



OISE's Environmental & Sustainability Education Initiative

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At the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), in Toronto, Canada, we have taken a multi-pronged approach to developing and delivering Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) in our Teacher Education programs. A small group of faculty formed the *ESE Working Group* in 2008 in anticipation of the release of the Ontario Ministry of Education's EE policy framework, "Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow". As Canada's largest teacher education faculty (with as many as 1000 teacher candidates registered each year), we felt strongly that a clear presence for ESE would support and deepen a culture of sustainability across the institution.

After a year of planning, OISE's *ESE Initiative* was begun in 2009 to accomplish this goal through course-infused teaching, elective courses, co-curricular programming, advocacy, research, and community partnerships. We have explored and refined successful ways of reaching hundreds of teacher candidates in recent years: hosting an annual EcoFair and ESE conference for students; offering events, talks, and workshops with EcoSchools teachers and community partners; establishing a Community Learning Garden; collaboratively creating environmental art installations; infusing existing courses with ESE content; running a student club called the *Environmental Learning Circle*; and developing ESE-focused practica and internship placements. This extensive programming has helped us to develop partnerships with a wide variety of community partners, such as Evergreen, Foodshare, and the TRCA, to help us extend our teacher candidates' learning into the community.

In 2016 we added a mandatory course component in ESE for all teacher candidates in the *Master of Teaching Program*; elementary candidates receive 12 hours of ESE in the *Science and Environmental Education* course, while secondary candidates receive 36 hours of ESE in the *Issues in Secondary Education* course. For those teacher candidates eager to learn more, we also offer an *Environmental Leadership Certificate* (equivalent to 36 hours of learning) that involves course-based, extra-curricular, and service-based learning.

While OISE's ESE Initiative has worked closely with the EcoSchools program at the Toronto District School Board since its inception, it began an innovative collaboration with the TDSB in 2017. By bringing preservice and inservice teachers' professional development in ESE together, we are exploring how to prepare new TDSB teachers for supporting environmental learning with K-12 students, and possibly contributing to the expansion of their EcoSchools program. Over time, this may be one of the ways that the school board and the university can contribute to the cultural shift of Toronto into a more sustainable city.

The *ESE Initiative* has moved us closer to our institutional goal of creating a culture of sustainability in unexpected ways; not only has it helped us to reduce our ecological footprints in terms of behavioural shifts and physical infrastructure improvements, but it has also extended our environmental handprints (our positive impacts) into the wider university and other educational communities in innovative ways.

For more information on OISE's ESE Initiative, please visit our website:

www.oise.utoronto.ca/ease