

**Environmental Education and Diversity within a Multicultural Society**  
**JCPS Center for Environmental Education**

**2002/2003**

Environmental problems bear down disproportionately upon the poor, while most environmental pollution and degradation is caused by the actions of those in the rich high-consumption nations; especially by the more affluent groups within those societies. Building a sustainable society, one in which wider questions of social needs, welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally connected to environmental concerns, requires a greater emphasis on equity and a celebration of diversity. By diversity we include race, culture, language, religion, gender, and people with disabilities. Diversity issues are often interwoven with those of poverty. To truly embrace the concept of diversity, the JCPS Center for Environmental Education (EE) and the field of environmental education must do more than work with diverse communities. We must make sure the field itself is more inclusive of peoples of color and address their environmental concerns.

We believe that not only will our work impact the environment, “the environmental justice issues” but the strategies inherent in environmental education can help struggling learners achieve at higher levels. As the work of the Pew Trust’s Environment and Education Roundtable and the national study: “Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context” documents the hands on-minds on community investigation motivates and engages all students to be involved. Howard Gardner recently has added the Naturalist Intelligence to his theory of multiple intelligences. In essence he is saying that the ability to interpret and understand your local environment is key to being a well rounded person.

Many environmental organizations and businesses struggle with implementing initiatives to the fullest extent -- where they appreciate, celebrate, and integrate multicultural perspectives into their programs, policies, hiring, and overall operations. Although the field of Environmental Education has made tremendous strides, we realize that we can do much more. We commit ourselves to reaching the highest possible level of celebrating and appreciating the broad diversity of our community and our school system. Listed below are our current initiatives that focus our work.

1. Ensure that all the programs and materials of the JCPS Center for Environmental Education are culturally inclusive and sensitive.
2. At Blackacre State Nature Preserve develop programs and material that highlight the contributions and the history of African Americans on site.
3. Continue developing environmental education programs that focus on Louisville’s urban core:
  - a. The Urban Watersheds Study Project
  - b. The Tour of Environmental Issues facing Louisville’s west end.

4. Continue working U of L Medical School on Environmental Health and Environmental Justice issues that face Louisville:
  - a. Continue the pilot testing of the Tox Rap curriculum
  - b. Work with Central High School, the Jefferson County Health Department and the U of L Institute for Environmental Health to develop A GIS project tracking environmental health problems of Louisville's west end, cancer, asthma, cardiac, resulting from air pollution.
5. Work with all schools, and Brightside, with a special focus in Louisville's Urban Core to develop outdoor classrooms. This is one way to ensure that students are actively engaged not only beautifying their school's campus, but it would go along way to creating "green islands" throughout our community.
6. Continue offering special supplement summer and year round follow up programs.
  - a. Into the Woods – a special environmental research program focused on middle school at risk girls who have a interest in science.
  - b. Kentucky Nature Writers Camp - Week long summer programs sponsored by ESS and adult education for primary and intermediate students in need of additional assistance in reading and writing.
  - c. Family Resource Center Camps – Working with family resource centers develop weeklong enrichment/remediation summer programs.
7. Annually set aside a full day where the staff of the JCPS Center for Environmental Education can participate in cultural sensitivity training that focuses on knowledge, skills, and awareness as it relates to the culture of the current work and how our individual and unique differences can compliment what we do as an JCPS Employees.

Embedded in the spirit of this document is the notion that the JCPS Center for EE staff must listen to the needs and the voices of our diverse constituents and respond to them. We realize that these steps are a preliminary step, as we gain more experience, we commit ourselves to doing more.