

Abstract

CREATIVE PROJECT: Connecting the Past, Present, and Future of East Central Indiana:

Nature and Culture Connect Us All

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Students and teachers in East Central Indiana lack educational curricula that feature natural and cultural concept that are specific to the region. Curricula that will allow students to learn about the environment, nature, and ethnohistory of the area in which they live. There has been previous work creating environmental education lessons for Indiana; many of them give broad information or are written for areas of Indiana that are not specific to East Central Indiana. Research suggests that younger students, who are learning the educational themes of environment, culture, and nature, relate better if the places they are learning about are near them. According to a myriad of examples in environmental education literature, it is important that students learn about what is happening in and around their immediate surroundings. Students need to feel like they can connect to the place they live. Through interview, direct observation, and work in the field, I developed three place-based environmental education lesson packets that address these issues. The three lesson areas I cover focus on: Reconnecting- to place and

fostering a sense of stewardship in local green spaces; interconnecting- learning with specific context about native people that were/are in the area; and positive examples- pointing out not just the negatives of environmental issues like species loss but focusing on species revitalization projects. Through investigative research, I have discussed factors affecting nature-deficit disorder, educational constraints to providing students with nature- based education lessons, culminating in place-based nature education lessons specific to students in grades three through five in East Central Indiana.