

Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence

Sample 2-hour Virtual Workshop

Note: This workshop is designed for use as an introduction to the Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence specifically and the Guidelines for Excellence Series in general. It can be scaled, depending on your needs, from 90 minutes to 2 hours. Times are approximate and will vary depending on your focus and your participants.

Materials/Links Needed:

- ✓ [Materials Guidelines PowerPoint presentation](#) [Note: Please download to your computer and feel free to edit and adapt to your own situation and style. Some speaker's notes are provided as a reference.]
- ✓ Link to *Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence* for each participant or use the Word version of the Key Characteristics and guidelines.
- ✓ Activity 1 "Essential Underpinnings."
- ✓ Activity 2 "Criteria for Quality EE Materials."
- ✓ Activity 3 "Digging into the Key Characteristics."
- ✓ Activity 4 "Six Key Characteristics of Quality Materials."
- ✓ Google Form: Workshop Evaluation. Please make a copy for your own use:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1-3Cd9rfl33cpcvzan_ca5KHCl8kbxq1KDfOdJNxs8dk/edit

Use [the PowerPoint presentation](#) to introduce the *Guidelines for Excellence*: What is NAAEE? What is the National Project for Excellence in EE? Why were the *Guidelines* developed? How were they developed? Overview of the *Materials Guidelines* [slides 1-10].

Depending on your group, you may wish to include, in this introductory session, the following: land acknowledgement, background information about your organization and/or the sponsoring organization, participant introductions, and an icebreaker.

Note: Much of the following assumes you will be using breakout rooms for small group work. Depending on the group and their familiarity with the online platform (e.g., Zoom) and applications (e.g., Canva) you are using, you may want to provide a quick introduction to using the chat function, the need to cut/paste URLs for use while in breakout rooms, and such.

*This workshop was developed using **Jamboard**. Since that time, Jamboard has been discontinued. PDFs of the Jamboard screens, now labeled as Activity, are provided to give you a model.*

Essential Underpinnings

30 minutes

In small groups, participants will become familiar with the Essential Underpinnings of environmental education as presented in the introduction to *Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence*.

Procedure:

- Explain that environmental education builds from a core of key principles that inform its approach to education. You may want to use the PowerPoint to display a listing of the Essential Underpinnings [slide # 11].
- Explain that they will be examining some of these key principles in small groups and that each small group will be assigned a different Essential Underpinning to review and discuss.
- In the chat, post the URL for the Activity 1 “Essential Underpinnings.” Be sure you have made your own copy. There are eight Essential Underpinnings. For smaller groups (less than 16 participants), you may want to delete some of the Essential Underpinning sheets.
- Explain that they will be assigned to breakout rooms (2-3 people/group). They should take note of their room number and go to the appropriate Activity sheet. They should also cut the URL from the chat box and paste it into their own browser for use once they are in their breakout room.
- Once in their groups, participants will have about **10 minutes** to complete the following assignment:
 - Introduce yourselves to each other.
 - Read your assigned Essential Underpinning
 - Discuss: What’s the most important take away for you? Any cognitive dissonance — something that doesn’t fit with what you already know? How does this apply to your work within your organization?
- Bring the group back together. Depending on time, ask each group to provide a short (2 minute) overview of their assigned Essential Underpinning or post the Activity again (with the URL in the chat) and ask participants to “take a virtual gallery walk” through the Essential Underpinnings.
- After everyone has had a chance to review the Essential Underpinnings, explain that these principles were used as guiding principles to the development of the Materials Guidelines.

Digging into the Six Key Characteristics

65 minutes

As a large group, participants will reflect on what they look for in environmental education instructional materials. Then, working in small groups, they will become familiar with one of the six key characteristics and share their understandings with the rest of the group.

Procedure:

- Explain that they are now going to shift their attention to instructional materials – such as activity guides and lesson plans.
- Ask them to write the name of some of their favorite activity guides in the chat.
- Ask the participants to think about the qualities of the best instructional materials they have created or used. What makes them so good? What are some criteria or characteristics? Ask them to jot down some of their ideas. Give them about **3-5 minutes**.
- In the chat, post the URL for the Activity 2 “Criteria for Quality EE Materials.” Be sure you have made your own copy.
- Ask participants to copy the URL from the chat box and paste it into their own browser.
- Depending on your group, provide a short orientation on how to use the Activity 2 (e.g., post-it notes, text boxes).

- Ask the participants to use post-it notes to suggest criteria for quality environmental education instructional materials.
- After **about 5 minutes** or when their posting starts to slow down, ask them to read the other responses. Are there duplicate/similar ideas? Do some of the ideas clump together? Do they have questions or comments about any of the post-it notes?
- Invite them to move the post-it notes around or to use the pen to draw links. Encourage questions and comments as they work (that is, ask them to explain their thinking).
- Provide a quick overview of the Materials Guidelines (e.g., there are six key characteristics, each key characteristic is further defined by guidelines, and guidelines are even further defined by indicators).
- Explain that they will be divided into six teams and each team will be assigned one of the six Key Characteristics – based on their breakout room number.
- Post the URL for the Materials Guidelines in the chat and ask participants to copy the URL into their browsers. They will need access to it when they get to their breakout room.
- Post the URL for the Activity 3 “Digging into the Key Characteristics.” Ask them to copy this URL into their browsers.
- Explain that once in their groups, participants will have about **20 minutes** to become familiar with their assigned Key Characteristic: (cut and paste the instructions into the chat):
 - ✓ Introduce yourselves
 - ✓ Read through the assigned Key Characteristic
 - ✓ As a group, discuss the Key Characteristic
 - ✓ Prepare a short presentation (5 minutes) about your assigned Key Characteristic. In your presentation, you should:
 - provide a general overview of the Key Characteristic
 - discuss what this Key Characteristic might “look like” in instructional materials
 - provide examples from your own practice
- Bring the group back together and ask each group to present, starting with Key Characteristic #1. Use the PowerPoint slides to provide a quick overview of the six Key Characteristics as each group presents.
- Stress key points on each or clarify information after each group has presented.

Wrap-Up and Final Questions

10 minutes

Tell participants that as a final exercise, they will think about all six key characteristics.

Procedure:

- Post the URL for the Activity 4, “Six Key Characteristics of Quality Materials” in the chat and ask participants to copy it into their browser.
- Once participants are on the Activity 4, ask them to place their name on a sticky note.
- Ask participants to think about each of the six key characteristics and then to move their post-it to the Key Characteristic they think is the hardest to do well.
- Ask a few participants at each key characteristic to share with the group what makes that characteristic particularly difficult.
- Ask if anyone knows of a set of EE instructional materials that seems to address specific Key Characteristics well?

- Next, ask participants to move their post-it next to the key characteristic that they think is most often implemented well.
- Ask a few participants at each key characteristic to share with the group why that characteristic seems to be implemented well. Ask if they have any specific examples of activity guides, not already mentioned, that address the Key Characteristics well.
- Final reflection: What two things are you going to take back to your organization?
- Open up the floor for any final questions.

Workshop Evaluation

5 minutes

- ✓ Post the URL to the Google Form: *Guidelines Virtual Workshop Evaluation* in the chat. Ask participants to take a few minutes to complete the evaluation.