Environmental Education and Advocacy

Environmental education has often blurred the distinction between ecological science and environmental advocacy. Growing public awareness of environmental problems and desire for action may be contributing to this blurring. There is a need to clarify the distinction between the role of ecological science and the role of social and political values for the environment within environmental education. This book addresses this need by examining the changing perspectives of ecology in education and the changing perspectives of education in environmental education. Guidelines are provided for assessing the science and education perspectives within environmental education, along with suggested frameworks for development of programs and resources that integrate current science, education, and action. This book will be of interest to environmental educators, ecologists interested in environmental education, and curriculum and resource developers.

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Environmental Education and Advocacy

Changing perspectives of ecology and education

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Preface

The editors of this book, one an ecologist and one an educator, notice that natural scientists, social scientists, and educators have been diverging in recent decades on their idea of environmental education. Before the 1960s, environmental education was primarily either nature study and outdoor pursuits or natural sciences. Conservation was generally limited to discussions of preserving natural areas and protecting endangered species, particularly birds and mammals. Since the 1960s, environmental education has shifted away from teaching how ecological systems operate to how economic, social, and civil systems are creating environmental problems. This shift in emphasis has resulted in an increase in advocacy in environmental education. In order to consider this changing perspective of ecology and education in environmental education we have divided this book into four parts.

Part I examines some of the fundamental questions about environmental education: How does one distinguish between the different forms and meanings of “ecology” presented in environmental education? What is the role of ecology in environmental education and what are the current ecological concepts that should be included in environmental education? What is the public and academic understanding of the science of ecology?

Part II explores the following questions: What is the public and academic understanding in environmental education? What is the role of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, non-profit groups, industry, and the professional societies in environmental education?

Part III examines the question: How does one distinguish between environmental education and advocacy? Example standards and practical approaches for assessing the science, social, and education dimensions of environmental education resources are provided.
Part IV provides some practical frameworks and approaches for integrating scientific understanding, education, and social action in environmental education.

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