

## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

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**Assessment:** Evaluation of skills and knowledge acquired by learners during a learning experience. Assessment can take many forms, from basic testing such as true/false, multiple choice, or matching tests to documenting complex thinking skills and performances.

**Comprehensive State Plan:** Charts a course of action and provides an implementation schedule for meeting state goals for environmental education. These plans set forth the goals and objectives for environmental education within the state and typically list who is best suited to achieve or implement these goals and objectives (e.g., the legislature, the business community, school administrators, etc.). (NEEAP, [www.uwsp.edu/cnr/neeap/StatusofEE/componentdef98.htm](http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/neeap/StatusofEE/componentdef98.htm))

**Creative Thinking:** Thinking which results in connections or possibilities previously unrecognized or unknown to the learner.

**Critical Thinking:** Analysis or consideration based on careful examination of information or evidence. Critical thinking relies on thoughtful questioning and logical thinking skills such as inductive and deductive reasoning.

**Education:** The imparting or creation of knowledge through any of several means including training, instruction, and facilitation.

**Educational Objective:** A statement of a specific measurable or observable result desired from an activity.

**Environmental Education:** A process that enables people to acquire knowledge, skills, and positive environmental experiences in order to analyze issues, assess benefits and risks, make informed decisions, and take responsible actions to achieve and sustain environmental quality. (NAAEE, 1993.)

**Environmental Interpretation:** "...an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media rather than simply to communicate factual information." (Tilden, 1957). Usually occurs in parks and natural areas with non-captive audiences (i.e., visitors).

**Environmental Issue:** Related to, but distinguished from, an environmental problem. An environmental issue reflects the presence of differing perspectives on possible solutions to an environmental problem.

**Environmental Justice:** "...the pursuit of equal justice and equal protection under the law for all environmental statutes and regulations without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status." (University of Michigan Environmental Justice Information Page: [www-personal.umich.edu/~jrajzer/nre/](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrajzer/nre/))

**Environmental Literacy:** Possessing knowledge about the environment and issues related to it; capable of, and inclined to, further self-directed environmental learning and/or action.

**Environmental Problem:** An environmental problem is a specific example of existing or potential environmental degradation, destruction, pollution, etc.

**Environmental Social Marketing:** An education approach that employs a structured analysis of the barriers to and benefits of behavior change, and then includes design of media and strategies to bring about those changes.

**Evaluation:** A process designed to determine if planned outcomes have been achieved.

**Formative Evaluation:** Collecting information and data about your program during its implementation with the goal of using the information and data to improve the program as it is implemented.

**Goal:** A desired result from an activity, lesson, or course of study.

**Higher-Order Thinking Skills:** Skills reflective of more complex thought processes, such as the synthesis of new knowledge or analysis of data versus less complex processes such as rote recall or simple recognition.

**Informal Environmental Education:** Any unstructured environmental education activity outside the formal system where people learn from exhibits, mass media, and everyday living experiences. Also referred to as free choice environmental education. (The term is frequently used interchangeably with nonformal environmental education, especially within the science education community.)

**Logic Model:** A program design and evaluation tool that details the relationship among expected program components (inputs), activities and participation rates (outputs), and impacts (short-term, medium-term, long-term).

**Needs Assessment:** The part of the overall planning and evaluation cycle that ascertains the need for a particular program by considering such things as audience interest and knowledge, environmental conditions, etc. Also known as front-end evaluation.

**Nonformal Environmental Education:** Education about the environment that takes place at nonformal settings such as parks, zoos, nature centers, community centers, youth camps, etc., rather than in a classroom or school. Any organized educational activity about the environment that takes place outside the formal education system. (The term is frequently used interchangeably with informal environmental education.)

**Objective:** A statement of a specific measurable or observable result desired from an activity. See Educational Objective.

**Program:** The term “environmental education program” is used in these guidelines to mean an integrated sequence of planned educational experiences and materials intended to produce a particular set of outcomes.

**Rubric:** Specific descriptions of performance of a given task at several different levels of quality. Teachers use rubrics to evaluate student performance on performance tasks. Students are often given the rubric, or may even help develop it, so they know in advance what they are expected to do. (ASCD, A Lexicon of Learning, [www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=1112](http://www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=1112))

**Standard:** A clear and specific statement of what a learner should know or should be able to achieve.

**Summative Evaluation:** Focuses on the documentation of outputs (e.g., number of participants reached, number of events held) and impacts/outcomes (e.g., level of knowledge gained, changes in social, economic, or environmental conditions) of the program once it is completed.