

Outdoor Education for All! (OEFA)

Wednesday, November 19







4:00-7:00 pm

Bidwell Mansion Visitor Center

Attending:

Jon Aull, Tevra Blankenship, Raeann Bossarte, Tony Catalano, Stacy Doughman, Derek Dunn, Gloria Halley, Mike Hubbartt, Scott Huber, John W. Hunt, Shannon Johnson, Paul Kirk, Marti Leicester, Michael Martinez, Nate Millard, Jeff Mott, Carol Oxsen, Robin Patterson, Barbara Rice, Sherri Scott, Emilyn Sheffield, Bill Shively, Lisa Speegle, Melinda Teves, Nena Wyllie, Steve Zachary

I. Proposed Outcomes

-  Review and provide input on OEFA strategic framework (mission, vision, & five year goals)
-  Quick idea generation **on actions for 2015**
-  Share progress in developing a Steering Committee, including roles and decision making
-  Share updates about important happenings over the past 6 months
-  Prepare for new approaches for working with OEFA Providers, Teachers and Schools in 2015
-  Set next OEFA meeting

II. Marti Leicester, OEFA Facilitator, called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm.

III. Welcome and introductions –

A. Marti Leicester welcomed Barbara Rice, National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) and Facilitator for the OEFA Strategic Plan. Marti also welcomed newcomers to the Outdoor Education for All! (OEFA) group and asked them to introduce themselves. We then went around the group and each person gave their name and affiliation.

B. Marti congratulated Jon Aull who was recently hired as the new Outdoor Education Coordinator for the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve. He was previously a naturalist at the Chico Creek Nature Center. Marti also congratulated Shannon Johnson on her new position as the Outdoor Education Coordinator for the Forest Ranch Charter School. OEFA networking helped each in different ways in their new job successes.

IV. Review agenda and desired outcomes - Marti No additions or amendments were made to the agenda. Ground rules of one person talk at a time, raise hand to speak, no side conversations were agreed to by all.

V. Partner Highlights: OEFA Success Stories in Outdoor Learning (for shorter meeting notes, this is combined with “OEFA Updates” on the original meeting agenda.)

A. Marti substituted for Brad Cooke. Working with Tony Catalano, Marti, Mike Seely (Thermalito Forebay Rowing Club), and BCOE, Brad organized the first pilot program of OEFA outdoor education Providers cooperating to come together in July and August to provide programs for Four Winds Charter School (July) and Hearthstone Charter School (August). (At the last minute, Brad and Timmarie Hamill agreed to represent OEFA at a mandatory meeting about a grant that would be talked about later in the meeting.)

1. Marti opened with comments that it had taken her since the last general OEFA meeting to absorb all that the speakers from the Children's Nature Institute had presented. The most important thing that she learned was their suggestion to "**Do – Plan – Do – Act**".
2. At first it didn't make sense to her, but after the past 6 months of OEFA pilot programs, it had become clear. You may have a plan, but you have to see how realistic it is in real life application. The OEFA pilot programs have provided a great deal of information on what works and what can be improved. We have accomplished a lot since the last OEFA April meeting, our plans were tested, and now we can revise them, and carry out improved actions based on experience.
3. Barbara commented this is the model used by both business and government and non-profit entities now due to the rate of change in our society. Another name for it is "Adaptive Management".

B. So, what have been some of the OEFA accomplishments of the past 6 months?

1. Marti showed a quick slide show of the Hearthstone Students working with the Providers at the **Thermalito Forebay**.
2. At the **Forebay**: 157 students were served in 6 days of field trips. 29 adults attended: Teachers, Parents and Educational Administrators. There were 7 adult staff for each day to help with the students and OEFA provided programs. The Agencies and OEFA Providers involved included: California State Parks-Lake Oroville SRA, Ranger Mike Hubbartt; Butte County Office of Education (many), Altacal Audubon Chapter of Butte County, Volunteers Derek Dunn and Kate Brice ; California Department of Water Resources, Jana Frazier; The Stream Team, Timmarie Hamil, Teachers from Four Winds and Hearthstone Charter Schools and Thermalito School Districts.

B.. Since the last OEFA general meeting in April, 2014, these additional pilot OEFA programs have also been underway to see what works, what can be improved:

1. **Forest Ranch Charter School (FRCS)**: This program includes working with community volunteers to provide outdoor education, development of an outdoor education area for the school, and field trips, including initiating a Science Ambassador Program similar to that at Ishi Hills School in Oroville. The Science Teacher at FRCS learned of the Science Ambassador program through networking with OEFA teachers. The plan is to bring in OEFA Providers to the school to provide on-site programs at the school and to develop a plan to take field trips and undertake programs with OEFA Providers (if permitted) at the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve when it opens to school groups again.
2. **Oroville City Elementary School District (OCESD)**: Tony Catalano has taken the lead to act as OEFA liaison with OCESD and bring cooperating Providers to the area for outdoor education. Tony and Marti led a field trip to the potential school sites for several Providers in June. Tony then coordinated the Providers to work with 2 schools in the District - **Ishi Hills Middle School Science Camp and Stanford Avenue School – 3 outdoor education days**.
 - a. 12 Providers have been involved (Brad Cooke, Stream Team, Butte Co. RCD, Lake Oroville SRA, CA DWR Fish Hatchery, Chico Creek Nature Center, RARE (Recycling and ReUse Education) Program, Altacal Audubon, Forest Ranch Charter School Science Ambassadors, CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, the involvement of Maidu Elders through Mike Hubbartt and Lake Oroville SRA from the Moore Town Rancheria; and the CSUC Hands-On Lab.
 - b. OCESD approved paying contract fees to some Providers. The public agencies offered their services at no cost to the schools.
 - c. Since May, approximately 1,200 students have been served at 4 schools (1,000 at Stanford Ave. alone.)

3. An **OEFA Steering Committee has been established.**
 - a. Originally starting with 11 members in July, the Steering Committee is now a core group of 8 people and a non-voting member, representing BCOE, who has agreed to manage the Strategic Plan process, with RTCA-Barbara Rice, and to serve as the leadership and decision making body for OEFA.
 - b. The Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities description was sent with the 11/19 meeting agenda. Marti asked for comments or questions. There were none and a few comments of support were made to affirm the direction and work of the Steering Committee.
 - c. Marti stated that work is under way to establish a website for OEFA so that all meeting minutes can be posted and the work of the Steering Committee can be tracked by interested OEFA network participants.
 - d. In response to a request from an OEFA Provider who was applying for a grant, the Steering Committee agreed to offer any requested letters of support from the Steering Committee for any OEFA participant applying for a grant and who wishes to demonstrate partner connections
4. **The Butte County Office Education (BCOE) continues to be a strong partner for OEFA**
 - a. Under the guidance of Superintendent, Tim Taylor, various offices of the BCOE have provided support to OEFA: After School Programs (Gloria Halley), Migrant Education (Michael Martinez) , Mini-Corps (Maria Elena Becerra), STEM (Christine McCormick), AV Dept. (Theresa Lightle) , Charter Schools Division and the OCESD (Penny Chennel. Patty Garrison, Kathy Myszka, Jackie Musselman and Amy Brooks), Special Education (Michelle Zevely and Stacy Doughman)
 - b. Nancy Silva from the Visual and Performing Arts Dept. has helped with advice on grants and fundraising.
 - c. THANK YOU!
5. Two other major projects include:
 - a. **An OEFA brochure** is under production with the initial help of Caitlin Reilly, Jennifer Patten and Tanya Parish and continuing with Lisa Speegle and Shannon Johnson. The goal is to print and distribute the brochure in winter, 2015. The purpose of the brochure is to promote OEFA Providers and provide another means to connect Teachers with Providers.
 - b. In November, a grant opportunity in Oroville initiated discussions among XX OEFA participants re: the possibility of submitting **a collaborative grant request** for an intern support program to expand the capacity of Providers to work with greater numbers of students and meet the requests for outdoor education services from the schools. Although the grant application didn't materialize due to time constraints and grant writing capacity, the discussions were worthwhile and have laid the groundwork for future collaborative grant applications.
6. Other Updates:
 - a. There were not enough registrations to justify the proposed NGSS Workshop. There was a 40% return rate of the surveys. Those who responded are VERY interested in the topic but we needed at least 15-20 registrants and we had 12 positive returns.
 - b. Marti proposed a model, suggested by the Monterey/Santa Cruz CREEC collaborating Providers, to shift the way OEFA Providers and Partners work together. The group agreed it was worth a try to propose this at a Providers only meeting – possibly to be scheduled for Jan., 2015.

VI: A Vision for the Future: Barbara Rice initiated the discussion for the meeting focus: review, REFLECTION and input on the basics of the OEFA working draft Strategic Plan: Vision, Mission and Goals.

A. Barbara introduced the value of a Strategic Plan for OEFA .

1. She stressed this is a WORK IN PROGRESS. The input of the community is key and the Plan can be revised and amended as broader input is received and reviewed by the group. The goal is broad community engagement to build strong community support.
2. The purpose of the Strategic Plan Framework (SPF) is to make our work together more effective by setting strategic priorities to guide our work and focus on what will be most effective to move OEFA forward.
3. The SPF will also help OEFA develop a **case statement** - funders are interested in that!
4. Barbara read the draft Mission and Vision statements.

B. Review the OEFA Strategic Framework and how it evolved. Tony Catalano and Shannon Johnson, members of the OEFA Steering Committee, presented the Vision and Mission statements (working drafts) highlighting key themes and how specific words were chosen.

1. Shannon explained that the two can be combined into one PURPOSE Statement. Some organizations use the Purpose Statement rather than the individual Mission and Vision Statements.
2. Tony and Shannon made these points:
 - a. Natural and cultural resource conservation & stewardship – OEFA will need a broad base of support and needs to seek out all who share the OEFA values expressed in the Purpose: hunters, fishermen, those working in agriculture – all who care about the health of the land and its educational value for learning - a sense of caring for the land and saving it for the future.
 - b. Standards based education - Important to teachers and providers.
 - c. Collaborative - what we agree on collectively.
 - d. Outdoor learning – this is the underlying foundation of OEFA. The Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve put forth the initial vision to serve more folks with the quality of BCCER and expand that quality to county wide outdoor education.
 - e. Through OEFA meetings and research into what other similar groups were doing, OEFA participants added that this vision would translate to at least one outdoor learning experience each year for each student, K-12.
 - f. But the Vision was even bigger – not just students, EVERYBODY – lifelong learning, multiple abilities, multiple languages. OEFA is the umbrella to provide outdoor and place-based education for different organizations and and for people of all backgrounds.
 - g. Nate Millard: The term “ecological literacy” is a newer term in this field. It has evolved from systems (eco-system) thinking and is based on the realization we are all inter-dependent . Are humans the only beings that affect the environment and change it? Most animals adapt. What is our place to preserve, protect, and enhance the environment? The term reflects SYSTEMS thinking – we all live in an ecology.
 - h. An “active citizenry” – the DOING of the OEFA Vision and Mission. We don’t want to be a group that just convenes and socializes but be a group that is actively involved in educating individuals on how they can act responsibly with their community to be stewards of the environment and land. We will do this through creating “building blocks of learning” or working with standards based field or place-based curricula of outdoor learning that integrates with classroom curricula.

C. Meeting Participant Comments:

1. John Hunt: The Vision and Mission could be more concise and predicts it will become as accurate and less words. Keep in mind a large pool of people needs to be able to grasp this quickly and easily. Now it reads as a compound, complex sentence. But it is a challenge. This is a big vision, big goal.
2. Mike Hubbartt read California State Parks Mission Statement. He commented it is no less wordy. Hard to be concise!
3. Paul Kirk asked if the public understands the term “standards based”? NGSS – moving to more experientially based science learning. We want the public to support the science curriculum. We may have to add words so the public will know what this means.
4. Mary Anne Pella-Donnelly: The majority of the Providers focus on K-12 and their parents understand the term.
5. Michael Martinez, BCOE Migrant Ed: We bring this term up in the parent meetings - we focus on it. We are almost prohibited from NOT being standards based. Most schools have re-designed report cards to reflect standards.
5. Comment: Teachers are scared of the new standards
6. Melinda Teves – How deeply do the Providers have to delve into being curricula and standards based? Altacal volunteers are very interested in this topic.
7. Mary Anne: The Providers are a very diverse group so it is hard, at this time, to focus on what specific training is needed.. Some topics are of interest to some but not all.
8. Scott Huber: What I see missing is that we have left out what was an initial high priority: ADD underserved communities, neighborhoods, ethnicities, “OF ALL BACKGROUNDS” is not enough. We will have to be more clear to make the case. It’s both the right thing to do, what we need to do and also the best way to get grants. Make it explicit.
9. Tevra Blankenship: Is the idea of OEFA to match schools and Providers?
10. Shannon Johnson: The CREEC database, a State funded project, is all about connecting Teachers and Providers and spells out this goal. It is a website for Teachers and Providers. OEFA are part of Region 2 – it allows teachers to do a specific search for any gap in their curriculum. If CREEC isn’t used, then the collective piece isn’t happening.

D. Barbara brought the comments to a close with these comments:

1. Please send any additional thoughts to butteoefa@gmail.com. Do it TOMORROW so you don’t forget! Send your ideas while they’re hot! Make sure the Framework captures your thoughts.
2. Remember: this is a WORKING draft – it will go to many audiences. This is a document with which you can have one on one meetings and also and test it with larger groups in the community.
3. MOST IMPORTANTLY – OEFA’s mission is to work collectively to deliver outdoor learning that creates an active citizenry. “Active” is a word also embedded in stewardship – that piece is taking care of your place and community – backyard, wetland, your school – YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOUR ROLE in that.

4. One way to make the Vision and Mission more concise – reduce and eliminate redundancies.
5. QUESTION: Are the GOALS only one year? No, the Steering Committee agreed these would be 5 year goals. This was a strategic decision because a 5 year time horizon is realistic to allow for OEFA development as an organization.

VII. Input session: The group put their immediate thoughts on sticky notes and pasted them on the VISION, MISSION, and GOAL statements that were written on large sheets on the wall.

SEE ATTACHED SUMMARY OF INPUT NOTES

VIII. BREAK and networking. Input with the sticky notes continued.

IX. Wrap-up, Next Meetings

A. The next step in this Strategic Plan Framework, based on the work and input so far is to develop and ACTION PLAN for 2015.

1. We need to set specific, strategic priorities for the coming year. The Action Plan will help articulate what should we work on in the coming 12 months – how to be deliberate v. helter skelter. We will want to make our goals achievable and do them well and to develop OEFA, encourage participation, and sell ourselves to funders.
2. Are the goals on the mark? Have we missed a goal that needs to be added?

B. The **next Steering Committee Meeting** will take place on December 10.

1. We need your input for this meeting to begin the Action Plan.
2. This is about you and you are part of this collective so your voice needs to be heard during this process.

C. The next General OEFA meeting will take place in late January or early February after the Steering Committee has drafted an Action Plan based on this meeting's input. The Action Plan will be DRAFT and your input and review will be the focus of the meeting.

Marti adjourned the meeting at 6:55 pm.

mkleicester 12.7.14