



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Education is heading outside!! Legislation in Congress would help bolster the success of Green Woods Charter School.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IS BACK AND GREEN WOODS CHARTER SCHOOL IS WAY AHEAD OF THE LEARNING CURVE!

N.W. Philadelphia – Across the nation, taking students outside to learn is starting to catch on. Educators and legislators see the benefits of environmental education in student achievement, test scores, motivation, critical thinking and other skills. But many schools are pressed for resources to implement this promising tool, a challenge that would be addressed by legislation introduced this week in Congress: the No Child Left Inside Act.

Green Woods Charter School is one shining example of a charter school in our state using environmental education as a means to engage students and improve learning. Over the past few years, the success of Green Woods has sparked the creation of two other schools that believed in the power of the Green Woods' EIC (Using the Environment as an Integrating Context) model. Green Woods has had people coming to their team from Bermuda, Harvard, Utah and more to learn about their program. Why is the Green Woods' EIC model so successful? Because teachers work together to plan and deliver standards-based learning experiences that are relevant and engaging to students and span all disciplines.

For example: imagine learning about the history, geography and science of the Delaware River watershed while also collecting and assessing data on the water quality of a nearby stream. Then, follow that stream all the way to the Delaware Estuary where you learn about the estuary ecosystem, get to work on the beach with horseshoe crab experts, learn more about the threatened Red Knot, and cruise through the wetlands on a skimmer boat putting your classroom knowledge to work by identifying life in the salt marsh. Finally, imagine 96% of students scoring proficient/advanced in the Science and Math PSSA! Welcome to 4th grade at Green Woods!

Studies show environmental education can improve student achievement and test scores, especially in math and science, help students think more effectively, provide a real-world context for classroom instruction, and prepare them for the 21st century workforce.

Environmental education in various forms started in the 1970s. But, with the advent of standardized testing and the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind law in 2001, many

schools and educators scaled back environmental education to focus on reading and math-- subjects covered by high-stakes standardized tests and calculated as part of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). (Sadly, science is not counted in AYP.) In recent years, however, environmental education has enjoyed a dramatic resurgence, perhaps as educators reacted negatively to “teaching to the test” approaches.

Jean Wallace, CEO of Green Woods Charter School spearheaded the EIC curriculum development at Green Woods and has seen the many benefits.. ***“At Green Woods Charter School our teachers are always revising and updating our award-winning EIC Curriculum. When teachers work together, start with the standards and build a curriculum framework from them, you not only have teacher motivation, but you have an entire staff that is working together to plan inter-disciplinary units of study that focus on science content, environmental concepts, and active citizenship.”***

But even at Green Woods Charter School resources are stretched thin. Operating on just about 80 cents to the dollar of the typical public school, this bill could certainly help support successful charter schools such as Green Woods. The No Child Left Inside Act could help by providing financial and other assistance to states which are bolstering environmental learning. More than forty states, including Pennsylvania, are taking action to urge the development of a statewide “environmental literacy” plan (ELP). Green Woods Charter School is proud to be on the ELP writing team for Pennsylvania.

Other signs of a national resurgence in environmental education are abundant:

- The number of high school students taking the Advanced Placement Environmental Science course jumped 426 percent in the past 10 years compared to an average increase of 97 percent for all AP subject exams over the same period. [More information](#)
- At least 200 green charters schools, including Green Woods Charter School, have opened across the country in recent years using a research-based curriculum called EIC, or Environment as an Integrating Context for learning. The idea involves using nature and the environment as a teaching tool for everything from math to reading to history. [More information](#)
- Between 1995 and 2005 all 50 states expanded and strengthened their environmental education programs by 80 percent, measured by the number of key components implemented: dedicated funding, professional development, comprehensive EE plan, etc. [More information](#)
- Nearly 2,000 schools have joined the national Green School Alliance. Green schools are designed or retrofitted to consume less energy, to reduce waste, and to connect environmental education curriculum to a school’s sustainable features. [More information](#)

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