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# INCREASING ACCESS TO IMPACTFUL ENVIRONMENT-BASED LEARNING FOR ALL OF CALIFORNIA'S K-12 STUDENTS

## HOW DO WE GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE THE TOOLS THEY'LL NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

We all want our children to have opportunities—to be healthy, passionate, successful, active, educated, informed, and fulfilled. We want our children to find pathways through which they can excel, and mentors who will provide them with the skills and support necessary to thrive in our changing world.

Understanding our interconnection with each other and our environment is essential to our future, and every student in California—inclusive of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, citizenship status, and socioeconomic status—deserves access to a high-quality K–12 education that cultivates environmental literacy.

Environmental literacy engages students in critical thinking and helps them learn in ways that are relevant to their lives, communities, and the world around them.

By encouraging students to explore their local environments, school administrators and teachers can embrace strategies that encourage hands-on investigation and discovery and can be applied to any subject area. Integrating environmental learning with core subjects helps meet standards-specific educational goals, and creates opportunities for all students to have impactful, meaningful learning experiences.

## ENGAGING, STANDARDS-BASED LESSONS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

CAELI collaborates with state agencies, county offices of education, K–12 districts, and community-based partners to prepare California's students for the future while building their skills in highly engaging settings. When the environment is used as a context



for teaching core subjects, learning is more exciting, effective, and culturally relevant; this cultivates students' understanding of issues that directly affect their lives. We collaborate with administrators like you who work day in and day out to give students the skills they need to deal with critical issues and prepare them for success in school, life, and career.

Together we can support students to become academically successful, engaged, environmentally conscious members of our society who are excited about learning, innovating, and working together to co-create solutions for our future.

## CAELI SUPPORT TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS:

- Connection to resources and academic experts to support planning and implementation of districtwide Environmental Literacy Plans (ELP) that identify—and achieve—district goals
- Resources for infusing environmental literacy into the K–12 curriculum that support mastery of state educational standards in equitable, engaging ways
- Professional learning support from educators, scientists, curriculum and environmental experts

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is environmental literacy?

Environmental literacy is the capacity to act individually and with others to support ecologically sound, economically prosperous, and equitable communities for present and future generations. Through lived experiences and education programs that include classroom-based lessons, experiential education, and outdoor learning, students will become environmentally literate, developing the knowledge, skills, and understanding of environmental principles to analyze environmental issues and make informed decisions. (*California Blueprint for Environmental Literacy*)

### What is the California Environmental Literacy Initiative (CAELI)?

The California Environmental Literacy Initiative creates a system of support in California that enables all students to have local, standards- and environment-based experiences



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that enhance their learning in core subjects inside and outside of the classroom.

By bringing together existing resources, stakeholders, and expertise, CAELI creates collaborations, builds capacity, and transforms systems to increase their impact and sustainability. CAELI works to ensure that teachers have access to high-quality professional learning and instructional materials that address standards and support English language learners. We support professional development opportunities and outdoor education resources, so teachers can provide students with engaging environment-based educational experiences inside and outside the classroom.

## Why is K-12 environmental literacy important for your students?

Environmental literacy has the capacity to positively impact who students become and how they interact with their environment, their communities, and their world. It is a way to support all students in developing the knowledge, understanding, and opportunities that prepare them to meet challenges and fulfill their potential to imagine—and realize—a better world.

Environmental literacy is essential to the future of every student in California, and every student in California—inclusive of race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, citizenship status, and socioeconomic status—deserves access to a high-quality K-12 education that cultivates environmental literacy.

Understanding our environment and human impact is crucial for our individual and collective wellbeing. Environmental literacy cultivates the skills students will need to deal with critical issues and supports their capacity for success in school, life, and career.

By focusing on environmental literacy, we prepare our youth to address environmental challenges like water and air pollution, increased fire risk, drought, and rising sea levels, so that they and future generations can thrive.

## How does CAELI help teachers and administrators implement environmental literacy in classrooms?

We know that as an administrator you have a lot on your plate, and we want to make things easier for you. Environmental literacy integrates the environment with core subjects—supporting you, your schools, your teachers, and your students to meet learning goals and create opportunities for equitable student learning without adding an additional burden.

By encouraging students to explore their local environments, administrators and teachers can embrace strategies that best support student learning. We work with partners throughout California to help administrators accomplish this by providing access to high-quality professional learning experiences—sharing tools and resources that empower administrators and engage students to build key skills while mastering state standards.

## How does CAELI improve the learning environment?

We see the system of public education as capable of serving students, communities, and our society. We focus work at the district level to support administrators, subject matter experts, teachers, and students because that's where change happens. We believe the school district holds space at the heart of community and is entrusted with our most valuable resource: our young people. We celebrate the victories of our partners and recognize the strength of a network working together.

We provide the tools to do things differently. We listen to the needs of the people and districts we serve to co-create environmental learning partnerships and experiences that are based in the communities and places where students live. We work with a generosity of spirit to support academic success and environmental literacy for all students, and prioritize equity by focusing resources on communities who have experienced historic, systemic, and continued barriers to accessing environmental literacy.

## Who does CAELI work with?

CAELI partners with state government, local education agencies, environmental education providers, community members, and funders to make environmental literacy a reality for all California's K-12 students.

## How can teachers, parents and school administrators get involved?

1. **Visit** [ca-eli.org](http://ca-eli.org) for information and helpful tools and resources.
2. **Discuss** environmental literacy with your fellow educators, parents and school administrators using the talking points in this toolkit.
3. **Connect** with local community-based organizations to work with your school.
4. **Contact** CAELI: [info@ca-eli.org](mailto:info@ca-eli.org)