

knowledge synthesized from across the traditional disciplines (especially the natural and social sciences) and includes knowledge about: the Earth as a physical system; the living environment; humans and their societies; and how society and the environment are linked.

### **1.3 Skills for understanding and addressing environmental issues**

Environmental literacy includes the abilities to learn about, evaluate, and act on environmental issues. The skills and knowledge outlined in the first two guidelines (1.1, questioning and analysis skills and 1.2, knowledge of environmental processes and systems) are applied and refined in the context of these issues—the real-life dramas where differing viewpoints and interpretations of data about environmental problems and their potential solutions are played out.

### **1.4 Personal and civic responsibility**

Environmental literacy is activated by individual commitment. Environmentally literate citizens are motivated and empowered to act on their own informed conclusions about what should be done to ensure environmental quality. In developing and applying concept-based learnings and skills for inquiry, analysis, and action, people cultivate an understanding that what they do as individuals and in groups makes a difference.

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## **Theme #2—Foundations of Environmental Education**

Environmental educators must demonstrate a basic understanding of the goals, theory, practice, and history of the field of environmental education. This knowledge provides a solid foundation on which educators can build their own practice.

### **2.1 Fundamental characteristics and goals of environmental education**

Educators understand environmental education as a distinct field and know its defining characteristics and goals.

- Identify the goals and objectives of environmental education as laid out in founding documents of the field such as the Belgrade Charter (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976) and Tbilisi

Declaration (UNESCO, 1978), as well as in more recent definitions such as Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1992).

- Describe the broad view that environmental education takes of “environment,” incorporating concepts such as systems, interdependence, and interactions among humans, other living organisms, the physical environment, and the built or designed environment.
- Discuss environmental education as an interdisciplinary field and provide examples of ways in which it draws on and integrates knowledge from across academic disciplines.
- Identify major components of environmental literacy. Discuss influences that have contributed to the evolution of these concepts, such as work done by Charles Roth, Harold Hungerford, R. Ben Beyton, and Rick Wilke.
- Relate environmental education’s focus on environmental literacy and citizenship with the need to provide opportunities for learners to enhance their capacity for independent thinking and effective, responsible action.

## ***2.2 How environmental education is implemented***

Educators understand that environmental education takes place in a variety of settings and that sources of support, program requirements, and other factors vary from context to context.

- Identify a range of individuals, organizations, and agencies delivering environmental education programs, including formal and nonformal programs. Identify efforts to link formal and nonformal programs through partnerships and other collaborations.
- Discuss how school policies, state or local mandates for environmental education, and federal legislation influence environmental education efforts.
- Describe a variety of national, regional, state, and local environmental education programs and support services, including funding sources and resources.

## ***2.3 The evolution of the field***

Educators are familiar with how the field of environmental education has changed over time and continues to change.

- Discuss how educational movements, including progressive education, nature study, outdoor education, conservation education, and ecology education, contributed to the development of environmental education and how they differ from environmental education.
- Discuss how the work of bodies such as the Brundtland Commission (Brundtland, 1987), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992), the International Conference on Environment and Society (UNESCO 1997), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) has influenced—or might influence—environmental education.

- Describe specific findings from environmental education research and discuss their effect on how environmental education might be perceived, defined, or practiced.
- Identify current and emerging issues in the field of environmental education. For example, evaluate assertions that environmental education focuses more on advocacy rather than education and discuss how these assertions are affecting environmental educators and education programs.
- Describe how specific environmental education research findings have informed the educator's own perspective.

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## **Theme #3—Professional Responsibilities of the Environmental Educator**

Environmental educators must understand and accept the responsibilities associated with practicing environmental education. In their pre-service and in-service preparation, educators should come to understand environmental education as a profession that maintains consistent and high standards for instruction and professional conduct.

### **3.1 Exemplary environmental education practice**

Educators understand their responsibility to provide environmental education that is appropriate, constructive, and aligned with the standards of the field.