



**ARIZONA  
ASSOCIATION FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION**



## **MINI COURSE SYLLABUS**

The Arizona Environmental Education Certification Program sets specific standards of knowledge, skills, and experience that highly qualified Environmental Educators in Arizona should be able to demonstrate. It is a competency-based program – one where the applicant will demonstrate what they know and can do by building an online portfolio. The competencies for Certification are based on the NAAEE Guidelines for Excellence in Environmental Education, and Arizona's Framework for Environment Concepts and Themes (AFECT).

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## About the Arizona Environmental Education Certification Program

The Arizona Environmental Education Basic Level Certification Program is a self-paced, professional development course aimed at formal and non-formal educators. This course will build capacity to provide high quality environmental education whether a formal teacher in a K-12 classroom or university, a non-formal educator in a nature setting, or informally teaching about the environment at a place of employment or enjoyment. The course helps to develop a portfolio that illustrates the applicant's competence in environmental education.

Environmental Education (EE) is provided for a variety of age groups in a variety of settings. Environmental Education can be done in formal (academic) settings or non-formal (recreational) settings or informally (on the spot). Environmental education is interdisciplinary, bringing together many learning standards from the sciences to math to artistic expression to social-emotional skills. EE providers often develop specialty niches around age groups, places, issues, and approaches. Whether new to the field of environmental education or an experienced provider, this course will build on current skills and knowledge, expand network of providers and resources, and help to develop strong foundations in environmental literacy.

All documentation and communication will be done online using the Maricopa Community College Canvas course website. Some assignments include physically observing environmental education locally. Participants are also provided options to connect with each other in forums and study groups. Educator cohorts are encouraged to collaborate, however work is assessed individually.

The national environmental education standards developed by the North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) are defined in the Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators (2010) and Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12) (2010). This course is designed to equip educators with the knowledge, skills and abilities outlined in NAAEE's guidelines for professional environmental educators in order to integrate the environmental education standards outlined in the Guidelines for K-12 Learning with Arizona's state standards.

As a certified environmental educator, participants are part of a network of high quality providers developing an environmentally literate citizenry. Together, we uplift the profession, our students, and the planet.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the AAEE Environmental Education Certification course, participants will develop a portfolio to showcase their competency in delivering effective environmental education supporting their mastery in the environmental education competencies and:

- Demonstrating increased confidence and ability to provide quality environmental education,
- Identifying effective environmental education resources,
- Building connections with a wider environmental education community.

## Competencies

Please read and review the competencies below. These are located in the Canvas Course under Modules → Aligned Competencies.

- **North American Association for Environmental Education Core Competencies** based on *NAAEE's Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators*.
- **Arizona Association for Environmental Education Core Competencies of Environmental Educators**, which complement, but do not replace, the NAAEE competencies.
- **Arizona Framework for Environmental Concepts and Themes (AFECT)** which further support and articulate expectations toward mastery of environmental literacy in Arizona.

Participants are encouraged to not only read the competencies, but also find ways to integrate them into learning and apply them to teaching. Many of the assignments will prompt participants to align with these core competencies. For each assignment, consider those specific core competencies. Participants are encouraged to critically examine these competencies by discussing them with peers and/or the reviewers and implementing them into work and teaching.

## Assignment Descriptions

The following is an overview and short description of each assignment. See the corresponding assignment page in Canvas for detailed information of how to complete the assignments.

1. **Environmental Education and You:** Provide a brief introduction of your interest, education, and experience in education and the environment, and what you hope to gain from this course.
2. **The History of Environmental Education:** Provide a brief overview of the history of environmental education, highlighting some of the important historical influences on the EE field today (two minimum), briefly describing the impact of each.
3. **Environmental Education and Policy:** Provide two examples of how a local, state or federal policy or legislation impacts your day-to-day work in environmental education.
4. **Natural and Cultural Processes in Your Bioregion:** Many natural and cultural processes shape a landscape's ecology, or bioregion. For this assignment, conduct some brief research about your bioregion. Reflect and respond to the following questions: What natural and cultural processes define your bioregion? What interaction between a natural process and a cultural process helped shape your bioregion?
5. **Recognizing Bias:** Bias is a common issue environmental educators must address in order to ensure that teaching and learning is comprehensive. To gain a better understanding of the controversy of bias in environmental education, read the attached article and identify the words or phrases that skew or slant the information.
6. **Educate or Advocate?:** Identify and describe your own Environmental Ethic. Summarize any environmental issue and identify any bias that associated with that issue and the

sources of that bias. How do you as an educator advocate for environmental responsibility without having bias direct your instruction?

7. **Code of Ethics:** Read and acknowledge your acceptance of the Arizona Environmental Educator Code of Ethics and reflect on how the content applies to you.
8. **Evaluation of Teaching Materials:** Part 1: Assess five materials at an environmental education teaching center for their age appropriateness. Part II: Visit two (2) environmental education providers in the state of Arizona.
9. **Environmental Education Program Observation:** Conduct one full-length observation and two formative observations (15-20 minutes) of environmental educators in-person or online.
10. **Environmental Education Discussions:** An environmental educator will likely have many formal and informal discussions about environmental education weekly, if not every day. For this assignment, show evidence of respectful participation in a minimum of four (4) electronic or in-person discussions (conversations, forums, meetings, or groups) related to environmental education.
11. **Lesson Plan Development—Issue Analysis:** Develop a unique lesson that incorporates issue analysis. Issue analysis looks at an issue from two or more points of view, then develops a reasoned response. Factual material is used in support of opinions.
12. **Lesson Plan Development—Inquiry Method:** Develop a unique lesson that employs the inquiry method. Inquiry Method is a student-centered method of education focused on asking questions. Students are encouraged to ask questions which are meaningful to them, and which do not necessarily have easy answers; teachers are encouraged to avoid giving answers when this is possible, and in any case to avoid giving direct answers in favor of asking more questions.
13. **Demonstration of Teaching:** Demonstrate teaching abilities for observation and scoring using an environmental education lesson plan of your choice (may also be the one that you create for Assignment A10 or 11).
14. **Demonstration of Teaching Reflection:** Reflect upon the teaching experience in Assignment A13, including post-assessment and evaluation. Review and reflect upon the comments made by your observer.
15. **Professional Growth Opportunities:** Identify and describe examples of several types of environmental education professional growth opportunities. Choose three professional growth opportunities from the above that you plan to pursue within the next two years. Describe the benefits of each of these to your professional growth.
16. **Letter of Recommendation:** Acquire a letter of recommendation from a current or former employer who can attest to your competency in environmental education.
17. **Capstone:** The capstone assignment is designed to synthesize your learning experiences during this course. Write a reflection essay drawing on your experiences and the EE competencies from the previous course assignments.

## Non-discrimination Policy

AAEE is committed to providing all members with the organization free of all types of harassment and discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, gender, physical or mental disability or veteran status. It is our policy to insist that all members be treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy. AAEE prohibits and will not tolerate such unlawful harassment or discrimination by those who do business with AAEE. All complaints of harassment or discrimination will be thoroughly, promptly, and objectively investigated.