

PRESS RELEASE



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Environmental Education Association of Illinois Releases eeGuidance for School Reopening in Illinois

- Outdoor classrooms offer opportunities for schools and districts reopening amidst COVID-19
- Environmental Education programs can help expand the classroom outside of the school building
- Environmental educators and programs can support teaching and learning in challenging times

Illinois - Environmental Education Association of Illinois today released *eeGuidance for Reopening Schools*, a new publication which offers support for schools and districts as they find ways to safely reopen their schools to students this fall. Developed in collaboration with the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), the guidance offers dozens of specific strategies for schools and districts, including using the school grounds for outdoor classroom spaces as a strategy for adhering to physical distancing guidelines, engaging community environmental and outdoor education programs as alternative spaces for learning, tapping into the expertise of environmental educators to support teaching and learning, creating healthier learning environments and supporting at-home learning.

“Educators throughout Illinois are facing a daunting task of evolving their classroom instruction to work within the guidelines provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of Education. By building collaborations between non-formal education facilities and formal educators’, resources can be leveraged in ways we haven’t thought of before. Environmental educators are ready to support schools in any way that they need. EEAI would love to utilize our extensive network to help make those connections and build collaborations”, Abbie Enlund, EEAI Executive Director.

As stated in the *eeGuidance*, “These organizations can and should be essential partners in supporting schools and families as states begin to reopen schools. As with any strategy, these recommendations are not without hurdles, nor will they fully address all of the challenges facing schools. But environmental and outdoor education programs present some promising tools for schools and districts throughout the U.S. and are essential partners in creating a more just and sustainable future for all.”

The “*eeGuidance for Reopening Schools*” can be found on the EEAI website – www.eeai.net. The Environmental Education Association of Illinois will be gathering information from non-formal facilities on virtual programming they will have available for schools this Fall and other opportunities for support. To find out more about these resources please visit <https://www.eeai.net/covid-19-educator-resources.html>.

About Environmental Education Association of Illinois

EEAI was founded in 1972 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. The organization is run by a volunteer board of directors and is a group of committed and concerned citizens that care about the environment and education. EEAI’s mission is to maintain a vital network that supports and advances quality environmental education throughout the state. Providing and promoting equitable access to high-quality, standards-aligned environmental education professional development to educators throughout the state of Illinois is one way that EEAI works to fulfill that mission. Through regional events throughout the year, an annual state-wide conference, online webinars and networking opportunities EEAI can bring needed knowledge and resources to Illinois educators. EEAI is the Illinois state host and professional development provider for the nationally renowned Project Learning Tree and Project WILD: curriculum programs. WWW.EEAI.NET