



## PROGRAMS

### Smart By Nature™

The Center for Ecoliteracy's initiative, Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability, provides information, inspiration, and support to the vital movement of K-12 educators, parents, and others who are helping young people gain the knowledge, skills, and values essential to sustainable living.

The Smart by Nature Initiative is based on four guiding principles:

#### Nature Is Our Teacher

To envision sustainable human communities, we turn to nature, which has sustained life for billions of years. Designing communities that are compatible with nature's processes requires basic ecological knowledge, one of the key components of ecological literacy. Ecological literacy fosters a perspective essential to sustainable living: that human needs and achievements are both supported and limited by the natural world. In schooling for sustainability, students are introduced to basic ecological principles and systems thinking — helping them achieve an understanding of the natural world's processes and the ability to think in terms of patterns, relationships, and contexts.

#### Sustainability Is a Community Practice

Sustainability depends on a healthy network of relationships that includes all members of the community, as students experience when the school functions as an apprenticeship community. When educators, parents, trustees, and other members of the school community make decisions and act collaboratively, they demonstrate sustainability as a community practice. School communities also have the opportunity to model sustainable practice through the ways in which they provision themselves with food, energy, and other basic needs, and how they relate to the larger communities of which they are a part.

#### The Real World Is the Optimal Learning Environment

As cooking is best learned in the kitchen, sustainability is best learned in the real world. Whether restoring the habitat of an endangered species, tending a school garden, or designing a neighborhood recycling program, students learn best from active engagement in which their actions matter and have meaning.

In schooling for sustainability, students connect with the natural world and human communities through project-based learning, which inspires them to learn more because they recognize that the knowledge is essential to something they care about. They also learn that they can make a difference, which lays a foundation for responsible, active citizenship.

#### Sustainable Living Is Rooted in a Deep Knowledge of Place

When people acquire a deep knowledge of a particular place, they develop a sense of caring about what happens to the landscape, creatures, and people in it. When they understand its

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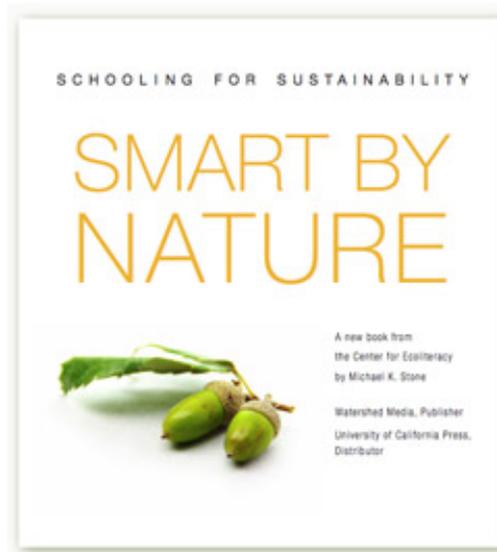
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ecology and diversity, the intricate web of relationships it supports, and the rhythm of its cycles, they also develop an appreciation for and sense of kinship with their surroundings. Place-based education is fundamental to schooling for sustainability. Places known deeply are more deeply loved, and well-loved places have the best chance to be protected and preserved, so that they will be cherished and cared for by future generations.

Among the initiative's offerings for 2009-2010 are:

- *Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability*, a fall 2009 book (published by Watershed Media) that explores the many ways in which schools are educating our nation's youth for a sustainable future.
- A new series of schooling for sustainability seminars to be held, among other places, at the Center for Ecoliteracy's future headquarters in the David Brower Center, a new home for the environmental movement in Berkeley, California.
- A new interactive website that will allow educators from across the nation to share their own stories, photos, and experiences in schooling for sustainability.



## SMART BY NATURE SCHOOLING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Coming in fall 2009, this book explores the many ways in which schools are educating our nation's youth for a sustainable future.

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