

# Networking among environmental educators in NYC:

Current status and desired outcomes



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How do environmental educators benefit and what do they expect in the future from networking in EEAC (Environmental Education Advisory Council)?

## Introduction

This project used Action Research to explore the benefits of networking among environmental educators in EEAC, NYC.

### Environmental Education Advisory Council (EEAC)

- Non-profit organization, since 1974
- Members: 150 environmental educators, youth leaders, environmental professionals and students
- Goals: influence EE policy and support professional development of environmental educators

## Research questions

- What are the benefits of networking among environmental educators in NYC?
- What are the future desired outcomes of networking?

## Methods

- Action Research approach (Greenwood and Levin, 2006). Members of EEAC participated in identifying research questions important to bring positive changes in their organization, and took part in analyzing the data.
- Data were collected through semi-structured interview with 14 randomly chosen EEAC members.

## Results

City-wide networking provides environmental educators the following benefits:

*(number of interviewees who mentioned these benefits; total number = 14)*

### Emotional support

- Feeling part of a larger community (8)

### Opportunities for professional development

- Learn how to teach EE (8)
- Learn about other workshops and conferences (7)
- Learn how to organize EE (6)
- Develop content knowledge (3)

### Resources and tools to achieve educators' goals

- Collaboration with other network participants (7)
- Getting information about grants (7)
- Learning about EE facilities in NYC (3)

In the future EEAC members would like to:

Make participation in EEAC even more worthwhile (7)

Increase and diversify membership (8)

Build stronger collaboration between EE institutions through panels and events (4)

Conduct social activities (4)

## Discussion

Important results of this Action Research were:

- Helping environmental educators in EEAC reflect about the impact of their organization on their professional development, and
- Facilitating a discussion within this organization about the trajectory of future development of EEAC.

High level of importance of "emotional support" within EEAC was an unexpected outcome, but resonates with published literature regarding educators' need for peer support because they often feel isolated from other educators (Bodzin and Park, 2002; Toback, 2002).

Focus on professional development and updating knowledge is also highly important for members in EEAC because subject matter, teaching approaches, and teaching resources change constantly.

Interviews indicated that inclusivity and diversity of membership is a priority for EEAC, similar to diversity policy in NAAEE (Monroe, 2007).

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