



Education and the Environment Initiative



Assembly Bill 1548 (Pavley, Chapter 665, Statutes of 2003)

FACT SHEET

Background

In October 2003, former Governor Gray Davis signed into law AB 1548, a bill authored by Assemblymember Fran Pavley and sponsored by Heal the Bay, which was designed to build on the early successes achieved by the Integrated Waste Management Board in implementing SB 373 (Torlakson, Chapter 926, Statutes of 2001). This new law mandated the development of a unified strategy to bring education about the environment into California's K-12 schools.

This landmark law, now referred to as the *Education and the Environment Initiative* (EEI), provides a comprehensive framework for bringing environment-based education to students across California's primary and secondary schools. The major components of this "unified education strategy" include:

- Development of California's first ever environmental principles and concepts;
- Design, development and dissemination of a standards-based model curriculum to teach the environmental principles and concepts to students in kindergarten through 12th grade;
- Incorporation of the environmental principles and concepts into the State Board of Education's criteria for textbook adoption in science, mathematics, English/language arts, and history/social science; and,
- Reorientation of the state's existing environmental education programs to support the learning of the environmental principles and concepts.

Who's Involved

The California Environmental Protection Agency and the California Integrated Waste Management Board lead and are actively engaged in the implementation of the *Education and the Environment Initiative* (EEI). This work is occurring in close collaboration with California's State Board of Education, Department of Education, Office of the Secretary for Education, and the Resources Agency. The government agencies that are collaborating in the EEI have been joined by a broadly-based group of partners from business and industry, educational institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and professional organizations to ensure the successful implementation of the EEI.

The EEI represents a major commitment by the State of California: staffing from the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA); staffing and funding from the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB); and, technical support and staff commitments from all of the government agency partners involved in the initiative.

Environmental Principles and Concepts

California's Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&C) examine the interactions and interdependence of human societies and natural systems. The EP&C were developed through technical working groups that involved over 100 scientists and experts representing state agencies, universities, business and industry, and environmental organizations from across California.

The Office of the Secretary of the CalEPA and the CIWMB have reviewed and adopted the following Environmental Principles:

- Principle I The continuation and health of individual human lives and of human communities and societies depend on the health of the natural systems that provide essential goods and ecosystem services.
- Principle II The long-term functioning and health of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems are influenced by their relationships with human societies.

- Principle III Natural systems proceed through cycles that humans depend upon, benefit from and can alter.
- Principle IV The exchange of matter between natural systems and human societies affects the long-term functioning of both.
- Principle V Decisions affecting resources and natural systems are based on a wide range of considerations and decision-making processes.

The complete listing of the Environmental Principles, with associated concepts and examples, is available at: <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Education/Principles/EPC.pdf>.

Development of the Standards-based Model Curriculum

The EEI Model Curriculum is intended to provide K-12th grade teachers, schools and districts with standards-based curricular materials, approved by the State Board of Education that can be used to teach the EP&C. As such, the EEI Model Curriculum will be designed to teach both the California's academic content standards and the EP&C to mastery.

The Model Curriculum will be structured so that it takes advantage of the instructional materials that are adopted by the State Board of Education as well as the educational resources that are offered by the providers of California's diverse environmental curricula and education programs. This approach should provide students and teachers with the opportunity to make the most appropriate use of all of the rich instructional resources that are available to them.

The Model Curriculum will be designed to use content from adopted instructional materials using the EP&C as the context for instruction. It will provide opportunities for students to achieve mastery of content standards in science and history/social science. The Model Curriculum will also help develop skills and knowledge in English/language arts and mathematics.

Environmental Principles and Concepts and Textbook Adoption

The law calls for incorporating the EP&C into criteria for textbook adoption in science, mathematics, English/language arts, and history/social science. The textbook adoption process is long-term, cyclical and spans several years for each subject area listed above. For example, the criteria for the next science textbook adoption were recently released by the State Board of Education; these criteria state "To be considered suitable for adoption, an instructional materials submission must provide: ... Examples, where directly supportive of the California Science Standards, of principles of environmental science, such as conservation of natural resources and/or pollution prevention." We will be working to incorporate the EP&C into textbook adoption criteria in each of the four areas pursuant to the law, as the cycles dictate.

Relation to California's Existing Environmental Education Programs

The law states that the environmental principles and concepts that are being developed under EEI shall be used to do all of the following:

- (1) "To direct (the programs of) state agencies that include environmental education components for elementary and secondary education in regulatory decisions or enforcement actions.
- (2) "To (serve as the basis for aligning the) state agency environmental education programs and materials that are developed for elementary and secondary education."

Under the direction of the Secretary of CalEPA, the Office of Education and the Environment, will work with other state agencies to assist them in developing programs that support implementation of the EEI. Depending on the availability of external funding, similar assistance will be made available to non-profit environmental organizations that are interested in modifying their education programs so that they conform to the EP&C and Model Curriculum.

Additional information regarding the Education and the Environment Initiative is available at: <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/Education/AB1548/>