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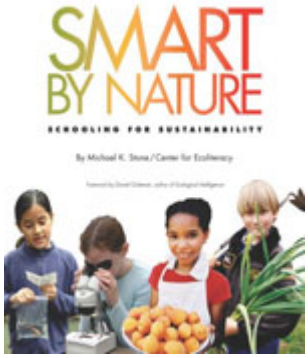
Take nature as a teacher, book urges schools

Teresa Malcolm | Apr. 10, 2010



SMART BY NATURE: SCHOOLING FOR SUSTAINABILITY
By Michael K. Stone
Published by Watershed Media, $24.95

The Center for Ecoliteracy advocates for schools? pivotal role in meeting the environmental challenges that face our world, and the center?s new book, *Smart by Nature*, not only celebrates the achievements of schools that have taken the lead in sustainability education, but offers them as useful lessons for others to follow in their footsteps.

Author Michael K. Stone, senior editor for the Berkley, Calif.-based center, writes, ?This generation will require leaders and citizens who can think ecologically, understand the interconnectedness of human and natural systems, and have the will, ability and courage to act.?

The efforts of the schools profiled in Smart by Nature are organized under the topics of sustainable lunch programs; greening campuses; wider community involvement in sustainable education; and using the natural world as a classroom.

Stone sets forth four principles that guide this kind of sustainable schooling:

- Nature is our teacher;
- Sustainability is a community practice;
- The real world is the optimal learning environment;
- Sustainable living is rooted in a deep knowledge of place.

From these principles, the practices are as varied as the schools and communities that implement them. So the reader learns about schools that bring students into nearby woods, as well as about inner-city schools where students sally forth to assess the quality of life in their neighborhood and press city officials for improvements. New school buildings can adopt green practices from the ground up, while one school had to envision how to combine sustainability with preserving its historic, but inefficient, buildings.

Smart by Nature also provides ample resources for educators interested joining the schooling for sustainability movement, including organizations, books, films and government resources.

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