

# Ecosystem Learning Partnership (ELP)

## Mission

To connect students and teachers with nature and its benefits through experiential ecosystem learning.

## Vision

To promote a scientifically literate, environmentally aware populace that is actively engaged with, and continuously restoring and enriching, the natural environment.

## Goals

To develop and implement an experiential, community-supported, K-12 ecosystem school learning program that:

- Develops and delivers hands-on ecosystem learning.
- Emphasizes the interconnectedness of the ecosystem and students' daily activities.
- Enriches the natural environment of school yards.
- Provides more sustainable modes of engaging with our environment and each other.
- Improves the mental and physical health of participants.
- Promotes the development of scientific literacy.
- Fosters creativity and innovation.
- Can be customized, replicated, scaled.
- Allows collaboration between students and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

## Proposed Methodology

A team of experts (the "Enviroteam") will collaborate with students and teachers at local schools to create highly customizable, wrap-around programs. This partnership will use an iterative, cyclical approach of assessment, development, implementation and evaluation:

- **Assessment:** Conduct an assessment of the school grounds, as well as the areas surrounding the school, looking at the natural and human-made environments and how the two inter-relate.
- **Development:** Learn about benefits received from ecosystem infrastructure, and opportunities for enhancements; conceive of ways in which people and the natural world could be in a greater state of balance.
- **Implementation:** Put into action student ideas to create areas that exhibit alignment between human and natural environments on this one small patch of earth – their school campus.
- **Evaluate:** Review each year's annual plan, then document, measure, evaluate and enter cycle again.

## Potential Program Components

Each school community will decide on its program components. Potential options include, but are not limited to:

- Reintroducing native plant species, which in turn would attract birds, butterflies and other pollinators.
- Restoring a creek, enhancing a natural wetland, or other projects related to aquatic habitat and water capture, filtration, and reuse.
- Creating school gardens or food forests (including soil replenishment when needed).
- Installing bird or bat houses or other refugia for migratory or endangered animals.
- Partnering with the surrounding community to create natural corridors to support 'rewilding.'
- Monitoring progress of restoration projects.
- Using state of the art technology to map, evaluate and share current conditions, progress and challenges.

## Who We Are

The ELP is part of The Tamasse Group, a 501(c)3 nonprofit that is dedicated to seeking funding for the establishment and operation of environmental education and stewardship programs. The Enviroteam is a group of experienced local professionals who have come together to support the ELP. We share a passion for the environment, and wish to use our skills to nurture the natural world in ways that also replenish people. The Enviroteam includes:

- Nonprofit leaders, administrators, project directors and program managers
- Science teachers, scientists, and school administrators
- Local elected and appointed officials
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency staff developing EnviroAtlas ([www.epa.gov/enviroatlas](http://www.epa.gov/enviroatlas)), a web-based mapping tool about ecosystem services, their benefits to society, and drivers of change.