

Request for Proposal

Audubon Center of the North Woods
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A. Introduction

The Audubon Center is looking to sponsor one or more charter public schools that would like to create the best Environmental Education School possible. It is expected that the school be prepared to open in September 2008.

The schools may choose to have an emphasis on language, science, or any other magnet discipline, and they may choose Montessori, Roots and Shoots, or other program models, but there must be a commitment to environmental education that is embedded throughout the curriculum. In addition, the school must use an interdisciplinary approach to education that is project based, inquiry, student centered and consistent across all grades. If you agree that this is the type school which you would want to develop, please contact: Mike Link, Steve Dess at The Audubon Center, Box 530 Sandstone, MN 55072 about sponsorship, planning, and development of the project. Mike can also be reached at 800-404 7743 or mikelink45@hotmail.com. Steve can be reached at stevedess@comcast.net.

B. Required Proposal Content

1. To be a successful applicant to this RFP, the school's proposal will need to comply with the charter school requirements of the Audubon Society as provided for on our website which is: www.auduboncharterschools.org.
2. The substance of the instructional design of successful proposals will be based on an interdisciplinary approach that will necessitate cooperation between teachers, disciplines, and across grades. Two national models will be required. The first is *Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC)* which is a national best practice for schools. (See references at the end of this proposal for contact and background sources). By itself, *EIC* is not an environmental education program or curriculum. It is an approach to education that has been researched by the Pew foundation and it has been documented by the State Environmental Education Roundtable which includes representatives of 19 states. It is expected that the school will utilize this approach for at least half of its education design.
 - a. The first several years of any education program require that the students learn how to function within the system. In essence, the students need to learn how to learn. Students who enter the school in the formative years will adapt to this program quickly, but those who have entered from other learning paradigms will need to adjust to the approach and expectations.

- b. Since the adaptability decreases with the age that the student enters the system the school must set goals for each year and progressively move towards an increasing use of *EIC* each succeeding year. Teachers will be required to participate in extensive training prior to the school year to learn the system and prepare for the students.

- 3. The second required program is *GLOBE*.
 - a. This international program focuses on data collection in these areas:
 - i. Atmosphere
 - ii. Hydrology
 - iii. Soils
 - iv. land cover/phenology
 - b. The information collected is shared internationally via the internet.
 - c. It should be coordinated between grades, classes, and disciplines and incorporated in to the *EIC* approach.
 - d. This program uses scientific method, technology, math, geography, science, and communications to achieve its outcomes.
 - e. This program also necessitates training prior to institutionalization.

- 4. Additional Classroom Curriculum Options
 - a. Each discipline needs to look at curriculum that will be compatible with *EIC* and *GLOBE*, but does not need to be limited to those approaches. We understand that our schools must meet federal and state standards. We know that we have to prepare our students with the knowledge and skills to make them productive in their careers and life. The following are suggestions that are not mandatory, but are highly recommended. We would expect that at least two of these would be used in your school and that you would defend your choices of other curriculums as a replacement for the suggestions.
 - i. Mathematics -
 - ii. English and communications
 - iii. Science – Riverwatch and/or adaptation of CA model curriculum program as developed with SEER.Org.
 - iv. History/social Science – Adaptation of CA/SEER model
 - v. Social Studies – Society and the Environment by the curriculum council
 - vii. Art – We recommend a combination of art study and art projects like Artstart’s River Ecojourney. Cynde Randall of Birdxbird is an excellent consultant and artist.
 - viii. Technology – *GLOBE*, Jason Project
 - ix. Health and Physical Education – Consider some of the principles in expeditionary learning and concentrate on skills that develop the physical skills of the child and put them in to

outdoor/environmental experiences such as orienteering, canoeing, climbing, etc. Emphasize lifesports. Some of this can be coordinated with an outdoor education center. Rethinking School lunch has good health curriculum which will relate to a quality school lunch program.

x. Geography – A sense of Place, developed by Antioch College and the Orion Network.

5... Suggested activities and support

None of the following are required, but we feel that they offer good activities to supplement the curriculum and teaching approaches above.

Please consider these as supplemental materials:

- a. Project Learning Tree
- b. The Leopold Project
- c. Project Wild
- d. Project Wet
- e. Minnaqua
- f. One Bird Two Worlds

6. Field Experiences:

The Audubon Center is founded on the belief that children need to experience the environment, that they require hands on learning and that they need immersion in their subjects and experiences. To this end we recommend that the school form a relationship with a local day use nature center or park and we require that all students have an annual residential experience at the Audubon Center. That experience will vary from year so that students will not repeat the information that they receive, but rather build from year to year.

- a. Grades 1 – 3, single overnight
- b. Grades 4 – 9 two overnights
- c. Grades 10 – 12 four overnights including service learning and an expedition.

The students will also spend time outside of their classroom in the community of local parks every ten days. We would hope that this will build both environmental understanding and a connection with the community. This could be a combination of service learning and knowledge acquisition.

7. Operational Model

We expect the school to set a model for the community and the student body through the processes used to teach and operate. We expect the school to have active and obvious programs in some or all of the following areas:

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- a. Recycling – both the disposal of used materials and the choice of what purchased for use in classroom and office
 - b. Avoid all forms of Styrofoam and plastic utensils that have to be thrown away.
 - c. Use of technology that reduces reliance on energy consuming materials. For example, the lights should be energy savers. We recommend the use of Energy Star’s K – 12 program.
 - d. Facilities are not owned by most schools, but wherever there is an opportunity to change or adapt a building we would want the school to consult the guidelines developed by the Collaborative High Performance Schools network.
 - e. Vending – We know that pop and candy vending makes money, but that is not an excuse for putting sugar and caffeine in the diet when we know they have adverse affects on performance so vending machines would have juice, water and healthful snacks if used.
 - f. School lunches – emphasis would be on health. In fact the lunch program needs to be integrated with health curriculum. We suggest “Rethinking School Lunch” or “Appetite for a change”.
 - g. Develop a compost program for the food waste – gardens, pig farmers, etc.
 - h. We suggest a garden program if the school can use green houses and grow herbs that will be used in the kitchen with the compost material.
 - i. Consider the most fuel efficient vehicles for the school – vans, cars, buses.
 - j. Attention should be given to toxins in cleaning solutions, to indoor air quality, and issues of health. The cleaning guidelines set forth by Healthy Schools.org are good criteria for this.

8. Instructional Staff

- a. Teachers must hold the required licenses from the Minnesota State Board of Teaching.
- b. Staff needs to be hired and trained before the school opens. There should be a minimum of eight weeks of employment before the opening of the school. During this time a portion of the training should be on *EIC*, *Globe*, and team building. We recommend curriculum development and mapping plus workshops on the key content areas that are chosen in the options above. For a successful program the teachers must be competent in both methodology which includes student coaching and curriculum_content. The investment in training and staff is critical.

- e. For new second year staff it is important to invest in training by collaborating with other schools chartered by Audubon to gain the benefits of the successes of others and to be certain that new teachers will be able to be successful along with the current staff. .

C. Measurement of Student Performance

The evaluation of the performance of the school is a key aspect of the school's design. Measurement, including testing, has to be multi-level. The State required tests are one format which must be included in the design of the evaluation model. But we would like to suggest portfolios of student work and other measurements of achievement that will facilitate the assessment of individual growth in each child, use multiple intelligence indicators, and emphasize progress for each child. It is particularly important to have measurement systems for determining how the students are growing in the knowledge of and care for the environment. NWEA or MAP tests are recommended as they provide excellent student growth data over time. In addition, we want the school to determine what they think their strengths and test to those strengths so that we have more than anecdotal measure. The evaluation design will need to include parent, staff and student surveys to gain their input into the evaluation of the school. Finally, the evaluation design must include a "growth model" of data analysis or at the discretion of the applicant, a "value-added growth model" of data analysis so that the school and the sponsor can view the growth of students over time as the primary method of determining the success of the school.

D. Recommended Resources

<http://seer.org/> State Environmental Education Roundtable
<http://www.globe.gov> Globe project international.
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/education/teachers/activities/health.html> Physical Education and the environment
http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=k12_schools.bus_schoolsk12 Energy Star for K-12
<http://www.chps.net/> Collaborative High Performance Schools
<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/programs/visual-guide/index.html> Ecoliteracy guide for school lunch program – rethinking school lunch
<http://www.artstart.org/ecojourney.html>
http://www.organicvalley.coop/culture/school_lunch/ School lunch program
<http://www.organicconsumers.org/afc.cfm> Appetite for Change
<http://seer.org/pages/newdevelopments.html> New CA science, history and social science curriculum developed with SEER
<http://www.seek.state.mn.us/fullrec.cfm?ItemID=1293> One Bird Two Worlds science curriculum

www.healthyschools.org For information on green cleaning guidelines
<http://www.childproofing.org/> for more on green buildings and cleaning.
<http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/pages/framework/framework10.htm> Curriculum
Council Society and the environment.

Time Table:

1. Letter of Intent to submit a proposal due by February 15,2007
2. Meeting with Audubon Center by February 28
3. Application final due to Audubon on June 15
4. Sponsor submission to the MDE by June 30