

# **Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE): Site #1: Apalachicola LIFE Center**

## **A Partnership Agreement**

### **Summary**

The Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) Program is a proposal for a statewide network of environmental-science, field laboratories on existing state lands (e.g., State Parks, Reserves, etc.). These "LIFE Centers" are designed to support the needs of small, rural school districts and improve the quality and continuity of educational programming within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). As classrooms without walls, the LIFE Centers provide an opportunity for the exploration of Florida's most unique natural communities and a place to practice and apply science.

### **Characteristics of the LIFE Program**

The LIFE Program represents a systematic effort to combine the unique assets of the DEP (namely, conservation lands and the scientists who protect and study them) with the needs of Florida's students, teachers, and schools – with special emphasis on FCAT Science. As such, it will be a partnership between individual field sites managed by DEP, and individual or multiple school districts in the area.

Each site designated as a "LIFE Center" or field lab will use the local environment as the entry point for inspiring students through hands-on, field-based activities. Students will spend a minimum of two days (and up to four days) per year at the LIFE center applying, reinforcing, and integrating content from their existing, standards-based curriculum. The "processes of science" will guide instruction and serve as a method to integrate other subjects into an interdisciplinary program.

The goals of LIFE Program are to improve student achievement, support teacher professional development, and enhance stewardship of the region's unique natural communities and resources. Teachers will play a lead role in designing and implementing field labs to address the priority needs of their students. LIFE Centers will also provide professional development opportunities for teachers including Project WET workshops and the establishment of an internet-based, environmental science, learning community.

Each LIFE Center will share the core characteristics outlined above; however, each Center will be the unique product of the local teachers, DEP staff, and other resources available at the site.

### **The Apalachicola LIFE Center Partnership: Roles and Responsibilities**

The Department of Environmental Protection, through the Office of Environmental Education, will serve as the project coordinator, and secure the necessary financial and personnel resources to initiate and evaluate the program. It will facilitate the integration of the program content into the 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum in participating Franklin County Schools, and help design the delivery methods and logistical arrangements for the site.

The Department of Environmental Protection, through the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, will serve as the first, field-based, learning center for the field component of the LIFE Program, will provide available staff, will coordinate scheduling of field labs, and will provide the necessary infrastructure and equipment for field activities.

The Franklin County School District will ensure district-wide support for the LIFE Program, provide transportation to and from the ANERR LIFE Center, will select a team to participate in a summer workshop to integrate the LIFE Program into the 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, will ensure teachers participate in a LIFE Program orientation/training, and will provide the necessary supplies for the classroom component of the program.

Other partners – including nearby school districts, state and federal agencies, colleges and universities, local businesses, local foundations, and local non-profit organizations – may be added to this partnership when their participation is agreed to by the primary partners described above.

This partnership agreement is designed to clarify the shared interests of the primary partners and to guide their good faith efforts to achieve the stated goals of the LIFE Program. It does not commit the partners to any specific financial obligations; however, it encourages each partner to ensure implementation of its roles and responsibilities as described above.

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Office of the Secretary	Date
Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection	

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Office of the Superintendent	Date
Franklin County School Board	

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Manager, Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve	Date
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Director, Office of Environmental Education	Date
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