

Principle I: Education

Cincinnati Nature Center (CNC) is committed to providing quality educational activities and enjoyable experiences for its diverse audiences. CNC strives to encourage a “Sense of Place” in all visitors while adhering to the Principles for Education outlined below.

1. Teaching People to Think (What We Teach)

CNC educators attempt to inspire visitors to think critically and act responsibly to support a healthy environment by aligning their actions with their values and committing to lifetime learning. CNC educators seldom teach a right answer about an environmental issue because, although they attempt to stay abreast of current research, issues are often too complex for simple answers. Rather, the intent is to educate people to make their own “right” choice.

2. Promoting Environmental Education (Why We Teach)

CNC’s programs and curricula are based on the goals of Environmental Education as defined by the Tblisi Declaration, the Belgrade Charter, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These goals are intended to create an environmentally literate citizenry through a progression of awareness, knowledge, values (passion for nature), skills, and action (environmentally responsible choices). Sustainability, as defined by CNC’s “Principles for Making Environmentally Responsible Choices,” is incorporated where appropriate as an educational theme. In addition, we strive to address concerns over the “Extinction of Experience” in today’s society. To this end, all off-site or in-school programs include incentives and encouragement for audiences to visit CNC sites.

3. Using Interpretation to Teach (How We Teach)

CNC uses the Principles of Interpretation (National Association of Interpretation) in all educational endeavors. All staff educators are committed to becoming certified interpreters. CNC programs are taught in small-group settings when possible so that all participants receive “hands-on” experience in the outdoors. Both staff-directed and self-led opportunities are provided. CNC educators strive to address the values, intellect, and senses of each participant; and they continually evaluate and improve their programs and services based on customer feedback, new trends in the field, and acquired knowledge and skills.

4. Providing Diverse Outdoor Environments (Where We Teach)

CNC believes the best environmental education occurs in biologically diverse outdoor settings. Visitors can be exposed to and educated about the wide continuum of interactions humans have with the natural world, from managed farmland to nature preserves. By emphasizing interconnectedness, CNC promotes the three components of sustainability – Environmentally Responsible, Financially Viable, and Socially Equitable. Farms, gardens, and other cultivated environments provide settings for hands-on experiences while demonstrating human dependence upon the land.

5. Reaching Families (Who We Teach)

CNC believes that children have the highest priority among all audiences, because we have an opportunity to influence and inspire their environmental values at an early age. These leaders of tomorrow are in need of frequent, positive outdoor experiences today. CNC alone cannot provide sufficient outdoor experiences for every child, but it is possible to educate and encourage families to take this step for their children.

Adopted as part of 5-year Education Master Plan in 1999

Revised as part of Strategic Planning process in 2003

Principle II: Experience

Experience is a critical aspect of the CNC Mission. The Cincinnati Nature Center Experience is defined as:

- 1. Providing encounters with the natural and agricultural worlds which are hands-on, multi-sensory, unique and personal.**
- 2. Employing and training courteous, enthusiastic, passionate and knowledgeable staff and volunteers who create a welcoming and positive environment for all visitors.**
- 3. Operating clean, well-maintained, accessible and safe grounds and facilities.**

Principle III: Making Environmentally Responsible Choices

*“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the **integrity, stability, and beauty** of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”*

A Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold, 1949

Cincinnati Nature Center (CNC) strives to *meet its present needs without sacrificing the ability of others, now and in the future, to meet their own needs*. To achieve this we must make choices which are **Environmentally Responsible**, **Financially Viable**, and **Socially Equitable**.

CNC’s policies, practices, and designs should promote and preserve integrity, stability, and beauty within its natural and human-made systems. CNC strives to understand and function within Nature’s interdependent processes through conservation, restoration, and stewardship of its natural, financial, and human resources. CNC strives to be a role model by making nature and environmentally responsible choices visible.

CNC chooses to be Environmentally Responsible by:

1. Respecting and utilizing the laws of nature

CNC seeks to learn about, teach about, and work with natural systems and laws and their inherent balance, unity, and order. The laws of nature include; water and nutrient cycling, energy flow, food chains/webs, and natural forces (gravitational, electric, and magnetic).

EXAMPLES:

- maintaining a comprehensive recycling program
- demonstrate a variety of alternative energy sources

2. Promoting a responsible land ethic

CNC is respectful and accountable to land character, natural resources and cycles, species, and their habitats. CNC maintains and enhances the biodiversity of all its natural lands, and serves as a model for responsible land use and stewardship. CNC recognizes the bioregion concept as the appropriate basis for land management. A bioregion is defined by the native habitats or biological communities within a geographically similar area (as opposed to state, county, or city lines). CNC seeks to inspire people to develop their own responsible land ethic and to practice ecological stewardship where they live and work.

EXAMPLES:

- manage lands for maximum native biodiversity
- consider final destination for any product as waste, before buying and using the product
- utilize farming practices which preserve and enhance the diversity of the soil

3. Recognizing the cultural and historical significance of the sites

CNC preserves, enhances, and celebrates the heritage of the region. CNC respects historical buildings, lifestyles, artifacts, and local ecological knowledge of ancestors for the lessons they provide about living within the bioregion.

EXAMPLES:

- restore native habitats, remove invasive plants, protect the old growth forest

- produce and sell farm products
- buy local products
- practice crop rotation

4. Making appropriate use of ecological systems

CNC seeks to understand and imitate natural systems. CNC responsibly integrates these systems into its facilities and practices in relevant areas.

EXAMPLES:

- orient buildings to the south to maximize solar gain
- staff and caterers separate food waste for composting, rather than landfill
- design buildings to maximize use of natural lighting
- use wetlands to filter and recycle water
- compost to recycle nutrients

5. Making appropriate use of technological systems

CNC strives first to use or imitate natural systems. When technologies are used, they are integrated with natural systems.

EXAMPLES:

- purchase high mileage, low emission vehicles
- utilize composting toilets
- utilize email when appropriate
- utilize compact fluorescent light bulbs

6. Limiting waste

There is no waste in natural systems; everything is recycled. CNC seeks to minimize the amount of waste produced by considering the end products of each activity when making decisions.

EXAMPLES:

- print 2-sided copies whenever possible
- establish a comprehensive recycling program
- select materials which can be reused or recycled
- compost organic wastes
- purchase materials with recycled content, e.g. copy paper

CNC chooses to be Financially Viable by:

7. Balancing annual operating budgets

A balanced budget is defined as operating expenses being equal to or less than operating revenues when including investment income.

8. Safeguarding and enhancing capital and financial assets

Facilities are maintained in good functional condition by funding their deferred maintenance. CNC's financial investments will be managed to balance long-term growth with support of annual operations.

EXAMPLES:

- provide adequate funding to maintain facilities
- establish and adhere to a rigorous and disciplined Investment Policy

9. Including ecological impact in financial considerations

CNC's financial decisions recognize the value of the natural world. The effects of human activity are considered. CNC recognizes that longer timeframes for the determination of economic payback are often required in ecological accounting.

EXAMPLES:

- consider amount of CO₂ produced when choosing HVAC systems
- place value on land and forests for their ecological value rather than for development
- purchase fair trade coffee

10. Creating an atmosphere conducive to philanthropy

CNC is a significant community asset providing a place to experience and study nature. CNC strives to create, in the community, excitement and interest in the natural world and the need for its protection. This, in turn, will encourage financial support. CNC shows appropriate appreciation to its members, donors, and volunteers for their contributions.

EXAMPLES:

- prompt acknowledgements for all gifts
- appropriate donor recognition such as books and plaques

11. Planning for the future

CNC believes regular multi-year advance planning is critical to its long-term health. Planning is seen as a cyclical and continuous process which includes implementation, assessment, and adjustment.

EXAMPLES:

- carryout regular strategic planning.
- project budget three years out in the future

CNC chooses to be Socially Equitable by:

12. Embracing a high quality of human life

CNC recognizes that humans are part of the community of all living things. Therefore, a healthy community must provide a high quality of life for all its members, including people. CNC embraces diversity and recognizes the value and wisdom of local peoples and their culture.

EXAMPLES:

- offer competitive salaries
- provide good benefits package
- communicate effectively with all constituencies

13. Encouraging people to connect with nature

CNC nurtures the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and other possible connections between people and nature and encourages people of all ages, interests, and backgrounds to visit CNC sites for the pleasure of being outdoors.

EXAMPLES:

- maintain good trails
- preserve the solitude of CNC properties
- interpretive display which explains the natural world
- design facilities which integrate with the site

14. Embracing a collaborative style of leadership and interaction

Staff, trustees, volunteers, and members exhibit a spirit of teamwork, open communication, and mutual support. However CNC recognizes that different situations require different decision making styles.

EXAMPLES:

- be clear about how decisions are made, and establish teams when appropriate

15. Providing for the safety of participants, volunteers, and staff

CNC takes precaution to provide a safe environment for its people.

EXAMPLES:

- provide proper protective equipment for all staff and volunteers
- train staff in CPR and first aide
- maintain good working relations with local police, fire, and EMS squads

16. Adhering to the laws of society

CNC complies with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

CNC recognizes choices are challenging due to the high degree of interdependence and complexity of natural systems. Board members, staff, volunteers, and members are required to balance many components within this dynamic system. CNC also recognizes it must continually adapt to a changing world in order to remain vital and viable. These Principles may need to be reevaluated to ensure they reflect current ecological, financial, and social knowledge and norms while guiding the choices made by Cincinnati Nature Center.