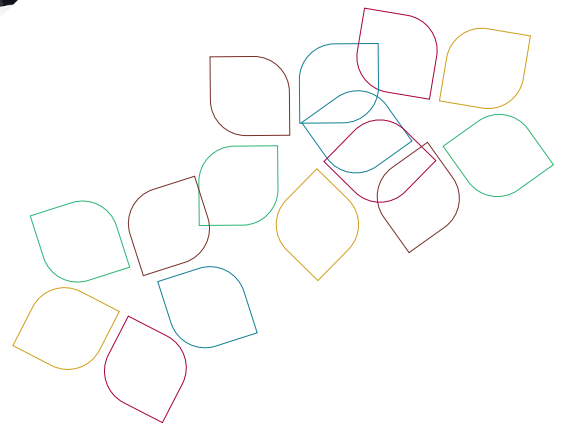


A JUST AND
SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE



NAAEE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

2024-2026



Vision-Driven, Future-Focused

For people, communities, and institutions committed to a just and sustainable future, environmental education is key. Around the globe, the ripple effects of environmental education (EE) persistently improve lives and communities. Environmental education inspires, informs, and enlightens. It connects people to each other and to place. And it helps create a more civically engaged public, a healthier environment, and a more inclusive society.

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) supports environmental education at all levels—from local communities to global networks. We are a trusted and nonpartisan authority, supporting practitioners, policymakers, and philanthropists. We are a network of networks, helping institutions and leaders in environment, education, civics, equity and inclusion, and other disciplines collaborate to create a better future. We strive to be a lighthouse to individual environmental educators, elevating effective practice, innovation, and inclusiveness.

Our three-year strategy grows from the work of hundreds of thousands of EE practitioners and partners. Although we can point to so many bright spots that demonstrate impact, we know—like many others dedicated to a just and sustainable future where both nature and people thrive—that we are not keeping pace with the obstacles our world faces. **As a result, our strategy compels us to grow the impact of environmental education, support emerging leadership, continue to strengthen networks for change, and advocate for the critical role education needs to play to address the complex challenges we face.**

ABOUT OUR STRATEGY

This framework outlines an ambitious strategy to continue advancing our goals over the next three years. However, in our rapidly changing field, no plan is ever static. As complex challenges continue unfolding in unexpected ways, we will stay nimble and responsive. As we make strides in building a more just and inclusive movement, new ideas, people, and issues will change the way we approach our work and shape this strategy in the coming years. We are committed to being flexible and understanding that there are many approaches to solving the environmental and social issues we face.



Participants in the BLAKE Inspire for Teachers Programme discuss lichen and epiphytes.
Photo credit: BLAKE

You can't wring your hands
and roll up your sleeves at
the same time.

—Pat Shroeder

Our Vision, Mission, and Values

VISION

A just and sustainable world where environmental and social responsibility drive individual, institutional, and community choices.

We envision a world in which:

- Environmental education is valued as an essential strategy to address environmental and social issues
- Research-based practices create high-quality environmental education programs with measurable impact
- Effective coalitions and partnerships advance the field
- Everyone has access to nature and high-quality environmental education
- Innovative leaders in the field reflect the world's diversity in all its dimensions
- Environmental education is integrated into formal and nonformal education systems, including preschool, K-12, higher education, adult learning, and the work of NGOs around the world
- Environmental education is used across sectors to help achieve global targets, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- An educated and engaged populace is actively involved in civic life

MISSION

To use the power of education to advance environmental literacy and civic engagement to create a more just and sustainable future. We work with educators, policymakers, and partners throughout the world.



Education is the key to unlocking the world. It is the passport to freedom.

—Oprah Winfrey



VALUES

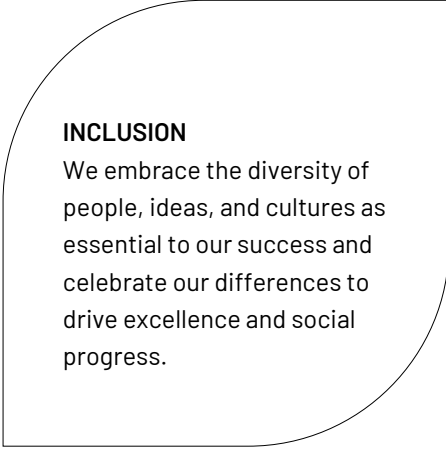
HOPE

Even in uncertain and challenging times, we choose hope and hold fast to the vision of a world where all people and the planet can thrive.



IMPACT

We focus relentlessly on the essential outcomes and impact of our work. We also recognize that not everything important can be measured and we balance traditional metrics with wider ways of knowing.



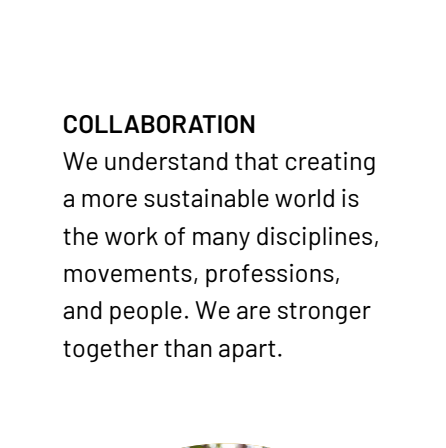
INCLUSION

We embrace the diversity of people, ideas, and cultures as essential to our success and celebrate our differences to drive excellence and social progress.



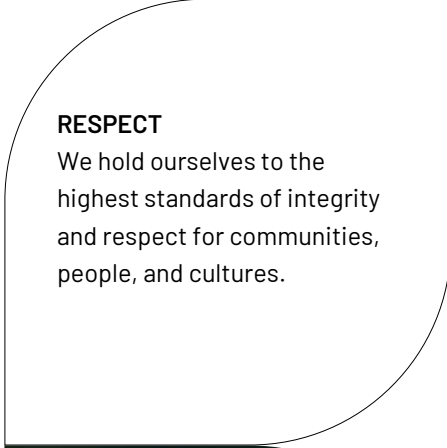
TRANSFORMATION

We embrace change and seek to inspire new and creative ways to scale solutions and adapt to a changing world.



COLLABORATION

We understand that creating a more sustainable world is the work of many disciplines, movements, professions, and people. We are stronger together than apart.



RESPECT

We hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity and respect for communities, people, and cultures.



Students participate in a local science fair event highlighting the roles of technology in mitigating threats to Eastern Box Turtles' urban habitat. Photo credit: Ali D Asif



CURIOSITY

Open-minded thinking is at the heart of our work. We believe in continually asking questions, seeking out different perspectives, and striving for better ways of doing things.

Equity and Inclusion: The Heart of Our Work

NAAEE embraces the principles and practices of equity and inclusion as both a moral and strategic imperative. Equity and inclusion are mission-critical drivers of our strategy and our collective identity. A sustainable future depends on respecting the differences among people of all backgrounds and beliefs, but respect alone is insufficient.

Inclusion is a matter of relevance, responsibility, and respect. Diverse voices and perspectives lead to better solutions. So, whether promoting promising or proven practices, cultivating collective action, building leadership, or mobilizing multi-sector support for environmental education, NAAEE's unique responsibility to advance the field will be fueled by equity and inclusion considerations.

Looking Forward

As we strengthen our organization overall, we will focus on these key areas to advance our equity and inclusion efforts:

- **Integrate Equity and Inclusion into the Fabric of Our Work:** Align inclusion and equity into our strategy and all aspects of NAAEE work.
- **Support Professional Development:** By providing training opportunities for staff, leadership, and partners on diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence, we will build understanding of why this work matters and how everyone can contribute.
- **Increase Representation:** Grow and diversify our membership and partners to better represent historically excluded groups: LGBTQ+, people with different physical and mental abilities, people of color, young professionals, and more.
- **Advocate for Change:** Championing equity and inclusion as both the objectives and pathways to meaningful and lasting change.

Our goal is to create an environment that is inclusive, respectful, and equitable, and to employ the talents of people with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to accomplish the mission of NAAEE.



EE 30 Under 30 honoree Jude Russel Ulatan Cuntapay is a program facilitator with the Save Philippine Seas' Change the Current: Education for Climate Action Workshop for public school teachers. Photo credit: Save Philippine Seas



You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.

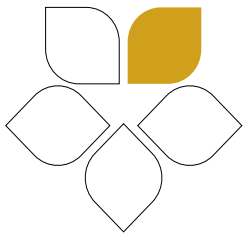
—Jane Goodall



Strategic Goals & Key Actions

In challenging times, environmental education is a catalyst for transformative change. Environmental education helps create a healthy civic life, a sustainable environment, quality education, and justice. Over the three years of this strategy, we will pursue five broad goals.

1. Drive Excellence and Spark Field-Wide Innovation and Impact
2. Invest in Leadership for a Stronger and More Inclusive Movement
3. Cultivate Collaboration and Strengthen Networks for Change
4. Champion Environmental Education Through Policy, Communication, and Outreach
5. Sustain a Thriving Organization



Goal 1.

Drive Excellence and Spark Field-Wide Innovation and Impact

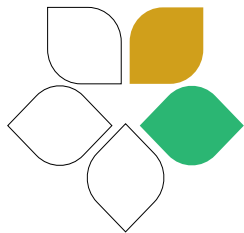
NAAEE sets the standards in the field—answering the questions, “What does effective practice look like?” and “What could the field be doing to scale up and achieve greater impact?” We advance research and professional learning, working with our Affiliate Network and our global partners to promote quality, creativity, cultural relevance, and impact in the field. We invest in innovation and capacity building to spark new ideas, professionalize the field, promote equity and inclusion, and stretch the boundaries of what’s possible.

Key Actions

1. Set standards for the field, build global capacity, and propel the field to deliver high-quality programming.
2. Champion access to research and evaluation to increase quality and impact, promote equity and inclusion, and drive innovation.
3. Provide resources, content, and recognition (certification, accreditation, awards, credentials, and grants), and invest in creative and effective professional learning to deepen and advance environmental literacy, civic engagement, and justice.



Students collect water quality samples and go kayaking at a lake north of Pittsburgh, PA. Photo credit: Sarada Sangameswaran



Goal 2.

Invest in Leadership for a Stronger and More Inclusive Movement

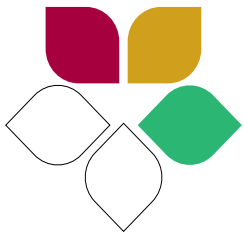
Our civic and environmental health depend on leadership of all forms. NAAEE is committed to building leadership skills and providing opportunities for a diverse cadre of multi-generational learners to grow, share, and innovate. As the champion and backbone organization for the field, we have a responsibility to build leadership pathways and to support new, emerging, mid-career, and seasoned leaders to advance environmental literacy and civic engagement. We focus not only on individual leadership behaviors, but also collective leadership that advances work in communities and networks. In addition, a leadership strategy can help make the field relevant to a broader audience and create an equitable and inclusive movement that attracts and retains new talent.

Key Actions

1. Provide professional learning and networking opportunities to develop and sustain leaders, including CEE-Change Fellows, EE 30 Under 30 honorees, and GEEP partners.
2. Build leadership within the Affiliate Network to strengthen environmental education at the state, regional, and provincial levels.
3. Provide leadership opportunities for new, emerging, mid-career, and seasoned leaders at our annual conferences and symposia and through our webinars and other learning opportunities.
4. Cultivate leadership pathways to attract diverse talent and creativity in the field, and engage historically excluded groups.



CEE Change-Fellow Joy Hayley Munthali with students in Malawi.
Photo credit: Joy Hayley Munthali



Goal 3.

Cultivate Collaboration and Strengthen Networks for Change

The work of environmental education is larger than any one organization or discipline. NAAEE plays a unique role as a catalyst to build and strengthen networks and collaborations that magnify the reach and impact of our collective work. We convene thought leaders from multiple sectors and disciplines to generate new ideas, address challenges, and seek opportunities to create positive societal change through EE. NAAEE is a “network of networks,” from our Affiliate Network to the Natural Start Alliance to the Global EE Partnership. We reach out across silos and boundaries, connecting individuals, groups, and resources to create a common purpose and greater impact. By helping to strengthen existing networks and demonstrating how networks can create change, we advance our mission and support the work of our members and partners.

Key Actions

1. Conduct best-in-class international conferences and symposia for the field of EE to promote networking, sharing, and leadership opportunities for expanding our collective impact.
2. Convene thought leaders to address big issues in the field, including equity and inclusion, STEM, civic engagement, green jobs, green schools, professional learning, research and evaluation, advocacy, and other issues.
3. Partner with the Affiliate Network to strengthen capacity for EE and magnify the reach and impact of our collective work.
4. Amplify and expand partnerships in strategically important areas such as the Natural Start Alliance, the Global Environmental Education Partnership (GEEP), the Superintendents’ EE Collaborative, and the Coalition for Climate Change Education Policy.
5. Support a thriving online EE professional community through eePRO and other technology advances.



Goal 4.

Champion Environmental Education Through Policy, Communication, and Outreach

NAAEE advocates for the field of environmental education and builds the capacity of others to be effective advocates. We champion policies that advance our mission and provide universal access to high-quality environmental education. NAAEE is a trusted source of information about the environmental education field and plays a critical role in communicating the value and impact of EE. With our North American footprint and our global reach, we are uniquely positioned to collaborate with partners around the world to advance our collective work for greater impact.

Key Actions

1. Lead EE advocacy efforts for the field, including building the capacity of local, state, and global EE advocates.
2. Provide tools, training, and support to engage adults and students in meaningful, productive discussions about the importance of civic action to improve the health of the environment and communities.
3. Build awareness of environmental education's impact in achieving effective, sustainable climate solutions through media, special events, and other communication strategies.
4. Advocate for competitive compensation and the value and impact of the profession through outreach and external communications.



Goal 5. Sustain a Thriving Organization

Part of growing the impact of environmental education is continuing to sustain a thriving organization and movement. To achieve our goals, we will continue to strengthen our staff, culture, board, advisory council, and financial health.

Key Actions

1. Attract, support, retain, and inspire a diverse and talented professional team.
2. Attract and retain a talented and effective board of directors representing a variety of backgrounds, disciplines, and cultures to conduct governance and fiduciary responsibilities.
3. Support a council of expert practitioners in the field to provide input to the organization.
4. Practice transparent, accountable, and fiscally responsible governance and secure the needed financial resources to sustain the organization.

Better Together: The Power of Partnerships

Creating a just and sustainable future invites us to search for bright spots, try new things, and work together across sectors, industries, and disciplines. NAAEE collaborates with a wide range of partners on civic engagement, environmental justice, conservation, education, and more. We forge connections with early childhood education and environmental education; influence K-12 systems through targeted policy and programs for teachers, administrators, and superintendents; and work to change systems to advance this work. Our partnerships with higher education institutions, including universities, community colleges, and vocational schools, are vibrant, as are our partnerships with nonformal educational institutions such as zoos, aquariums, museums, nature centers, and conservation organizations. Together with Affiliates across North America, we work globally to share effective practices and strive for collective impact. We work with leaders in diverse sectors—government, philanthropy, business, health, communication, science, and environmental justice—to reach people where we live, work, play, worship, and dream about the world we want. Our collaborative approach ensures that we are not just dreaming about the world we want but actively working to shape it. We invite everyone interested in just and sustainable futures to work with us toward this vision.

Conclusion

In these challenging times, environmental education is more vital than ever. We are committed to advancing environmental literacy and civic engagement, recognizing the profound impact that environmental education has on the environment, education, community well-being, and justice. Our strategy is a living commitment to create a more equitable and sustainable future. It aligns our work towards these critical areas, reflecting our belief that education is a powerful tool for improving lives and leaving the world better than we found it. In this ever-changing landscape, flexibility and adaptability will guide our implementation of this strategy. We will continue to collaborate with our partners, evaluate our progress, and revise our approach as needed to achieve the greatest impact. Together, we will harness the transformative power of environmental education to foster a society that values and protects its natural resources, promotes social justice, and cultivates engaged and responsible global citizens.



When we choose to protect others,
we are also protecting ourselves.
We cannot achieve climate justice
without uplifting and supporting
all communities.

—Intersectional Environmentalist



A JUST AND
SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE



Education We Need for the World We Want