

A Trail To Every Classroom

“It’s changing an entire system of thinking, from the teachers down to the kids.” – 2006 TTEC Participant

The significance of the Appalachian Trail is not its length but its story of civic engagement in preserving a recreational, natural, cultural, spiritual, and now, educational, resource for individual challenges and dreams through the efforts of local citizens. Visited by approximately four million people each year and located within a day’s drive of one third of the nation’s population, this emblematic American icon traverses 14 states and 174 school districts from Georgia to Maine. Our unique Cooperative Management System engages more than 100 public and private partner organizations and over 6,000 volunteers.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the National Park Service developed *A Trail to Every Classroom* as one strategy to help preserve our volunteer tradition- a multi-disciplinary professional development program for K-12 teachers that uses the Appalachian Trail as an educational resource through service-learning and place-based education. Modeled from the successful *Forest for Every Classroom*, *A Trail to Every Classroom* (TTEC) was launched in 2006 with a week-long Summer Institute.

Inspired by the pilot Institute’s success and requests from participating teachers, we expanded the program in 2007 to a three-season cumulative series of professional development activities providing cohorts of teachers with new ways to link academic subjects to the Trail and local communities through field experience with resource specialists.

In just our third year, we have trained 125 teachers and community partners, and through the curriculum developed as part of TTEC we are engaging approximately 3,000 students. Our goal is to engage 6000 students by 2010.

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“The Trail to Every Classroom program engages young people in nature. It brings together Trail managers, teachers, and children, allowing a safe pace to engage in physical exercise, explore nature, learn about the Trail as a natural and cultural resource, and collectively get their hands dirty. This is exactly the kind of program we need to see more of as a way to connect children to nature.” Richard Louv, Author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, 2005.

Program Model

- **Annual Planning & Recruitment**
Target locales are selected based on partner interest, facilities, in-kind and funding opportunities.
- **1st Local Workshop**
Introduce local teams of teachers to the Trail locally
- **Summer Institute**
Brings all participants together focusing on Place Based Education and Service-Learning, Curriculum Planning
- **2nd Local workshop**
Focus on curriculum implementation and sustainability
- **Curriculum Development**
Teachers develop curriculum with a focus on the AT
- **Grants**
Grant opportunity for teachers who are committed to curriculum implementation
- **Follow-up Activities**
Advanced workshops for alumni

*Connecting Youth & Communities
Along the Appalachian Trail*

