



Educator Guide

EL4IL Background Information

EL4IL was written by over 40 environmental educators over the course of 18 months in 2020-2021. Partners on this project determined through strategic planning sessions and focus group listening sessions that the field of environmental education, specifically here in Illinois, could use a foundational professional development document that would help provide educators with a baseline of common knowledge and shared language around key issues within environmental literacy. This document would also include a wealth of local resources, contacts and examples to help provide easily accessible ways for practitioners to increase their environmental education programming and outreach.

EL4IL is meant to be used with current environmental education practitioners within both the formal and non-formal education sectors, as well as pre-service educators pursuing both formal and non-formal education careers. Two options for how to incorporate EL4IL into a professional development learning environment are provided within this document.

EL4IL Workshop Learning Objectives

Participants will:

1. have an understanding of environmental literacy and be able to define this concept in their own words.
2. understand basic definitions of justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility and how those relate to and impact the environmental education field.
3. be able to identify one new IL based resource or service that they could utilize to help increase environmental education programming within their facility or classroom.

Synchronous Professional Development Workshop

It is recommended that participants review EL4IL prior to attending an educator workshop, at least chapters 1 and 2, but it is possible to attend and participate without having reviewed the material. Briefly share with participants a bit about how EL4IL was developed, the goals for the project and how the authors intend for the document to be used.

Discussion Questions and Activities to Address Objective One -

Defining Enviro Lit (35 min - 45 min)

- **(5 min)** Intro and framing for activity, share the platform or method that share out will take place in. Let folks know they will be working to build a collaborative definition of EL.
 - Virtual platform (ex: Jamboard, Nearpod or Mentimeter)
 - In Person - Post it notes and larger poster (for larger groups perhaps have two posters to add to?)
- **(7 min)** Folks work to share their ideas on the chosen platform
- **(15 min)** Work as a whole group or small groups (if more than 20 people would do this in smaller groups using breakout rooms) have folks begin grouping and organizing the shared ideas to identify themes and ideas. If in small groups they should come back to share their thoughts. *(If in person, recommend small groups take a photo of the board to discuss in small groups)*
 - Questions to discuss:
 - Is anything missing
 - Is concept/idea more heavily discussed/brought up
 - Is anything problematic after review?
- **(5-10 min)** *Only if small groups, have spokesperson from each group share out their summary*
- **(3 min)** Have a volunteer read the formal definition from EL4IL
- **(5 min)** Ask participants to share their thoughts on the definition, do they think it captures the definition they came to earlier? Do they think anything is missing?

Exploring the 7 Tenets Of Enviro Lit (Option 1) best for experienced educators (45 min)

Prior to the session have the 7 tenets written out on big poster paper

- **(5 min)** Intro the 7 Tenets and their value to successful EL programming (have folks go to Chapter 5 OR print out pages 49 and 50 from the packet)
- **(5 min)** Ask participants to share out
 - Which of these tenets do you feel like you are currently successful or could be successful in implementing with your students?

- Which of these tenets do you think you would need the most support in?
- **(20 min)** Hand out a post-it note pack to each participant and ask them to share out resources, activities, or local/state/national programs that they have used in the past that could help support. Encourage folks to continue to visit each tenet even if they don't have more to add to see what others have added. They should add a (+) on post-its if they have also used that resource and a checkmark for ones they would like to hear more about. Explain that these will be collected and shared with the group so that they can have a selection of possible resources to use in the future.
 - *This might take time so let folks know to take their time and think about things they have used before. Encourage them to use their phones or tablets if they need to look up or search for something they have used in the past.*
 - *As participants are adding to the boards, facilitators should be looking for post-its with multiple checkmarks. These will be asked for contributors to share out after.*
- **(10 min)** Using the identified post-its with the most checkmarks, ask if the person who shared it would be willing to share more about the resource and how it connects to the Tenet. Try to do one from each tenet if possible, if time is limited focus on the tenets that most folks mentioned as being ones they need the most support in.
- **(5 min)** Wrap up and final questions or thoughts. Let participants know that there will be a follow up with the resources shared or if they want them now they can take photos of the poster boards.

Exploring the 7 Tenets (Option 2) For Pre Service Teachers (1 hour 45 minutes)

- **(5 min)** Intro the 7 Tenets and their value to successful EL programming (have folks go to Chapter 5 OR print out pages 49 and 50 from the packet)
- **(10 min)** Divide the group into 7 similarly sized groups. Assign each of the groups one of the seven tenets. Let groups know they will be using their computers or tablets to identify resources, organizations or activities that could support their assigned tenet.
 - *If groups are from vastly different regions in IL and may not serve the same communities, it may be useful to have an example completed for tenet 1 that addresses a variety of communities that groups can explore as an example.*
- **(40 min)** Group work time, have some format for groups to collect their data. This information will be shared with the whole group so all participants can access and review it in the future.
 - *It may be worthwhile to create a digital asset for groups to add to, this way all of the information will be easier to share and groups can include hyperlinks to websites and resources for folks to further review.*
 - *Have a list of websites and resources for participants to be able to start with*
 - NAAEE
 - EEAI

- *Forest Preserve Districts*
 - *Zoo and Aquarium Programs*
 - *Park District Programs*
 - *Beetles Project*
- **(10 min) Break**
- **(35 min)** Allow each group 5 minutes to share out some of their favorite resources that they found.
- **(5-10 min)** Wrap up and final questions from the group.

Discussion Questions and Activities to Address Objective Two

Activity Options - JEDIA Exploration (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility)

- **Option 1 (45 minutes)**
 - **(5 min)** Ask folks to share out action words that they associate with environmental education, the outdoors or nature.
 - Create a list as folks share out
 - **(15 min)** Ask individuals or pairs (depending on the group size) to pick one of those words and on their device (computer or phone) Google “People ‘Action Word’ ” Ask them to look at only Images in the search and review the first 15-20 images that come back.
 - Have individuals write a summary of what they found in those images. How would they describe what they observed? What narrative do they get from these images?
 - **(5-10 min)** Have groups or individuals share their summary.
 - **(10 min)** Share the definitions for DEAIJ as defined by EL4IL.
 - Go back through your images now with a lens of JEDIA. What is missing? Who is not represented?
 - **(10-15 min)** Ending message/discussion questions - After looking at these images associated with the outdoors and nature through a lens of JEDIA:
 - Why do you think it’s important that we as educators are aware of JEDIA when we connect with our audiences?
 - What impact could we as educators have if we successfully engage in all of these letters in the environmental education space?
- **Option 2 (45 minutes)**- Break into 5 groups and randomly assign each group one of the 5 “letters”

- Have groups read/review the EEAI definition/introduction to these terms from the EL4IL
 - **(25 minutes)** - Have each group create a poster or infographic to explore this term. Posters should include
 - A motto or short phrase to summarize their letter
 - An image that represents their letter
 - Misconceptions about their letter
 - 1-2 examples of ways their letter can be addressed in a classroom or program (avoid examples from reading if possible)
 - Challenges or Struggles in successfully engaging in their letter
 - **(10 min)** Stick post-it posters around the room and explore gallery walk style. Others can add to the implementation section and the challenges section using smaller post-its.
 - **(10 min)** Regroup and allow time for discussion about highlights or questions.
- **Option 3 (25 minutes)** - Present the 5 letters to the group and brief definitions of each.
 - Have large poster post-its with each term on them around the room. Participants move through the room and can add their own thoughts, questions and ideas **(10 min)**
 - **Pink post-its** - Misconceptions about the letter
 - **Yellow post-its** - Best practices or examples of engagements that acknowledge the letter
 - **Blue post-its** - Struggles or confusion about the letter
 - Regroup and Discuss **(15 min)**
 - Circulate as groups fill in posters and search for themes or big topics to bring back during the discussion

Discussion Questions and Activities to Address Objective Three

Further Learning Exploration (50 minutes)

- **(5 min)** Welcome and Intro - Share out the purpose of and the location of the various “Further Learning” sections and resources within the EL4IL.
- **(15 min)** Discuss and provide information on the various resources as well as a quick summary of what they provide. Between each resource allow participants to ask questions or share ways they have used the resource in the past.
 - ENTICE (pg 10)

- EEAI (pg 13)
- NAAEE (pg 29) - consider covering last and then segue into the next activity
- Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation K-12 Solar and Wind Programs (pg 31)
- IL Green Ribbon Schools (pg 36)
- IL Agriculture in the Classroom (pg 38)
- IL EPA office of Enviro Ed (pg 47)
- **(5 min)** Ask participants if they have any other resources they have used in the past and provide space for them to share how they used it. Wrap up and move on to the next activity. For pre-service educators, have them share ideas or examples of how they might envision using these resources with students.
- **(10 min)** Review the approaches to environmental education implementation found in chapter 3 (pgs 32-37).
- **(15 min)** Ask participants what experience they have had, either as an educator or as a student, with any of these approaches.
 - Are they currently using any of these approaches within their instruction?
 - As pre-service educators, which are they most interested in utilizing in their teaching?
 - Which areas do they feel they need more support or instruction in?

Deeper Exploration of NAAEE Education Guidelines (70 minutes)

- **(5 min)** Introduce NAAEE as a resource and share out the variety of Guidelines for Excellence that have been written. Let folks know we will be exploring the K-12 version.
- **(15 min)** Introduce a summary of the information presented in [pg 8 - 20 of NAAEE Excellence Guide](#), if time is short, a focus on the strands is important here.
- **(5 min)** Have groups divide up by grade band after intro to explore the document more deeply (print out those sections OR have folks access them on their tablet). If grade band groups will be larger than 5 individuals create multiple groups per band.
 - Grades K-4
 - Grades 5-8
 - Grades 9-12
- **(30 min)** Have smaller groups move through their grade band reading. Provide groups with a large piece of poster paper to add their notes and thoughts
 - Task 1: Groups should read through and individuals should identify which of the strands or practices they have had success with and which they need more support in. Group members should feel free to support peers and share resources that have helped folks meet the areas of need.

- Task 2: Groups should review known resources (shared earlier) to identify which might help support various practices/strands, use the guiding questions below to help drive conversation.
 - What examples here in Illinois do they have for how this approach can be implemented?
 - What resources do they know of that support this approach?
 - What additional resources or services do they feel would benefit the implementation of this approach?
 - Where do participants feel these approaches might fit in with IL learning standards?
 - Is there a way to incorporate this work within NGSS?
- Task 3: Groups should prepare to share out what they have learned and what they still need support in. Individuals within groups are encouraged to identify one change or resource they plan to try to bring into their classroom.
- **(15 min)** Groups share out things they learned as well as sharing out some of the actions or changes folks in their group plan to implement.

Asynchronous Professional Development Activity

EL4IL is a great resource to use as a foundation or background informational piece for pre-service educators as well as students going into non-formal education and community outreach career fields. It can be assigned to students as an asynchronous reading assignment and then a reflection activity or follow-up assignment can accompany the reading.

Ideas for the reflective assignment are provided here.

1. In your own words define environmental literacy.
2. How does your definition reflect similarities from the one that was presented in Chapter 1?
3. How does your definition differ from the one that was presented in Chapter 1?
4. Research one of the Further Learning resources in EL4IL. What did you find as meaningful? How could you use this resource (or ideas from this resource) or a service they provide with students in your classroom?
5. Read the Case Studies in EL4IL. Take a look at the organization online. Is there a way that you could envision replicating their program or ideas within your own community? Why or Why not? Are there any similar programs that already exist within your own community? If so, please elaborate.
6. What are the biggest challenges to what you have read in each chapter? (SWOT analysis?)
7. What are the biggest take-aways from what you have read in each chapter?
8. Overall, how has reading EL4IL impacted the way you may teach in your classroom in the future?