

# 2026-27 Four Winds Linkages for Environmental Literacy Nature- and Place-Based Learning Professional Development

## WONDER AND INQUIRY



**WONDER & INQUIRY** is our connecting theme this year! Wonder inspires the wish to understand. Deeply connected, wonder, curiosity, awe, and fascination drive scientific inquiry and discovery. Wonder prompts scientists to delve into the "why" and "how" behind natural phenomena. It's the spark that motivates scientists to explore, question, and seek understanding of the natural world.

We invite you to participate in a teacher-directed professional development initiative for 2026-27. **The aim of this project is to improve place-based science education and increase student engagement in learning** by leveraging local natural and human resources and supporting school/community environmental citizenship partnerships. The goal for teachers is to create instructional units or develop projects that nurture a sense of place using environmental education as a frame for investigating local issues that have meaning for students in their communities.

We'll plan to get together for half-day sessions as a whole learning community four (4) times in 2026-27 to engage in professional development, share resources, and develop curriculum and practice. Graduate credit through VSU – Castleton may be available if there's group interest.

Interested educators should submit a one-page essay/application in which they identify their own project goals and needs (see included application form). Applications are due August 17, 2026. Project managers will make final decisions regarding participation.

Participants will receive an \$800 stipend (prorated/meeting) plus \$400 for unit related teaching materials.

Dates for group meetings will be determined via Doodle schedule surveys completed by participating teachers.

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2026-27 Four Winds Linkages for Environmental Literacy  
Nature- and Place-Based Learning Professional Development

## WONDER AND INQUIRY

The goal of this project is to form a teacher-directed learning community in our schools focused on improving place-based science instruction, leveraging local resources, and increasing student and teacher environmental citizenship.

Applications are due August 17, 2026. By applying, you are agreeing to:

- **Connect with a LEL project manager** to clarify project goals and identify resource needs.
- **Participate in four whole group meetings/workshops.**
- **Develop or revise an inquiry-based environmental/science unit/place-based EE project** to be presented in classrooms by May 2027.
- **Complete brief project check-ins** in a timely manner in November, February, April.
- **Share project/unit goals and activities** at a whole group symposium
- **Submit project/unit write-up and final reflection by May 30, 2027.**

**TO APPLY:**

Teacher name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

School address \_\_\_\_\_

Home address \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_

Work Email \_\_\_\_\_

Summer email \_\_\_\_\_

In a brief (1-page) signed and dated essay, please describe a nature- or place-based science unit/project idea you would like to develop and explain how you plan for this experience to impact environmental understanding and connection with your students. Include some ideas for how you might include a community component in the unit. Consider what kind of professional development and content specialist support would be of assistance. Also required, a brief email of support from your building principal regarding your participation in this professional development program.

Eight teachers will be selected to participate. Participants will receive an \$800 stipend (prorated) plus \$400 for unit related teaching materials.

Applications are due August 17, 2026.

**For more information or to submit a proposal contact Becky Proulx at [becky@fwni.org](mailto:becky@fwni.org)**