For Immediate Release

Contact: Kathlene Carney
707-377-4141 / Kathlene@carneypr.com

SMART BY NATURE:
Schooling for Sustainability

By Michael K. Stone / Center for Ecoliteracy

BERKELEY, CA, Sept. 15, 2009 . . . Throughout the United States, a movement of educators, parents, and students is remaking K-12 education to prepare students for future environmental challenges.


Stone documents this movement through inspiring success stories from public and independent schools across the country. Youngsters learn good nutrition while eating healthy lunches of farm-fresh food, gardens bloom on former asphalt lots, and classroom buildings become living laboratories for resource conservation.

Students learn to ask what is upstream and who is downstream, and how their decisions affect the health of people and the environment. They design rain gardens, dig the trenches, direct the bulldozers, and reconcile competing opinions along the way. When students become engaged in studies that matter, test scores rise. Student health improves. Problem schools mired in low achievement become nationally recognized success stories.

“Smart by Nature” is a framework for schooling for sustainability based on two decades of work with hundreds of schools by the Center for Ecoliteracy, a public foundation in Berkeley, California. The book explores four areas of schooling for sustainability: food, the campus, community, and teaching & learning, examining each area from the perspective of Smart by Nature principles. For instance, it chronicles programs that look at whole food systems rather than just the nutrients in the lunch, and reports on how building greener schools saves money while benefiting the wider community.

One biology teacher explains, “It’s not so much that we want them to say ‘Oh we had a cool school. We put solar panels on the roof. We had a garden and we composted.’ But rather we want them to be able to express why they did those things and why they’re important.”

Smart by Nature includes profiles of schools and districts from every region, paying particular attention to strategies for creating change within schools and incorporating into the curriculum such sustainable practices as purchasing school food locally, increasing energy efficiency, and promoting the well-being of surrounding communities.
“This book presents a radical vision for education,” says Zenobia Barlow, executive director for The Center for Ecoliteracy. “It’s founded on the conviction that the best hope for learning to live sustainably lies in schooling that returns to the real basics. We want to assist schools becoming places where children can acquire the experience, knowledge, skills, and values they will need to create sustainable communities.”

Every chapter features “Lessons Learned” and practical “What You Can Do” suggestions. The book concludes with ten pages of resources for further exploration and implementation, making this a twenty-first-century guide for our educational future.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ECOLITERACY
The Center for Ecoliteracy is dedicated to education for sustainable living. It provides information, inspiration, and support to the vital movement of K-12 educators, parents, and other members of the school community who are helping young people gain the understandings and competence essential to sustainable living. For more information, please visit www.ecoliteracy.org.

PRAISE FOR SMART BY NATURE
“Smart by Nature is must reading for teachers, school administrators, parents, and the concerned public. It is an encyclopedia of good ideas, principles, and case studies of some of the most exciting developments in education. It is an antidote to the idea that schools are failing and must fail. To the contrary, Michael K. Stone and the Center for Ecoliteracy show how schools succeed by joining curriculum and nature in innovative and practical ways. The results include smarter, more grounded children and lots more.”

–David W. Orr, author of Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse (Oxford University Press, 2009), Earth in Mind (Island Press, 2004), and other books

“As we recognize the sobering implications of global environmental and social justice threats, people are looking for smart new answers. Smart by Nature: Schooling for Sustainability offers the best hope of all by explaining what sustainable living really means, how to teach it, and why young people with this knowledge will lead us to a safer, more fair, and prosperous future.”

–Kevin Coyle, Vice President Education and Training for the National Wildlife Federation

“Smart By Nature is an inspired handbook that connects hands-on experiences of the garden, the kitchen, the table, the compost heap, and the classroom curriculum!”

–Alice Waters, founder Chez Panisse

Book specifications:

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