



What is the Colorado Collective Outcomes Project?

CAEE, in collaboration with the Pisces Foundation, Blue Lotus Consulting and Evaluation, and Point b(e) Strategies, has been engaged in a multi-year effort to bring together environmental education (EE) practitioners, evaluators, and funders to create and implement shared outcomes, with the goal of being able to demonstrate the role of EE in improving quality of life in Colorado. CAEE initiated a robust process of gathering community feedback in order to start establishing collective outcomes in Colorado. The primary goal of this project, now referred to as Colorado Collective Outcomes, is to move all Colorado EE stakeholders closer to a shared language and a common understanding for intended outcomes across the state.

CAEE has identified the following five major outcome areas that encompass Colorado EE initiatives:

- Conservation
- Education
- Positive Child and Youth Development
- Health and Wellness
- Social Justice

Why is the Colorado Collective Outcomes Project Important?

By collaborating with organizations statewide to work toward and evaluate common outcomes, CAEE is hopeful that we can create a common language and a unified voice about the role of EE in Colorado. There are numerous benefits to measuring the same outcomes across EE organizations.

- By measuring the same things, organizations can utilize the same evaluation tools and methods and share lessons learned across organizations. EE organizations statewide can engage in collective learning as a network and use lessons learned to improve programs.
- By measuring the same outcomes across the state and with different populations, EE organizations can one day aggregate the data to assess the statewide impact of EE.
- Through establishing common outcomes, we can bring strength to our voice as a field, illustrate our collective impact, contribute to research and best practices, and increase support and funding for environmental education.

Table 1: Colorado Collective Outcomes Project—Five Impact Areas Defined

Impact Area	Result	Programming
Conservation	All Colorado ecosystems are healthy, vibrant, and valued.	Programs with conservation outcomes include those that increase environmental knowledge, improve environmental awareness and attitudes, and inspire positive environmental actions that lead to improvements in environmental quality.
Education	Environmental education supports and ensures all PreK-12 students are lifelong learners with successful school outcomes.	Programs with education outcomes include those that improve academic performance, increase E-STEAM literacy, improve standardized test scores, and expand school engagement using the environment as an integrating context.
Positive Child and Youth Development	All Colorado children and youth grow into responsible, resilient, engaged citizens that care for themselves, their natural environment, and their communities.	Programs with youth development outcomes are aimed at guiding young people as they grow into responsible, engaged citizens that care for the environment and their communities. These outcomes may be achieved through strengths-based programs focused on character and leadership combined with outdoor experiences or community service.
Health and Wellness	Through increased safe access, connection to and comfort in the natural environment, all Coloradans are healthy and well—physically, mentally, and emotionally.	Programs with health and wellness outcomes are focused on improving physical, mental, emotional, and social health and wellness for participants through connection with nature. Health outcomes include improving nutrition, increasing physical fitness, reducing stress and anxiety, recovering from physical or psychological trauma, and increasing awareness and understanding of personal and environmental health.

Social Justice	All Coloradans have access to and opportunity to experience the outdoors.	Programs with social justice outcomes include those that increase access and opportunity for underserved communities and underrepresented populations. These outcomes include increasing access to outdoor experiences, improving urban green space, and developing and supporting environmental educators and leaders from traditionally underrepresented groups.
-----------------------	---	--

For each of the impact areas, CAEE identified both program-level outcomes and population-level outcomes. Program-level outcomes look at what is happening in specific programs. These are outcomes that organizations can track and evaluate and use to better understand and improve their programs. Population-level outcomes, on the other hand, assess what is happening on a larger scale across the state. They may not be attributable to one single organization but help inform whether EE organizations are collectively making changes in each of the impact areas. By identifying population-level outcomes, EE organizations can keep track of certain trends across Colorado.

Table 2: Colorado Collective Outcomes Project—Population Level and Program Level Outcomes

Outcome Area	Population-level outcomes*	Program-level outcomes**
Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in environmental behaviors • Increase in quality: water, air, and soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in nature connection • Increase in stewardship actions • Increase in desire to participate in positive environmental actions • Increase in positive attitudes toward nature and environment • Increase in civic and community engagement • Increase in awareness and knowledge of cultural, biological, and scientific systems
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in # students enrolled in NR/ENVS degree program • Increase in % schools with EE • Increase in academic testing scores • Increase in level of engagement in learning (attendance and referrals) • Increase in # opportunities and action for civic or community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in understanding of EE program content • Increase in critical thinking/problem solving skills • Increase in engagement in learning • Increase in workforce readiness skills • Increase in time spent on EE in the classroom and outdoors • Increase in culturally relevant curriculum

* Population level outcomes: a measure that encompasses population-level data points as opposed to individual programs or persons
 ** Program level outcomes: a measure that assesses individual programs or persons

<p>Positive Child and Youth Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in # opportunities that provide a continuum of experience between organizations, partnerships, and other collaborations • Decreased barriers to nature access • Increase in programs that support PYD Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competence - Confidence - Character - Caring - Connection - Contribution • Increase in # opportunities for civic or community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in # opportunities that provide a continuum of experience • Increase in # of youth experiences in the outdoors that support basic needs (food, sleep, comfort) to lead to safe and positive experiences in nature • # of youth-directed internship, mentors, authentic adult and peer relationships • Increase in youths' understanding of healthy and unhealthy risk • Increase in # opportunities for civic or community engagement
<p>Health and Wellness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in time in nature • Increase in # of culturally responsive outdoor spaces • Decrease in systemic barriers to accessing nature • Increase in % Coloradans with Safe and Convenient Pathways to Nature • Increase in nature connection across all Coloradan demographics • Increase in programs offered linking healthy environment and healthy self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in unstructured free time for all ages in outdoor green space • Increase in comfort in exploration of outdoor spaces • Decrease in fear, anxiety, unknown • Decrease in participant reported barriers to accessing nature • Increase in participants with safe and convenient pathways to nature • Increase in nature connection among all participants • Increase in perceived wellness and health as result of being in outdoors • Increase in outdoor community-based health interventions
<p>Social Justice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in barriers to nature access • Use of outdoor spaces reflects demographics of community • Increase in commitment to DEI within organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in # participants who feel welcome in Green Spaces • Increase in # programs honoring diversity in outdoor spaces • Increase in diversity of organizational leadership • Increase in providers' DEI training for all staff • Increase in participants' perception of safe and healthy community • Increase in culturally aware and responsive programming