

DRAFT Outdoor Education for All! (OEFA) Meeting Minutes
Bidwell Mansion Visitor Center
5/12/2015

Attending: Aull, Bender, Blankenship, Bossarte, Catalano, Chakarun, Cooke, Doughman, AS Adventure, Garrison, Gray, Hellmair, Johnson, Leicester, Martinez Millard Mott, Pella-Donnelly, Reilly, Rice, RossMerz, Sheffield, Shively, Speegle Stephens, Sweeney, Thomas, White, Wylie **(This is not a complete list of names – about 4 are missing. To be updated before June 9 Steering Committee meeting.)**

The meeting was basically in 3 parts:

- A. Presentation of the final OEFA Strategic Action Plan, 2015-2016.
- B. A networking break to share information and announcements
- C. A panel presentation by Tony Catalano on the work with Stanford Avenue School in 2015 and plans for 2016, a review from a Providers Perspective on working with Stanford Avenue School by Jon Aull of the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve, and the Principal's Perspective on the work from Principal Patty Garrison of Stanford Avenue School. What were the lessons Learned?

A. Strategic Plan Presentation -Barbara Rice, National Park Service , Planner and OEFA Strategic Plan Facilitator. Manager of the Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program

- 1. Barbara made a presentation covering the following points:
 - a. the importance of outdoor education for all people and the fact that the National Park Service is celebrating 100 years since the agency's establishment in 1916.
 - b. The importance of partnerships in conservation and providing natural and cultural history education programs to the public.
 - c. An overview of our collective process in creating the OEFA Strategic Action Plan for 2015-2106.

Originally there were 75 possible actions proposed.

The OEFA Steering Committee narrowed the field to 30 actions deemed achievable for 2015-16 and

Another 20 were identified as actions that are goals for 2016-17 and beyond.

- 2. The Action Plan can now be used for fund raising, as needed, or for "friend raising" – community outreach.

B. The OEFA Steering Committee provided an overview and comments on each of the Action Plan Goals:

- 1. Shannon Johnson summarized Goal 1 Programs and Training: **"Establish programs that connect providers, schools, and students of all ages and promote the value of Outdoor Education For All in the educational community as a primary resource for outdoor learning experiences"**
- 2. MaryAnne Pella-Donnelly provided information on Goal 2: **"Support and expand the capacity of providers to meet demand and deliver quality programs."**

- Discussion on interns' availability (often not available when field trips and classroom presentations are in highest demand – May and early fall.
- Willingness to volunteer v. work for pay.

These are issues that OEFA might address and help organize to make work better for the Provider network.

3. Shannon Johnson and Debbie Chakarun commented on Goal 3: **“Coordinate and support leadership development and training for informal and formal educators.”**

a. CREEC and OEFA may work together to continue to survey and learn what training Providers want and need.

b. Anne Stephens offered information that the CSU Chico Science Education Dept. will be offering two tracks for interns in the future: formal and informal science education. This new addition in the Dept. might be helpful in addressing both Goals 2 and 3.

c. Debbie announced a plan to move many of the models and approaches OEFA has been using in Butte County to Tehama County in the coming year! Lucas RossMerz of the Sacramento River Preservation Trust wants to help begin this effort also.

4. Shannon also commented on Goal 4: **“Identify and build recognition of outdoor learning places within proximity of communities and learning institutions.”**

a. 31 places to hold outdoor education have been identified in Butte County through the OEFA network.

b. Several have volunteered to take the map on the back of the new OEFA brochure and work to make it interactive on the new OEFA website. Tehama County is doing.

5. Barbara Rice offered the following thoughts on Goal 5: **“Establish a formal organization (nonprofit, partnership, fiscal agent, MOU and other) to support OEFA's ongoing activities.”**

a. In working with dozens of communities forming groups for a variety of goals, Barbara recommends working together for a minimum of several years before taking valuable time to establish a 501.c.3 non-profit organization. Can funds be funneled through an existing organization to support the work of the whole? Can a partnership of existing organizations carry out the work to support the whole? Etc.

b. Barbara acknowledged there is a strong pull to establish a non-profit and control funds. Consider that when money comes to one entity it can SOMETIMES undermine trust in the whole.

c. Ideas to consider!

6. Nate Millard is already at work on a significant project working to achieve Goal 6: **“On a regularly scheduled basis, assess the progress and effectiveness of Outdoor Education For All and assure its improvement and sustainability as an organization and in program delivery.”**

- a. A pre- and post survey was provided and filled out for the final OEFA event at Stanford Avenue.
- b. Nate is just beginning to analyze the results and will continue to work with OEFA on program surveys that can be of help to Providers in program planning and improvement or customizing to better meet teacher needs.
- c. The surveys are quantitative now but hope to make them qualitative also in the future – takes more people power to do this!

7. Marti Leicester and Lucas RossMerz provided insights into Goal 7 on Outreach and Community Engagement: **“Build awareness and participation in OEFA targeting diverse partners and the public.”**

- a. OEFA has already or is in the process of developing newsletters, a website, (oefa.org), a facebook page, etc.
- b. Send feedback to Marti to improve the website and other social media.
- c. Please ‘Like’ the Outdoor Education for All! Facebook page.
- d. Need short video for fundraising and are always looking for personal stories that can live in the media.
- e. We have a logo.
- f. Community Outreach will be a major focus in the coming year to raise the visibility of OEFA and gain broader support for its work.

8. Jeff Mott opened a discussion on Goal 8 : **“Establish and maintain financial stability to sustain the organization (OEFA) and program delivery.”**

- a. Jada White emphasized the importance of partnerships when seeking grants.
- b. Anne Stephens encouraged the group that the State Environmental Literacy Plan will be completed and rolled out in the coming months which hopefully will trigger state and private funding to groups like OEFA. She agreed the biggest grants for environmental education are going to collectives.
- c. Caitlin emphasized that lots of the money is not meant to be sustainable and we need to build on a more solid foundation rather than trying to exist grant to grant and what an uncertain atmosphere this creates for working together.
- d. Marti responded that we need to reach out to the Boards of Directors of the many organizations working in the OEFA network. There are a variety of needs because some participants in the network are programs or organizations that are focused on fundraising for their core needs and some are independent contractors.
- e. Gretchen suggested that we prove our value-added propositions by gathering data from network participants to determine their needs.
- f. Marti reported on our meeting with Christine McCormick re training for teachers, working with teachers to develop NGSS training curriculum for themselves and for providers.
- g. Caitlin sees problems when a larger organization, or a partnering group like OEFA asks for participation smaller organizations are doing a lot as it is.

B. Networking Break: It was difficult to end the break. Always a great opportunity to mingle, share and keep in touch! Thanks to all for the potluck snacks!

C. Panel:

1. Tony Catalano reported on the progression of experimenting on how to work together as “OEFA Providers” and bring a quality experience to Stanford Avenue School (SAS).

- a. We learned to schedule and match groups to Providers better each time.
- b. By the third event, we were better at matching programs to standards/themes provided by the school.
- c. In school year 2-15-2016, OEFA has been invited back. This time we want to begin to build sustainability: Event 1: Teachers help and observe providers offering programs. Event 2: Providers help and co-present with teachers. Event 3: Teachers provide the programs.
- d. We are considering this model to work to build sustainability in providing outdoor education by the teachers and OEFA then being able to expand to more schools.

2. Jon Aull: Jon sent a summary of his notes which I attach in whole as they are an excellent summary of the year.

3. Patty Garrison:

- a. Expressed respect and appreciation for the pioneering spirit of OEFA.
- b. Best to work with schools that have a focus. It make it easier going in to define what results are wanted coming out. SAS has such a focus: Wellness and STEM emphases “We STEM” is there motto.
- c. School wanted true partnerships – not just taking but making a difference for the partner and the school. They had a great partnership with Recology and have cut their waste stream and improved their recycling. They gained from working with OEFA.
- d. Her attitude is “it’s ok to fail and learn from it and then do it better.” Plan-evaluate-plan-do etc.
- e. Teachers did some professional development at the beginning of the school year by participating in a Project WILD workshop with the Chico Creek Nature Center.
- f. Sold continuing to work with OEFA next year to the District Supt. by presenting the model that 6 Lead Teachers will participate in the “learning to provide outdoor education” and meet NGSS standards.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

See Comment on Working with SAS by Jon Aull following.

Mkleicester 6/1/15

Reflections on 2014-15 OEFA project at Stanford Elementary School (SAS) in Oroville

Jon Aull – Presented as part of an Outdoor Education for All! Community meeting on May 12, 2015.

These events really could not have gone off without the amazing work of Tony Catalano and Marti Leicester. From the concept to the contact with the school and the coordination of the days, an incredible amount of work must have gone into them. I organize an outdoor classroom, so I know how much planning goes into coordinating all the people, the scheduling of the activities, being liaisons with the school, and so on. Having central planners coordinating the providers was vital to the success of this project.

We learned a lot over the 3 seasons at SAS. As one could have imagined, two classes at a station was way too many kids, and program quality suffered. The decision to go to two days to serve the whole school was a great one. The grouping of K-2 one day and 3-6 the next was a good split, allowing providers to mentally shift gears from one day to the next. One class at a time worked much better; a half class would be even better for hand-on activities. Perhaps there is a way providers could structure activities to give the teachers an active defined role in the activity to make it a better experience for all. I had a couple of teachers who really jumped in and helped and it made all the difference. I also was lucky enough to have my own assistant the last time, which made a big difference. Maybe there could be better communication between the providers who could have used help and the providers who had off time to better support each other. I was willing to help, but not sure how I could have, so better communication beforehand might have helped.

I think by the third time we visited SAS we had it running smoothly. Giving the providers the standards beforehand and having everyone commit to activities made for a marked improvement in quality. I think it helped all to focus and coordinate with others. It was impressive to see the evolution.

SAS was a great experience, due in no small part to the principal, Patty Garrison, who is committed to science and outdoor education. She is an adventurous leader who gives her staff (as well as us) the “freedom to fail,” and learn in the process. She gives her teachers the training they need to embrace science in their classrooms. This commitment is evident in the quality of the teachers and students. The natural area behind the school is beautiful, a blue oak woodland with a (mostly dry) drainage, great mossy boulders, birds, and wildflowers in the spring. I’m looking forward to the demonstration project next year, where we will model and teach activities to teachers and show them how to use their natural area, making an outdoor education program sustainable at the school regardless of funding.

The teachers at the school were interested in doing future field trips with the Reserves, so in that sense it was good outreach, exposing us to a whole school and giving them a little sample of the kind of activities we offer, even though we are mostly a place-based provider. We often work in isolation as providers, so it is a great thing to be able to see our partners in action, people who share our passion for Outdoor Science Education. It is inspiring to see the different ways people are approaching outdoor education. The enthusiasm is contagious, the energy energizing. Projects like these help build a community of providers who can work together toward a larger vision, a vision of Outdoor Education for All!