

# Audubon Center of the North Woods Environmental Education Performance Evaluation

## Overview

The Audubon Center of the North Woods defines environmental education as the implementation of values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate citizens who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and the Earth. The overarching goal of environmental education is an environmentally literate citizenry. The test of environmental literacy is the capacity of an individual to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment. This requires sufficient awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to create a healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth.

The Environmental Evaluation (EE) Performance Framework was derived through a review of ACNW’s charter contract, Minnesota’s plan for environmental education, as well as the “Awareness to Action Continuum,” identified in the Tbilisi Declaration (1977) and outlined from left to right below. Also known as the “environmental literacy ladder,” this loose hierarchy lays out the five essential components of environmental literacy. Each area is designed to build on the previous steps, although there may be some overlap.



No single indicator describes the full picture of a school’s environmental focus or performance on its EE-related goals. The performance areas are to be used together to indicate the total picture of the school’s EE efforts. As appropriate, this evaluation should provide guidance for the school on areas of improvement.

This evaluation is informed by data from state assessments, data provided by the school, ACNW site visits to the school, interviews, and other information available to ACNW. Its purpose is to determine the strength and level of the school’s overall environmental focus, as well as progress on contractual goals in the charter contract. Results of this evaluation become part of the body of information used to inform charter school renewal decisions made by the ACNW Board of Directors.

The Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW), as part of the charter contracts with each school we authorize, evaluates each school’s progress towards its environmental education (EE) related goals. Each school is required, as a condition of its contract, to provide opportunities to instill a connection and commitment to the environment through experiential learning. While environmental education is a pervasive educational strategy intended to permeate all curricular components, it is particularly useful in science learning and as a component of other curricula through hands-on, place-based learning activities.

ACNW’s approach to measuring a school’s commitment to and performance of environmental education is evolving. This evaluation framework reflects ACNW’s current established guidelines for determining mission match; however, as the expectations and processes become more defined, the evaluation metrics will reflect that definition. ACNW will work closely with schools during their contract renewal period to clarify the expectations, goals, and reporting procedures.

## Environmental Education Performance Indicators

The Environmental Education Performance Framework includes eight indicators, or general categories, used to evaluate a school’s environmental education performance.

<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<b>Indicator 1: Awareness</b>	Students demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life and the diversity of life that shares the earth with humans.
	<b>Indicator 2: Knowledge</b>	Students have knowledge of how natural systems function and how human systems interact with and depend on them.
	<b>Indicator 3: Attitudes</b>	Students demonstrate respect and concern for the earth’s health and the motivation to participate in environmental stewardship.
	<b>Indicator 4: Skills</b>	Students possess the skills needed to identify and critically analyze environmental issues, and to contribute to resolving the root of environmental challenges.
	<b>Indicator 5: Action</b>	Students have the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to perceive and interpret the health of environmental and social systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems.
<b>INPUTS</b>	<b>Indicator 6: Environmental Education Program</b>	The school implements values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate citizens who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and the Earth.
	<b>Indicator 7: Governance</b>	The board of directors allocates the appropriate financial, human, and organizational resources to carry out environmental education and monitors the school’s progress toward its goals.
	<b>Indicator 8: Operations</b>	Operational decision-making and purchasing, reflects a commitment to environmental sustainability. The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place.

## Ratings

Each measure will receive one of five ratings based on evaluation of the established indicators. Again, no one measure identifies the full picture of a school's operational standing. The measures are to be used together to indicate the total strength of the school's EE program.

### OUTCOMES:

#### **Exceeds Standard**

The school met its contractual goal, implements fully established EE programs, and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

#### **Meets Standard**

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

#### **Approaches Standard**

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided evidence of emergent environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

#### **Does Not Meet Standard**

The school did not meet its contractual goal or did not provide evidence to demonstrate an emergent level of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

### INPUTS:

#### **Well-Developed**

The school's performance is commendable in that it meets or exceeds ACNW's standard.

#### **Approaching Well-Developed**

The school's performance is fundamentally sound in that it contains most aspects of a well-developed practice but requires one or more material modifications to meet ACNW's standard.

#### **Partially Developed**

The school's performance is incomplete in that it contains some aspects of a well-developed practice but is missing key components, is limited in its execution, or otherwise falls short of meeting ACNW's standard.

#### **Minimally Developed**

The school's performance is inadequate in that the school has minimally undertaken the practice or is carrying it out in a way that falls far short of meeting ACNW's standard.

#### **Undeveloped**

The school's performance is wholly inadequate in that the school has not undertaken the practice at all or is carrying it out in a way that is not recognizably connected to ACNW's standard.

## Summary of Environmental Education Performance

Indicator		Rating	
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Indicator Area 1:</b> Awareness		
	<b>Indicator Area 2:</b> Knowledge		
	<b>Indicator Area 3:</b> Attitudes		
	<b>Indicator Area 4:</b> Skills		
	<b>Indicator Area 5:</b> Action		
<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Indicator Area 6:</b> Environmental Education Program	<b>6.1:</b> Curriculum and Instruction	
		<b>6.2:</b> School Culture	
		<b>6.3:</b> Alignment to Mission or Community	
	<b>Indicator Area 7:</b> Governance		
	<b>Indicator Area 8:</b> Operations		



## **EE Performance Indicator 1: Awareness**

### **Standard:**

Students demonstrate an awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life and the diversity of life that shares the earth with humans.

### **School Goal:**

1. Students and staff *NAME OF SCHOOL* have the awareness, or are increasing their awareness, of the relationship between the environment and human life.

### **Rating:**

**Exceeds Standard**

The school met its contractual goal, implements fully established EE programs, and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Meets Standard**

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Approaches Standard**

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Does Not Meet Standard**

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

### **Analysis:**

## **EE Performance Indicator 2: Knowledge**

### **Standard:**

Students have knowledge of how natural systems function and how human systems interact with and depend on them.

### **School Goal:**

1. Students and staff at *NAME OF SCHOOL* have the knowledge, or are increasing their knowledge, of human and natural systems and processes.

### **Rating:**

**Exceeds Standard**

The school met its contractual goal, implements fully established EE programs, and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Meets Standard**

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Approaches Standard**

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Does Not Meet Standard**

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

### **Analysis:**

## **EE Performance Indicator 3: Attitudes**

### **Standard:**

Students demonstrate respect and concern for the earth's health and the motivation to participate in environmental stewardship.

### **School Goal:**

1. Students and staff at *NAME OF SCHOOL* have an attitude, or are increasing their attitude of, appreciation and concern for the environment.

### **Rating:**

**Exceeds Standard**

The school met its contractual goal, implements fully established EE programs, and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Meets Standard**

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Approaches Standard**

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Does Not Meet Standard**

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

### **Analysis:**

## **EE Performance Indicator 4: Skills**

### **Standard:**

Students possess the skills needed to identify and critically analyze environmental issues, and to contribute to resolving the root of environmental challenges.

### **School Goal:**

1. Students and staff at *NAME OF SCHOOL* have or are increasing their problem solving and critical thinking skills as it relates to the environment and human life.

### **Rating:**

**Exceeds Standard**

The school met its contractual goal, implements fully established EE programs, and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Meets Standard**

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Approaches Standard**

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Does Not Meet Standard**

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

### **Analysis:**

## **EE Performance Indicator 5: Action**

### **Standard:**

Students have the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to perceive and interpret the health of environmental and social systems and take appropriate action to maintain, restore, or improve the health of those systems.

### **School Goal:**

1. Students and staff at *NAME OF SCHOOL* demonstrate the capacity, or are increasing their capacity, to work individually and collectively toward sustaining a healthy natural environment.

### **Rating:**

**Exceeds Standard**

The school met its contractual goal, implements fully established EE programs, and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Meets Standard**

The school met its contractual goal and provided evidence of increasing environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Approaches Standard**

The school nearly met its contractual goal and provided some evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

**Does Not Meet Standard**

The school did not meet its contractual goal or provided insufficient evidence of environmental literacy among its students and faculty.

### **Analysis:**

## **EE Performance Indicator 6: Environmental Education Program**

### **Standard:**

The school implements values and strategies that foster learning and create environmentally literate citizens who engage in creating healthy outcomes for individuals, communities, and the Earth.

### **6.1 Curriculum and Instruction**

Environmental education is integrated into the core curricula or used as an integrating theme across the curriculum.

### **Rating:**

**Well-Developed**

The school employs environmental education as a strategy for teaching and learning across the majority of disciplines; ample cross-curricular collaborations are evident.

**Approaching Well-Developed**

The school employs environmental education as a strategy for teaching and learning within its science curriculum and at least one other discipline (e.g. language arts or physical education).

**Partially Developed**

The school employs environmental education as a strategy for teaching and learning within its science curriculum. Its application is not evident in other disciplines.

**Minimally Developed**

The school occasionally teaches concepts related directly to the natural environment but does not employ environmental education as a pervasive educational strategy for teaching and learning in any discipline.

**Undeveloped**

The school does not employ environmental education as a strategy for teaching and learning.

### **Analysis:**

## 6.2 School Culture

The school creates a positive social and academic environment to support students in the process of learning, asking questions and thinking critically about environmental issues and solutions.

### Rating:

**Well-Developed**

Evidence of a school culture of environmental sustainability and stewardship is observable in the classroom, work spaces, and school yard and readily evident when interviewing students, leadership, and faculty.

**Approaching Well-Developed**

Evidence of a school culture of environmental sustainability and stewardship is observable in some classrooms or other areas of the school and evident in most interviews with students, leadership, and faculty.

**Partially Developed**

Evidence of a school culture of environmental sustainability and stewardship is inconsistent and limited across classrooms and individuals.

**Minimally Developed**

Evidence of a school culture of environmental sustainability and stewardship is inadequate or falls far short of satisfying the standard.

**Undeveloped**

All or nearly all students, school leadership, staff, and faculty are unaware of the school's environmental education requirements or are actively resistant to environmental stewardship, sustainability, or education.

### Analysis:

### 6.3 Alignment to Mission or Community

The school adapts environmental education to the needs and unique aspects of the school's educational program or the needs of the school community.

#### Rating:

**Well-Developed**

The school fully integrates environmental education in the majority of school-related activities and events, and is central to mission fulfillment.

**Approaching Well-Developed**

Environmental education values and strategies are readily evident in the school's projects and programs, but not central to its mission fulfillment.

**Partially Developed**

Environmental education values and strategies are evident in some of the school's projects and programs, but not central to its mission fulfillment and limited in execution.

**Minimally Developed**

The school has minimally undertaken environmental education or is carrying it out in a way that is not relevant to its mission or community.

**Undeveloped**

The school does not implement any aspect of environmental education in projects and programs related to mission fulfillment or community service.

#### Analysis:

## **EE Performance Indicator 7: Governance**

### **Standard:**

The board of directors allocates the appropriate financial, human, and organizational resources to carry out environmental education and monitors the school's progress toward its goals.

### **Rating:**

#### **Well-Developed**

The school meets four or more of the following criteria:

- The board of directors allocates appropriate funding to implement an environmental education program, as evidenced by the school budget and budget discussion recorded in the board meeting minutes;
- The board of directors monitors the school's progress toward its EE goals at a minimum quarterly, as evidenced by board meeting minutes;
- Discussions about facilities, food program, transportation, schoolyard, and purchasing include consideration for environmental sustainability, as evidenced by board meeting minutes;
- The school's mission statement indicates a strong commitment to EE principles or practices;
- Staff and faculty receive appropriate training to implement the school's environmental education and recycling programs; and
- The school has systems in place to track its progress toward increasing student, faculty, and school leader environmental literacy.

#### **Approaching Well-Developed**

The school meets three of the criteria listed above.

#### **Partially Developed**

The school meets two of the criteria listed above.

#### **Minimally Developed**

The school meets one of the criteria listed above.

#### **Undeveloped**

The school meets none of the criteria listed above.

### **Analysis:**

## **EE Performance Indicator 8: Operations**

### **Standard:**

Operational decision-making by school leadership, staff, and faculty reflects a commitment to environmental sustainability. The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place.

### **Rating:**

#### **Well-Developed**

The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place and provides ample, observable evidence that its decision-making and operations reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability in four or more of the following areas:

- Facilities (e.g. lowering energy costs, refillable water bottle stations, low-VOC cleaners)
- Food (e.g. locally sourced food, low or no waste packaging, ort collection, composting)
- Schoolyard and outdoor areas (e.g. school garden, native plantings)
- Transportation (e.g. incentivizing carpools or biking, offset carbon footprint of buses)
- Purchasing (e.g. purchasing office supplies made from recycled materials, contracting with low-impact service providers, ensuring end-of-life recycling for purchases)
- Teacher training (e.g. school-wide or individual professional development, EE in PLCs)

#### **Approaching Well-Developed**

The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place and meets three of the criteria listed above.

#### **Partially Developed**

The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place and meets two of the criteria listed above.

#### **Minimally Developed**

The school has a waste reduction and recycling program in place and meets one of the criteria listed above.

#### **Undeveloped**

The school does not have a waste reduction and recycling program in place or does not meet any of the criteria listed above.

### **Analysis:**