

**TEACHING NATURALLY:  
THE INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION  
INTO RHODE ISLAND SCHOOLS**

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## ABSTRACT

Environmental education is an educational process that aims to create environmentally literate citizens. It can be effectively integrated into a classroom using a teaching strategy that incorporates the goals and educational philosophy of environmental education, the developmental stages of the students, and the environmental education resources that are available to the teachers and students. Numerous environmentally-related educational opportunities for teachers and students are sponsored by state agencies and private organizations in Rhode Island. A grassroots network of enthusiastic and dedicated educators supports an effort to integrate environmental education into the schools of Rhode Island. Few teachers in Rhode Island currently carry out the process of environmental education in their classrooms. A mandate is likely to increase the number of teachers who address environmental education in their lessons, however, an attempt to integrate environmental education into all schools in Rhode Island must also include an effort to coordinate environmental education statewide.

An Office of Environmental Education would provide the formal leadership, coordination, and commitment to environmental education which Rhode Island currently lacks. The Office would be staffed by a Coordinator, an Assistant Coordinator, and a Secretary. The primary duties of the staff would be to promote environmental education in Rhode Island schools and to provide consultation to local educators. The Office would cosponsor all workshops and conferences in Rhode Island regarding environmental education. A Resource Library would contain resources and materials for teachers. An Environmental Education Fund would provide funding for schools to purchase materials and for students and

teachers to participate in environmental education opportunities. The Office could be funded through the annual state budget, a dedicated tax on packaging materials, or grant monies. The Office of Environmental Education should be located in a centralized state agency such as the Department of Environmental Management, the Department of Education, or the University of Rhode Island - College of Continuing Education. The implementation plan proposes a strategy for establishing the Office of Environmental Education within two to three years. Implementation would require a dedicated and cooperative effort on behalf of all individuals committed to environmental education in Rhode Island.