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Green Schools Newsletter

The Notebook: Environmental Aesthetics

How do we learn to understand and appreciate the aesthetic qualities found in natural environments?

In BC's [Environmental Learning & Experience Guide](#) one of the four principles outlined for conceptualizing environmental awareness is aesthetic appreciation. The authors write that aesthetics deals with beauty, artistic expression, and our physiological responses to these. They note that environmental education helps students to develop an aesthetic sense of respect and appreciation for the natural world through study, physical challenges, and other experiences in nature.

Aesthetic appreciation helps students and adults to care for and sustain the environment, and it also contributes to self-awareness and personal fulfilment.

Both artists and thinkers often seek insight and enrichment by immersing themselves in the natural world. Aesthetic appreciation encourages the sense of uniqueness and beauty of nature and is also the impetus for many forms of creative expression.

Landscapes, plants and animals have been subjects of the visual arts since human artistic expression began. Such art often reflects a respect for the land and for all living things. Either consciously or subconsciously it encourages the maintenance of a healthy environment.

Students in BC now have a great opportunity to apply creativity through their art while showing how environmental issues impact their lifestyle. A province-wide Earth Day Art Show, sponsored by the provincial government and Arts Council of Surrey, is open to all students in Grades 9-12.

The goals are to promote [Earth Day](#) values, increase youth awareness about environmental issues and showcase youth talent in the visual arts. Cash prizes will be presented to the top three students and 50 finalists will have their art exhibited at the Newton Cultural Centre in Surrey during the month of April.

More information about this Earth Day student art competition, including show criteria and product requirements, can be found under the Earth Day Art Show & Competition 'terms of reference': www.artscouncilofsurrey.ca

Please contact Marc Pelech pelech_m@sd36.bc.ca if your school is interested in having one or more students submit artwork. All submissions must be received by March 11.

Ministry Update

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and encouraging sustainable school operations reduces the environmental footprint of our schools. All 60 school districts have signed the province's [Climate Action Charter](#) which enables them to be fully reimbursed for carbon taxes paid each calendar year.

By signing the Charter, Boards acknowledged that climate change and greenhouse gas emissions are important issues for the education system. They also agreed to submit data on their carbon emissions to the province. The 2010 calendar year is the first year that school districts are required by legislation to submit their data using the government's SMARTTool system. The use of SMARTTool will also allow districts to make decisions about energy use based on standardized data.

With the use of SMARTTool there is no longer a need to submit carbon tax data on a separate form. Carbon taxes paid for purchase of fuels will be calculated automatically using data entered.

Teachers: Are you looking for support in teaching about the environment?

Find out more about the Environmental Educators PSA at: www.bctf.ca/eepsa/



...Ministry Update

All districts must enter their SMARTTool data for fuels purchased in 2010 by February 25 so that the Ministry can reimburse carbon taxes by the end of the government's fiscal year which is March 31.

Districts who have not yet received their natural gas or propane billing data for December may enter a conservative estimate for the month and enter an adjustment once the data is available.

Carbon offsets for calendar year 2010 must be purchased by March 31 as stipulated in the province's Greenhouse Gas Reduction legislation. Districts complete the Carbon Offset Purchase form found on the SMARTTool website and send their payment to Pacific Carbon Trust. Districts are reminded that they receive a carbon tax rebate on school bus fuel purchases, but do not have to purchase carbon offsets for emissions from buses.

Carbon Neutral Action Reports are also due by March 31. New to the report this year is a place to enter greenhouse gas emissions as reported in SMARTTool. The total emissions must be reported as well as a breakdown by fleet, buildings and supplies. Once again this year, districts can highlight their broader sustainability and green initiatives in the Overview section. The 2010 report template and instructions can be found at: www.livesmartbc.ca/cnar/index.html

School District Spotlight: Sooke

The Sooke School District on Vancouver Island has undertaken many steps towards reducing energy use and implementing environmental stewardship programs in schools. A number of years ago the district entered into an agreement with service providers to help lower energy consumption at each school. This partnership resulted in central heating controls and lighting upgrades at most schools.

In 2008 the district partnered with BC Hydro to create an energy manager position. The role of the energy manager is both to raise awareness about energy issues, and to identify and implement energy conservation projects. Their energy manager has been very active in working with schools and students on these projects.

...School District Spotlight: Sooke

The district also performs an annual energy management assessment/audit to highlight key areas of energy conservation. This has led to reduced energy consumption which helps to counterbalance rising utility costs.

Currently the district is working with Destination Conservation on a three year behaviour education program for students with a focus on energy, waste and water reduction. The program is running in 16 out of 22 schools in the district. In the first two years a 'lights out' campaign resulted in saving over 350,000 kilowatts of electricity which has saved the district \$30,000 for the two school years. Half of the avoided cost was returned to the participating schools to encourage further conservation initiatives.

Additional green activities in the district have included: walk to schools days, a Garry Oak restoration project, participation in an annual Earth Day community clean up, an anti garbage campaign, and a number of school specific green events.

Han Helgesen Elementary won a BC Green Games award last year for telling their story about reducing school energy and water usage. In one year they managed to reduce their school's electrical consumption by more than 17%.

BC Green Games

Submit your project now!

Schools across the province have been busy for months creating environmental action projects and documenting their hard work for a chance to win big prizes in the third year of Science World British Columbia's BC Green Games.

"We love watching the submissions start to roll in," says Pauline Finn, Science World's vice president of Community Engagement. "It's so exciting to see the difference that kids are making in their communities and how passionate they are about environmental initiatives. We can all learn so much from them."

When winners are announced this April, over \$20,000 in prizes will be awarded.



Students from Riverdale Elementary School in Surrey receiving their Certificate of participation in the 2010 Green Games Celebration at Science World.

To send comments and ideas for future issues or to add your name to our

mailing list, email:

educ.greenschools@gov.bc.ca

or visit us online at

www.bced.gov.bc.ca/greenschools

BC Green Games

BC Green Games was launched in 2008 as the first province-wide environmental contest for K–12 schools. Over the past two years, nearly 250 projects were submitted and are now showcased in the BC Green Games [online gallery](#). Entries include PowerPoint presentations, videos and pictures of projects such as recycling programs, garbage audits and community cleanups.

Draw inspiration from the hard and creative work of BC students by viewing [past](#) and present entries on the website. Also a valuable resource for students, parents, families and communities, the website will spark your imagination as you see all the possibilities of sustainable action.

The online project submission period is February 1–March 1, 2011, and student groups from all over BC are encouraged to participate. Submissions are judged by environmental education and science education experts based on demonstration of environmental responsibility, creative problem solving, and clear communication about the project. A public voting session, beginning March 1, will determine the additional winners of two prizes for elementary teams and two prizes for secondary teams.

Science World manages BC Green Games with input from youth, government, school district, university, science and environmental education community partners. Presenting sponsors are BC Hydro and Terasen Gas with additional support from the Ministry of Education.

Events

February 15. Richmond Science Jam at the Richmond Centre Mall 3:30–6:30 pm. *Featuring projects in Sustainability & the Environment.*

February 17. Institute for Environmental Learning—Launch and Open House. At The Roundhouse in Vancouver 5:00–7:00 pm. *RVSP by February 10: carleyk@sfu.ca*

February 23–24. [East Kootenay Regional Science Fair.](#) *Featuring projects under the Earth & Environmental category.*

February 25–26. [BCTF New Teachers' and Student Teachers' Conference.](#) *Featuring workshops in social justice and environmental education.*

March 12. [Central Interior Science Exhibition.](#) *Featuring projects under the Earth & Environmental category.*

March 29–April 1. [Fraser Valley Regional Science Fair.](#) *Featuring projects under the Earth & Environmental category.*

SCIENTIST IN RESIDENCE Program



Resources: Scientist in Residence

In the [Scientist in Residence](#) program, scientists and elementary school teachers work together to develop and deliver science units comprised of hands-on lessons on specific themes. There is a major focus on the experimental process of science. Opportunities are created to link lessons to other curriculum areas such as math, fine arts, and language arts. Many lessons focus on environmental issues facing society such as marine pollution, climate change, soil erosion, biodiversity, and the importance of protecting ecosystems. The *Scientist in Residence* program lesson plans support the BC science curriculum for K – 7.

