

Sowing SEEDS: A Model for Museum-Based Teacher Certification and Environmental Outreach Programs

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Environmental concerns are one of the most pressing issues of our time. Yet, people are increasingly disconnected from nature and many educators feel ill-equipped to teach about the environment and show its connection to all students and subject areas. Miami University's Hefner Museum of Natural History and the Cecilia Berg Center for Environmental Education have created a program to address this dilemma.

Sowing SEEDS is a certification program available to educators at any career stage that provides the Science content and Environmental Education methodologies, Discovery-based learning techniques, and Synthesis of information across diverse fields-the "SEEDS"-needed to grow environmental literacy in a positive, nurturing, and inspiring way. Certification requirements align to the criterion set forth by the North American Association for Environmental Education and the Nature-Based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook. Classes are available for both primary and secondary educators, tailored to provide age-appropriate, standards-based pedagogical methods that empower instructors to use natural history objects and content when teaching a wide range of subjects. Coursework includes creating and piloting new educational activities, honing inquiry skills, and learning methods to use and prepare scientific specimens that spark curiosity in students. These activities make natural history personally relevant-lessening the disconnect to the natural world. Educational kits created as part of coursework are retained by students for immediate use in their classrooms, and can be reproduced by the Museum as part of our outreach and loan materials, available to both formal and informal instructors.