

Teacher Training: A National Survey of Needs

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In a 1990 survey, AAZPA institutions reported that they had conducted training programs for 24,000 teachers nationally. While that number appears impressive, it loses its luster when you divide it among the 160 accredited institutions, and subtract the 6,000 teachers trained in Hawaii by three institutions. As a collective group we can certainly do better than 115 teachers per year/per institution. AAZPA institutions reach 8 million students annually. Our member institutions are all at different levels in their approaches to teacher training in their community. This workshop was designed to give you some new ideas and formats, as well as to encourage networking with your colleagues in this region.

Why get involved in teacher training? A number of reasons....First, better trained classroom teachers will enhance any school group's visit to your institution. Preparation is the key to the success of any class trip. Second, your staff time is used more efficiently when viewed as a wholesale vs. retail approach. Thirty trained teachers can reach 900 students. Finally, experience shows that any type of exposure, be it an introductory workshop, an in-service course, or simply the hosting of a meeting of local teachers or administrators creates goodwill that will last. Once you make that "personal contact," the teachers, administrators, and school systems will think of you as a resource and ally in education. Becoming involved in teacher training programs generates positive attitudes towards your institution as a community educational resource.

Many AAZPA institutions are already involved in various forms of teacher training. Programs range from one-hour orientations to in-service programs that last for weeks or an entire semester. Some formats that seem to work include:

1. An Educators' Day to introduce teachers to the variety of services your education department already has to offer. Think of this event as a "Whitman Sampler," giving a taste test of your programs. Be sure to sign up teachers for programs that day, encouraging them to plan trips in the "off" months. Educators' Days have worked well in the early fall and on Saturdays. As is the case for most teacher events, some form of food is a must!

2. Have your institution offer to host a regional meeting of teachers or administrators. School districts are always looking for new and interesting meeting sites. The program content will remain under their control, but you can offer to do shortened tours or an introductory talk. A 15-minute segment of their afternoon will work fine.
3. Offer to host the "new teachers" orientation meeting for the local school district. Classroom teachers are amazingly mobile, switching districts often. By offering your site as the meeting location, you can get to them early in their career, within your region.
4. Orientation Workshops can be conducted to address the running of a successful field trip to your institution. Teachers should be oriented to collection themes, the layout of the park, key locations such as bathrooms and gift shops, and times of year to visit. A preview visit should be included with the workshop. Sample activity sheets will enhance the program.
5. Pre-Service Teachers...get 'em before they even start in a school system! Check with your local colleges and universities for education departments that are looking for observation sites. Student teachers are often required to visit various sites, observe programs, or even participate as assistants.
6. In-Service Workshops are very important to classroom teachers, as these are the primary source for continuing education credits. In order to move up in pay grade or advance on the career ladder, most school systems require continuing education. You should work closely with your city or county school district, or contact the state Department of Education to develop a course that will be accredited. Look for mandated curriculum issues, or recent educational initiatives that are being emphasized.

What do we, as zoo and aquarium educators, bring to the table? An exciting and inherently interesting learning setting! This past spring AAZPA conducted a survey of teachers around the country to determine what services we could provide that would dovetail into their current classroom needs. The survey results are on the following pages. What is apparent from the results is that AAZPA institutions have many areas of common concern with classroom teachers. Our expertise in endangered species and wildlife issues, as well as experience in informal science education techniques, are greatly needed in the traditional classroom setting. We are a tremendous resource to the weary classroom teacher who needs a recharge. We have much to offer, and should seek to expand our services. Increasing your concentration on teacher training will only work to your advantage.

**AAZPA Office of Education
Educators Survey
Classroom Materials On Animals**

Objective: Classroom teachers from various areas of the country were surveyed during the spring months of 1992. Questions addressed grade level, animal and wildlife issues currently taught, student interests, resources used, sources for information used, and types of resources desired.

Methods: The survey was sent to 22 AAZPA institutions with the request to give it to teachers who were novices to the zoo. This was suggested to encourage a balanced return in opinions. Questionnaires were distributed at zoo/aquarium workshops, meetings, and in-service classes.

Results: 395 surveys were returned from eight states: California, Ohio, Alabama, Arizona, Maryland, Texas, Minnesota, and Oklahoma.

Discussion: There was remarkable consensus in the results, despite what would seem like regional differences in awareness of animal issues.

Grades taught:

Kindergarten	25	High school 9-12	15
First	49	K-Third	4
Second	47	K-Sixth	13
Third	43	K-Eighth	9
Fourth	34	K-12	5
Fifth	27	Librarian/Resource	9
Sixth	23	Pre-service	9
Middle school 6-8	30	Undetermined	55
Total:	395		

Unit taught on animals and wildlife issues:

Habitat preservation	58%	Anatomy	17%
Pets and farm animals	36%	Endangered species	65%
Zoos and aquariums	43%	Animal rights	14%
Hunting	6%	Dissection	11%
Animal behavior	53%	Classroom animals	26%
Laboratory animals	3%	Classification	43%

Are there any particular issues in which students seem more interested than others?

While most of the respondents left this blank, or stated "all subjects are popular" the responses included:

Endangered species	65	Animals	34
Animal behavior	16	Local wildlife	15
Ecology/Awareness	13	Pets/Farm animals	12
Oceans	10	Animal rights	10
Rain forest	9	Classroom animals	8
Habitat (general)	7	Whales/Dolphins/Sharks	7
Dinosaurs	5	Anatomy	2
Conservation	2		

Single mention of each of the following:

Ethics, Genetics, Predator/Prey, Hunting, Baby Animals, Camouflage, Recycling, Pollution, Reproduction, African wildlife, Mammals.

List resources you currently use:

Many of the teachers left this answer blank. Of the respondents answering, the most frequently mentioned resources were:

Books and Videos (171 mentions)

Specific videos mentioned: *Living Planet*, *Nature*, and *The Voyage of the Mimi*.

Textbooks and Periodicals (57 mentions)

Specific periodicals mentioned: *Weekly Reader*, *Science Teacher*, *ZooBooks*, *National Geographic World*, *Learning*, *Ranger Rick*, *Discovery Magazine*, *Science World*, *World Wildlife Magazine*, and *Scholastic News*.

Teaching Tools (47 mentions)

Specific tools mentioned: field trips, films, filmstrips, slides, posters, charts, live animals, labs, preserved animals.

Curriculum (40 mentions)

Specific curricular units mentioned: Project WILD and AQUATIC, local county curriculum, Nature Scope, Project Learning Tree, SCIS kits, OBIS, State Curriculum Network.

Which sources do you use to get resources?:

Many of the teachers left this answer blank. Of the respondents answering the most frequently mentioned sources were:

Library (87 mentions)

Organizations/Institutions (91 mentions)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Local zoo | Natural History Museum |
| Science museum | Outdoor Education Center |
| Audubon Society | Greenpeace |
| Humane Society | National Wildlife Federation |
| Public/Cable television | |

Agencies (11 mentions)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Department of Natural Resources | Local Fish and Game Department |
| Local utility company | State Department of Conservation |
| State Fish and Wildlife Agency | |

Resource People/School Services (36 mentions)

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Science supervisor | Other teachers |
| Resource teachers | Teacher workshops |
| Guest speakers | Regional science centers |
| "Science Closet" | Carolina biological supply |
| District media center | Parent/Child educational supply stores |

Any Free Materials (frequently mentioned!)

"Personal library" was a resource mentioned often with a plea for more resources.

Types of resources teachers would like developed for classroom use:

In-service for teachers	62%	Speakers for classroom	90%
Video presentation	67%	Pamphlets	29%
Curriculum booklets	52%	Resource books	53%
Library display	38%	Steps for "labs"	45%
Slides, Films	55%	Fact sheets for students	53%
Classroom artifacts	70%	Field trip ideas	70%