

A Forest For Every Classroom – A Place-Based Professional Development Program for Educators

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ISSUE: *A Forest for Every Classroom* (FFEC) is a professional development program for educators that combine the concepts of ecology, sense of place, stewardship and service learning to develop place-based curriculum that fosters student understanding and appreciation of forest resources in their community. The FFEC founding partners have agreed to work with the Northern Region of the USDA Forest Service and its partners to replicate FFEC in the Northern Region. The initial Northern Region replication is being planned for the Elkhorn Mountains in 2009 and is being pursued by the Helena National Forest in partnership with the Montana Discovery Foundation, the Elkhorn Mountains' Working Group, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and other partners. The Helena-Elkhorn FFEC Partners will conduct community focus forums during the summer and fall of 2008 to integrate local issues and concerns into the training schedule and program content for this session. Outreach is ongoing to identify partners and places for future FFEC replications in the Northern Region for 2010 and beyond.

BACKGROUND: The FFEC model of place-based education is a year-long series of three 2-day workshops and a 5-day summer institute providing educators with the opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge, and support they need to create standards-based curriculum that connect students to the outdoors and the public lands in their communities. FFEC is a partnership of public and private organizations. The founding partners include: Shelburne Farms, National Park Service Conservation Study Institute, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Green Mountain National Forest and the Northeast Natural Resource Center of the National Wildlife Federation. The Founding Partners have 6 years of program experience and evaluation and want to work with partners in other parts of the country who are interested in building a network of place-based educators.

TALKING POINTS: At the heart of the FFEC program is the belief that students who are immersed in the interdisciplinary study of place are more eager to learn and be involved in the stewardship of their communities and public lands.

- Today's students will become responsible citizens if they understand the places in which they live.
- Public lands have tremendous potential to contribute to education and quality of life in our communities as outdoor classrooms and places to perform service learning.
- Teachers and students are more engaged when they participate in educational opportunities based on real life issues that challenge them to be stewards of their own communities.

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LINKS & OTHER RELATED MATERIALS: Information about the FFEC model of place-based education, including program evaluations, is available at: <http://www.nps.gov/mabi/forteachers/forest-for-every-classroom.htm>. Information on place-based education is available at: <http://www.promiseofplace.org/>.