Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators (PIAEE)

Application Form

Program History

PIAEE recognizes outstanding kindergarten through grade 12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for learning for their students. Up to two teachers from each of EPA's 10 Regions, from different states, may be selected for this award. Since the passage of the 1990 National Environmental Education Act, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), in partnership with EPA, administers this award to nationally honor, support and encourage educators who incorporate environmental education in their classrooms and teaching methods.

Eligibility

- Teach K-12 on a full-time basis in a public school that is operated by a local education agency[1], including schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- Hold a current teaching license from the state or territory (or valid reciprocity from the state for a license from another state);
- Have a minimum of 5 years of K-12 teaching experience, including at least 3 years of teaching environmental education;
- Have a current teaching assignment or anticipated classroom teaching assignment involving environmental education for the upcoming school year;
- Citizen of the United States, its territories or possessions, or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residency[2]
- Has not been a recipient of this award in the past 5 years; and
- Completed, signed and dated EPA Multimedia Consent Form, found at the end of this application.
- Must be able to provide a complete W9 and ACH form for oneself and for the school if selected.

Application Requirements

There are five sections to the application:

Section 1: General Information about the Teacher

- Applicants must provide contact information, perform an eligibility review, and provide a summary of teaching experience.

[1] For this program, a local education agency is one as defined by section 198 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (now codified at 20 U.S.C. 7801 (26)).

[2] The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services defines lawful permanent residency as any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the United States under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant, also known as "Permanent Resident Alien," "Resident Alien Permit Holder," and "Green Card Holder."

Section 2: Essays

- Applicants are required to respond to essay questions addressing the selection criteria, which includes Innovation, Service to the Community, Leadership and Integration.

Section 3: Sample Teaching Materials

- Applicants must include sample teaching materials that demonstrate the teacher's work with students in **only** one or more of the following focus areas:
    - Agricultural practices
    - Food Waste
    - Prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards
    - Recycling
    - School gardens or green space (e.g., playground, park, or other community spaces)
    - Use science, data analysis or other creative approaches
    - Water infrastructure
    - Water quality and/or litter within waterways

Section 4: Letters of Support

- Each application must include 3 signed letters of support form an administrator at the teacher's school, a fellow teacher, and a past or current student.

Section 5: Final Checklist

- Applicants must complete a final checklist, certifying that they have completed all required sections of the applications.

Selection Criteria

Teachers must have an outstanding record of teaching. Each of the factors below is meant to illustrate the applicants record of teaching. Applicants will be judged only by the responses to the questions in each of these five factors, as well as their sample teaching materials and letters of support.

Innovation (25 points)

A. How does the teacher make learning about the environment unique, fun and exciting for the students? For example, does the teacher use experiential or place-based learning in ways that go above and beyond the practices of other teachers? ***Please ensure that all the submitted teaching material only focus on the topics listed above.***
B. How does the teacher tailor their teaching methods to the needs of their student population?
C. How does the teacher use any of the following topics as a basis to teach about agricultural practices; food waste; prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards; recycling; school gardens or green spaces (e.g., playground, park or other community spaces); use science date analysis or other creative approaches, water infrastructure; and water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Achievement (15 points)

A. What positive changes has the teacher seen in student academic achievement and behavior or attitude because of participation in the teacher's environmental education program?

Service to the Community (20 points)

Many schools are part of communities that are heavily impacted by environmental pollution. While your community or school may or may not be impacted by environmental pollution, please answer the following questions.

A. How does the teacher extend environmental education beyond the classroom? Are the teacher's students participating beyond the classroom in environmental, conservation, or earth science extracurricular or community-based projects and activities?
B. How does the teacher inspire the surrounding community, including parents/guardians and members of the community to participate in environmental education activities?
C. Is the teacher working with a community to solve an environmental problem?

Leadership (15 points)

A. How does the teacher serve as a model for students and teachers with his/her approach to teaching about one or more of the following environmental topics: agricultural practices; food waste; prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards; recycling; school gardens or green spaces (e.g., playground, park or other community spaces); use science, data analysis or other creative approaches; water infrastructure; and water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Integration (10 points)

A. How does the teacher help to integrate environmental education into the broader school curriculum or coordinate with other teachers to integrate environmental education into their academic subjects?

Sample Teaching Materials (10 points)

A. Sample teaching material must only be on one or more of the following focus areas:

- Agricultural practices
- Food waste
- Prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards
- Recycling
- School gardens or green spaces (e.g., playground, park, or other community spaces)
- Use science, data analysis or other creative approaches
- Water infrastructure
- Water quality and/or litter within waterways

Letters of support (5 points) - Please ensure the content of the letters only discuss the focus areas listed above.

Winners

- Winners will receive a Presidential award plaque and up to $2,500 to be used to further their professional development in environmental education.
- Award winners' local education agencies will also receive up to $2,500 to fund environmental activities and programs. These funds cannot be used for construction costs, general expenses, salaries, bonuses, or other administrative expenses.
- A congratulatory letter from a senior official at EPA will be provided to each winner.

Submission Requirements

- All application contents are required to be submitted in English.
- Applications will only be accepted by email.
- Email the completed application package, including all supporting materials, to **PEYA_PIAEE@epa.gov.** Please include "Application for 2026 PIAEE" in the subject line.
- All email applications must be received by **11:59 PM ET on January 9, 2027.**
- Please ensure that the required supporting materials are included in the application submission- a checklist is provided on the last page of the application.
- All applicants will receive an email confirmation that their application was received.

The public reporting and recordkeeping for this collection of information is estimated to average 10 hours per response. Send comments on the Agency's need for this information, the accuracy of the provided burden estimates, and any suggested methods for minimizing respondent burden, including automated collection techniques to the Director, Collection Strategies Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2822T), 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20460. Include the OMB control number in any correspondence. Do not send the completed form to this address.

Application Section 1: Contact Information

Teacher Contact Information

Full Name	
Work Email Address	
Secondary Email Address:	
Preferred Telephone Number	
Secondary Telephone:	

School Contact Information

School Name, School Address, City, State or Territory and Zip Code	
School Telephone Number	
School Email Address	
School Website	
School Tax ID Number	
School Telephone Number	
Principal Name	
Principal Email Address	
Principal Telephone Number	

Grades Taught

K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Teaching Experience

How many years has the teacher taught K-12? _____

Eligibility:

Check each box to confirm that the teacher meets eligibility requirements.

☐ The teacher educates K-12 full time in public school (including a Bureau of Indian Affairs school) that is operated by a local education agency. [3]
☐ The teacher has a teaching license from the State (or valid reciprocity from the State for a license from another State).
☐ The teacher has at least 5 years of teaching experience, and at least 3 years of teaching an environment-based curriculum and/or environmental education
☐ The teacher has a classroom teaching assignment involving environmental education for the current school year.
☐ The teacher is a citizen of the United States, its territories or possessions, or lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residency. [4]
☐ The teacher has not been a recipient of this award in the past 5 years.

How did you hear about this opportunity:

☐ EPA Headquarters Staff

☐ EPA Regional Staff

☐ Friend or Colleague

☐ School Administration

☐ Press Media

☐ Other *(Please specify)*:
_____

Application Section 2: Essays

- Essays are listed under the following five headings: Innovation, Achievement, Service to the Community, Leadership and Integration.
- Teachers should clearly address every question in each heading area in a separate, attached document. Teachers must include sample teaching materials and may reference the sample teaching materials throughout their essays.
- If the teacher's response to a question cites information provided in response to another question, or in the same teaching materials, the response should clearly indicate where the information is located so that the reviewer may easily find it.
- Essay length, font type and size specifications:

[3] For this program, a local education agency is one that is defined by section 98 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 *now codified at 20 U.S.C. 78-1 (26)).

[4] The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services defines lawful permanent residency as any person not a citizen of the United States who is residing in the United States under legally recognized and lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant, also known as "Permanent Resident Alien," "Resident Alien Permit Holder," and "Green Card Holder."

- The total length of the 5 essays must not exceed 5 pages. An essay may start on the same page as the ending of a previous essay.
- Essays are to be typed in Times New Roman font, size 12, line spacing 1.5 and at margins no smaller than 1 inch.
- Additional pages beyond 9 pages will not be read or evaluated.

Essay 1: Innovation

A. How does the teacher make learning about the environment unique, fun, and exciting for their students? For example, does the teacher use experiential or place-based learning in ways that go above and beyond the practices of other teachers? Please be sure to exemplify this in the same teaching materials.
B. How does the teacher tailor their teaching methods to the needs of the student population?
C. How does the teacher use any of the following topics as a basis to teach about environmental education: agricultural practices; food waste; prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards; school gardens or green spaces (e.g., playground, park, or other community spaces); use science, data analysis or creative approaches; water infrastructure; and water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Essay 2: Achievement

A. What positive changes has the teacher seen in academic achievement and behavior or attitude because of the participation in a teacher's environmental education program?

Essay 3: Service to the Community

Many schools are part of communities that are heavily impacted by environmental pollution. While your community and school may or may not be considered one that is impacted by environmental pollution, please answer the following:

A. How does the teacher extend environmental education beyond the classroom? Are the teacher's students participating beyond the classroom in environmental conservation, or earth science extracurricular or community-based projects and activities?
B. How does the teacher inspire the surrounding community, including parents/guardians and members of the community to participate in environmental education activities?
C. Is the teacher working with the community to solve an environmental problem?

Essay 4: Leadership

A. How does the teacher serve as a model for students and teachers with his/her approach to teaching about one or more of the following environmental topics: agricultural practices; food waste; prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards; recycling; school gardens or green spaces (e.g., playground, park or other community spaces); use science, date analysis or other creative approaches; water infrastructure; and water quality and/or litter within waterways?

Essay 5: Integration

A. How does the teacher help integrate environmental education into the broader school curriculum or coordinate with other teachers to integrate environmental education into their academic subjects?

Application Section 3: Sample Teaching Materials

Sample teaching materials must be submitted separately as attachments to this application.

Content: Materials from one unit/curriculum or module that the teacher has taught on **only** one or more of the focus areas listed below. Indicate how these materials were used, and now students responded to them.

- Agricultural practices
- Food waste
- Prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards
- Recycling
- School gardens or green space (e.g., playground, park, or other community space)
- Use science, data analysis or other creative approaches
- Water infrastructure
- Water quality and/or litter within waterways

Source(s): The materials may be original to the teacher or may be from an existing education curricula source. If existing education curricula or activities are submitted, the source of these materials must be documented, and the topic must be on one or more of the focus areas listed above.

Length: The total length of the sample teaching materials must not exceed 5 pages. A brief description of how the materials are used must be included. Teachers may include up to 5 additional pages of photos, which must be clearly labeled. Photos are optional. Web links to supporting materials, such as photos (5 pages or fewer) and sound and/or video recordings (10 minutes or less of total playing time) may also be provided but accompanied by a brief description of the project. Reviewers will not attempt to find online content for invalid web links, so please make sure all web links are active.

Sample Teaching Material Titles

Please identify the titles of the sample teaching materials in the space provided below.

Sample Teaching Materials Use and Student Response

Please briefly indicate how these materials were used and how the students responded to them, within the space provided.

Application Section 4: Letters of Support

Each application must include a total of 3 signed letters of support. Letters must come from:

- An administrator from the teacher's school
- A fellow teacher
- A past or current student

Letters of support should not exceed 1 page and must include the following:

- Relationship to the teacher
- Familiarity with the teacher and the work for which the teacher is being considered
- Perspective on why the teacher's work is unique and innovative in the field of environmental education, and how the teacher inspires others to use environmental education

The letters must be submitted as attachments to the application. Please identify the individuals who provided letters of support for this teacher below.

Letter 1: Administrator

Name: _____

Title: _____

Organization/School: _____

Email Address: _____

Letter 2: Fellow Teacher

Name: _____

Title: _____

School: _____

Email Address: _____

Letter 3: Past or Current Student

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Application Section 5: Final Checklist

Before submitting, please ensure your application package includes the following:

☐	Completed application with 5 essay responses
☐	Copy of teacher's teaching license, state teacher certificate, or copy of online record (an active web link). **Do not send original certificates**.
☐	Sample teaching materials that include materials that demonstrate the teacher's work with students in **only** one or more of the following focus areas: ○ Agricultural practices ○ Food waste ○ Prevention of and/or response to natural disasters and environmental hazards ○ Recycling ○ School gardens or green space (e.g., playground, park, or other community spaces) ○ Use science, data analysis or other creative approaches ○ Water infrastructure ○ Water quality and/or litter within waterways
☐	3 letters of support
☐	Signature
☐	Completed, signed, and dated EPA Multimedia Consent Form, found at the end of this application

_____ _____

Teacher Signature Date

_____

Teacher Printed Full Name

If needed, please refer to these instructions for e-signing a PDF in Adobe Acrobat Reader.

Official U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Consent Form
For use with Video, Photo(s), or Voice Recording(s)

I, _____ (“the Contributor”), hereby authorize the
(Name)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) to film, record and/or photograph me or my child (where I am the child’s parent or legal guardian), as part of the EPA Project or Event titled, _____
(Project Title)

(“Event or Project”) occurring on or about _____ (“Recording(s) or Photo(s)”).
(Date)

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I understand that if the Recording(s) or Photo(s) includes an Event, they may be live-streamed online; the Recording(s) or Photo(s) may also be publicly displayed and distributed in full or in part on EPA’s web site and/or on official EPA social media pages, including those on Facebook (www.facebook.com/EPA/), YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/USEPAgov), Instagram (www.instagram.com/epagov/), Linkedin (www.linkedin.com/company/us-epa) and X, formerly known as Twitter (x.com/EPA). I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copies, wherein the Contributor’s name, image, likeness, appearance, and/or voice appears. I understand that the videos, photos and/or voice Recording(s) may remain online indefinitely and may subsequently appear in EPA paper/online publications/social media graphics or other non-EPA publications that EPA deems appropriate to help promote or publicize the Event(s) or Project(s). I also understand and agree that EPA may be required to preserve, reproduce and/or distribute copies of the Work as required under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, the Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. chs. 21, 29, 31 & 33, EPA's regulations at 40 C.F.R. Part 2, Subpart B or as otherwise required by U.S. law. I hereby agree to waive any and all compensation for myself and/or my custodian in regard to the above-referenced uses of the Recording(s) or Photo(s).

I understand that disclosure of the Contributor’s name, likeness and professional biographical information for the foregoing purposes is voluntary, and is collected and maintained under the authority of the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a; failure to disclose the personal information requested may result in the Contributor not being included in EPA multimedia products.

I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the United States and EPA from all claims, demands, and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate or that of my custodian have or may have by reason of this authorization.

I am at least 18 years of age, and/or the legal guardian/custodian of the Contributor, and I am competent to contract in my own name or in the name of my child/ward for whom I am a legal guardian/custodian. I have read this release before signing below, and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

_____ _____
Signature of Individual or other legally authorized person | Date

_____ _____
Print Name | Email (Optional)

_____
Organization and/or Title

Project/Production Notes:

_____