

Environmental Education for the Next Generation Plan for Regional Expansion

Introduction

Deep cuts to California's education budget are drastically affecting how our state's youth develop and grow. In the past few years, public school students of all ages—from elementary to high school and even college—have lost beneficial programs and services that once served to supplement formal classroom education. The mission of Environmental Education for the Next Generation (EENG), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization¹ I founded in August of 2009, is to reverse this trend by offering our supplemental, youth-to-youth environmental science program, led by University of California, Santa Barbara students, to 1st and 2nd grade students at zero cost.

To ensure our program has the broadest possible impact, we aim to expand beyond Santa Barbara County. The Donald A. Strauss Scholarship would support the launch of our first regional chapter, consisting of Cal Poly students, in San Luis Obispo and propel our goal of statewide expansion over the next 5 years.

Organization Description

I founded EENG with a team of undergraduate students at UCSB to increase environmental awareness to youth in the early stages of their educational development (Grades 1 & 2). We work to instill an environmental ethic in the next generation by training college students to engage children ages six through eight with interactive activities and experiments that foster critical thinking about the world we live in. Participants in the program benefit from close personal mentorship in a small group setting that brings education to life and empowers students to make a positive impact on their surroundings.

EENG's curriculum team has developed two unique 8-week units²—one for 1st grade and one for 2nd.

Lessons build upon each other, reinforcing important concepts over an extended period of time to

¹ Please see Appendix A for documentation of official 501(c)(3) status

² Please see Appendix B for overview of our 1st and 2nd grade units

improve retention and appreciation for the subject matter. Each lesson aligns closely with the California State Board of Education's Content Standards, serving to enhance existing classroom activities. Lessons use a system of teaching called *Flow Learning*TM to effectively engage the learner types identified in the *4MAT System*.

Our first grade unit explores the relationship between humans and the natural world through hands-on experiments and craft projects.³ We introduce our second graders to more abstract concepts, like conservation, encouraging them to think about the resource footprint of their households and providing them with the tools and knowledge to minimize their impact on the environment.

EENG's educational approach revolves around small group interaction. During the first classroom visit, program participants are assigned to a nature team made up of 5 students and 1 college-aged instructor. Throughout the quarter, teams build strong bonds with one another, with instructors acting as role models and mentors for the members of their nature team. The youth-to-youth component of our program is what sets it apart from the field.

Our efforts have been well received by the Santa Barbara community. Since August of 2009, we have expanded from a single classroom at Isla Vista Elementary School to 24 classrooms in 12 schools spanning from Goleta to Carpinteria. To date, we have engaged over 400 elementary school students, and expect this number to continue to grow well into the future. As another indication of our program's success, both the Superintendent of the Goleta Union School District and the Director of Curriculum & Categorical Programs for the Santa Barbara School District have whole-heartedly endorsed our program.

Our dedicated team of UCSB student-directors (executive, curriculum, operations, business development, and web) has built this organization from the ground up. In response to countless requests to bring our environmental science program beyond Santa Barbara, I've been working with the team over the past few

³ Please see Appendix C for sample lesson

months to develop and execute a plan to expand the program to San Luis Obispo County in Fall of 2011. Our expansion to San Luis Obispo will act as a model to achieve our goal of statewide expansion over the next 5 years. The Strauss Scholarship would be instrumental to achieving this ambitious goal.

Regional Expansion Plan

EENG has created plans for the launch of a regional chapter in San Luis Obispo that will be closely affiliated with our Santa Barbara headquarters. We have selected an undergraduate student at Cal Poly to head up the chapter and have also appointed a Regional Director of Operations to support program growth.

Jamee Curran, our Regional Director for SLO, has been sitting in on our weekly director and business development meetings since the first week of January. By exposing Jamee to the behind the scenes operations of the organization, we ensure she knows exactly what to expect when she takes the reins in September. We have also set up briefing sessions over the next few months led by the Santa Barbara director team that will address more specific program processes, requirements, and best practices we've learned along the way. Jamee will be an experienced director on day 1 of program launch.

Once Jamee has selected her director team⁴, which will consist of other Cal Poly students, the group will then focus on building its volunteer base by connecting with student environmental and education groups on campus at Cal Poly. Just as EENG SB depends on UCSB's Associated Students Community Affairs Board and Environmental Affairs Board as sources of enthusiastic volunteers, EENG SLO will find feeder organizations at Cal Poly to ensure program sustainability as the chapter grows.

Once appointed, SLO's Director of Business Development will set up meetings and deliver brochures⁵ to teachers and administrators in the San Luis Coastal Unified School District aimed at introducing the

⁴ Please see Appendix D for regional team roles and responsibilities

⁵ Please see Appendix E for outreach brochure

program into new classrooms. By leveraging contacts and the strong reputation and recommendations we've solicited from stakeholders in Santa Barbara, we anticipate smooth program integration in San Luis Obispo and soon beyond.

To ensure our SLO chapter operates at the level of excellence the EENG team demands, volunteer instructors will participate in an extensive training workshop developed by the curriculum team to address classroom etiquette, suggest effective teaching strategies, and build strong teams.⁶

At the end of each academic quarter, the Regional Director will compile a quarterly report including: accomplishments, program assessments from participating teachers, director performance reviews, and future goals. The Santa Barbara director team will thoroughly review this report, providing feedback and support as needed.

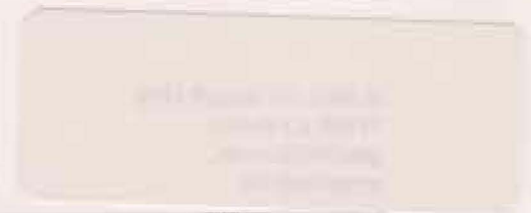
Program Goals

The program goals for the San Luis Obispo Chapter will be to operate in 15 classrooms, recruit 30 Cal Poly student instructors, and engage more than 300 elementary students by the end of the 2011-2012 academic year. We further plan to participate in 3 community events in San Luis Obispo over the course of the year in order to spread the word about the program, build connections, and give back to the broader community. To cultivate the ambition of our college-student team and further develop the program and organization, we plan to attend seminars and workshops to hone our curriculum, instructor training, managerial skills, and marketing strategies. The overarching goal is to establish a repeatable strategy for regional expansion by working with college students across the state to implement the program statewide. For more information about EENG please visit www.EENGonline.org.

⁶ Please see Appendix F for instructor training presentation



**Environmental Education
for the Next Generation**
Investing in our youth, rethinking our future



Proposed Budget

	Description	Amount
Classroom Supplies	Experiment, activity, & project supplies <i>Funsheet</i> printing	\$3,500
Volunteer Supplies	Uniform t-shirts Curriculum binder printing Volunteer Recruitment Instructor training Team building events	\$2,000
Community Outreach	Festival registrations Booth materials Banner & brochure printing Web development	\$1,500
Organizational Development	Professional curriculum development Teaching accreditations Managerial workshops Marketing seminars	\$2,250
Travel Expenses	Transportation costs Housing accommodations	\$750
Total		\$10,000