



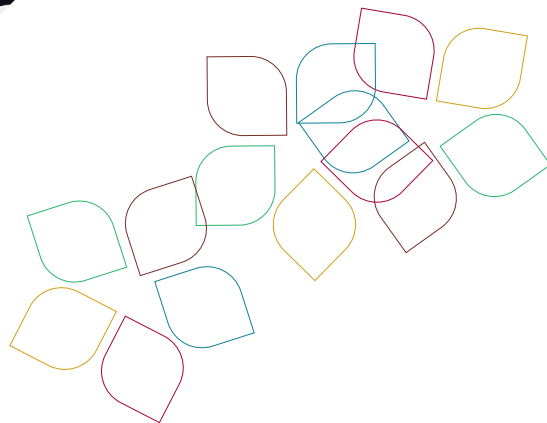
**A Healthy and
Sustainable Future
for All**



NAAEE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

2024–2027

naaee.org



Vision-Driven, Future-Focused

Environmental education is essential for people, communities, and organizations committed to creating a healthy and sustainable future for all. 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 one another and to the places they care about, helping create healthier communities, a thriving environment, and opportunities for everyone to participate in shaping the future.

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, and other disciplines collaborate to create a better future. We strive to be a lighthouse to individual environmental educators, elevating effective and innovative practice.

Our four-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 advance our goals over the next four years. However, in our rapidly changing field, no plan is ever static. As new challenges and opportunities emerge, we will continue to learn, adapt, and refine our approach. We know that the strongest solutions come from bringing together people with different perspectives, experiences, areas of expertise, and ways of thinking. By remaining curious, collaborative, and flexible, we'll be better equipped to address the environmental and social challenges ahead.



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 Schroeder



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Our Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

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

We envision a world in which:

- Everyone has access to nature and high-quality environmental education.
- 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.
- Innovative leaders in the field reflect the many backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and ways of knowing that strengthen our communities.
- 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 create healthier communities and a thriving planet for all. 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.

BELONGING

We create a welcoming community where people feel valued, respected, and able to contribute their unique perspectives, experiences, and talents.



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.



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.



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

The Way We Work

NAAEE believes that lasting environmental solutions are built through collaboration, curiosity, and a shared commitment to learning. Our values—hope, impact, transformation, community, belonging, collaboration, respect, and curiosity—guide how we work together and how we support the field.

The environmental challenges we face are increasingly complex and interconnected. Addressing them requires people with different perspectives, experiences, areas of expertise, and ways of knowing working together toward common goals. When we listen, learn from one another, and build partnerships across communities and sectors, we develop stronger ideas, make better decisions, and achieve more lasting results.

Whether we're sharing promising practices, supporting educators, developing leaders, building partnerships, or mobilizing action, these values shape the way we work and the impact we strive to achieve.

Looking Ahead

As we continue strengthening our organization and the field of environmental education, we will focus on the following priorities:

- **Foster Community, Belonging, and Collaboration:** Create welcoming environments where people feel respected, connected, and able to contribute their ideas, experiences, and talents. Strengthen partnerships that bring together people from different sectors, disciplines, and communities to advance environmental education.
- **Strengthen Leadership and Professional Learning:** Provide professional learning opportunities that help educators, leaders, and partners expand their knowledge, strengthen their skills, and effectively engage the communities they serve.
- **Broaden Participation:** Continue to grow our membership, partnerships, and leadership by welcoming people with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, expertise, and perspectives, recognizing that stronger representation leads to stronger ideas and better outcomes.
- **Advance Environmental Education:** Champion environmental education as an essential strategy for creating healthier communities, preparing future leaders, strengthening civic engagement, and building a more sustainable future.

Our goal is to build an organization where people feel they belong, are treated with respect, and have opportunities to contribute, learn, and lead. By bringing together people with different backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and expertise, we strengthen our organization and our ability to fulfill NAAEE's mission.



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: © 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



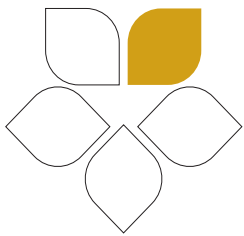
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Strategic Goals & Key Actions

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 thriving communities. Over the four years of this strategy, we will pursue five broad goals.

1. Drive Excellence and Spark Field-Wide Innovation and Impact
2. Strengthen Leadership, Collaboration, and Learning
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 helps set the standard for excellence in environmental education by asking, “What does effective practice look like?” and “How can we strengthen the field to achieve greater impact?”

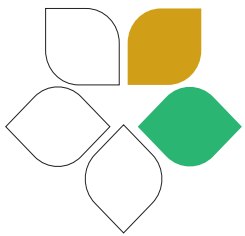
We advance research, professional learning, and innovation, working with our Affiliate Network and partners around the world to promote quality, creativity, cultural relevance, and measurable impact. We invest in leadership, capacity building, and innovation to strengthen the field, expand participation, and ensure that high-quality environmental education reaches and benefits people in every community.

Key Actions

1. Set high standards for the field by building global capacity and supporting high-quality environmental education programs.
2. Strengthen research, evaluation, and innovation by expanding access to evidence-based practices and helping educators and organizations continually improve their work.
3. Invest in people, organizations, and new ideas by providing resources, recognition, credentials, grants, and professional learning that strengthen environmental literacy, civic engagement, leadership, and innovation across the field.



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



Goal 2.

Strengthen Leadership, Collaboration, and Learning

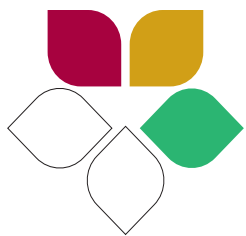
Our civic and environmental health depend on leadership of all forms. NAAEE is committed to building leadership skills and providing opportunities for a diverse cadre of multi-generational learners to grow, share, and innovate. As the champion and backbone organization for the field, we have a responsibility 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 more people, foster a sense of belonging, and attract, connect, and retain leaders at every stage of their careers.

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 that attract and support talented leaders, broaden participation, and create opportunities for everyone to contribute and lead.



CEE Change-Fellow Joy Hayley Munthali with students in Malawi.
Photo: © 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 explore how environmental education can better engage people from all communities while advancing STEM, civic engagement, green jobs, green schools, professional learning, research and evaluation, policy, and other emerging priorities.
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 policy 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 talented team that reflects our values and welcomes a broad range of perspectives, experiences, and expertise.
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 healthy and sustainable future requires us to look for what's working, learn from one another, try new approaches, and collaborate across sectors, disciplines, and communities.

NAAEE works with a wide range of partners to strengthen environmental education, civic engagement, conservation, and healthy communities. We connect early childhood and environmental education; support K–12 schools through professional learning, leadership development, and systems change; and work with colleges, universities, and vocational schools to prepare the next generation of educators and leaders.

Our partnerships also extend to zoos, aquariums, museums, nature centers, conservation organizations, businesses, government agencies, foundations, and community organizations. Together with our Affiliate Network and partners around the world, we share effective practices, build leadership, and strengthen environmental education through collaboration and shared learning.

We also work across fields—including education, science, public health, business, communication, philanthropy, conservation, and community development—to help more people connect with and benefit from environmental education where they live, learn, work, and play.

Our collaborative approach recognizes that the environmental challenges we face are too complex for any one organization or sector to solve alone. By working together, we can build stronger communities, expand opportunities for learning and leadership, and create lasting change.

We invite everyone who shares this vision to join us.

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, and community well-being. Our strategy is a living commitment to create a healthy and sustainable future for all. 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 and cultivates engaged and responsible global citizens.



It's the little things citizens do.
That's what will make the difference.

— Wangari Maathai



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Education We Need for the World We Want