

National Park System Advisory Board
EXPANDING COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

May 21, 2014

The Education Committee has three overarching responsibilities: (1) serve as advisors to the National Park System Advisory Board regarding future needs, challenges, opportunities and directions of NPS education, (2) assist in developing broader NPS contacts with educational institutions and others to promote expanded collaboration with K-12 and higher education systems, and (3) explore the development of strategies that support innovation, creativity, and sustainable partnerships in formal and informal education.

Status of Activities

The 27-member Education Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board is providing ongoing guidance and support, with leaders from national education associations, schools of education, agencies such as the Smithsonian and U. S. Department of Education, educators, and researchers. Two Education Committee Members, Dr. Kevin Clark of George Mason University and Dr. Stephen Lockhart, a physician and former chairman of NatureBridge, were recently named White House Champions of Change. Milton Chen received awards from the Western National Parks Association and the National Parks Conservation Association for leading the committee's work to elevate youth engagement through National Park Service programs.

The 21st Century Interpreter subcommittee contributed to the new publication, *Relevance in Our Second Century: A Five-Year Interdisciplinary Strategy for Interpretation, Education and Volunteers*. Two years in the making, with input from hundreds of employees across the Service, this strategy interconnects and supports initiatives from *A Call to Action* and *Secretary's Initiative* to prepare and propel national park interpretation, education and volunteerism into its 22nd century and beyond. This strategy is designed to help NPS prioritize and expand limited resources, while meeting the needs of 21st^t century audiences. In order to identify the tools needed to implement this plan, the NPS has already launched an interpretive training needs assessment.

The recently completed *21st Century Interpretive Skills* vision paper makes the case for change and provides NPS with outside, scholarly perspectives on how their work is changing. The report also reflects the changes going on in the museum and library professions and the world of formal education. This report is the result of research conducted by the George Washington University; National Council for Interpretation, Volunteers, and Education of the NPS; and this Education Committee. *This paper is being submitted for acceptance by the Board at its May meeting.*

A Business Planning subcommittee is working in partnership with the Institute at the Golden Gate, a program of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. The business planning process is underway to prioritize needs, assess costs, and recommend options for funding and revenue. Working with a broad group of relevant stakeholders in a collaborative process, the

Institute will design a business planning document for NPS Interpretation and Education by December 2014.

The Education Committee has also designated a Learning Summit subcommittee. Two activities are being planned: a Parks as Classrooms Day and a Scholars Summit. The first event is envisioned as a large public event for 2016 that could launch as a pilot in 2015. The Scholars Summit would be held in 2016 and would bring together the best research and scholarship on STEM, history, and cultural learning in and through the National Parks. The National Geographic Society has indicated interest in helping with developing a TED-like event in Washington, D.C., in 2016.

The Technology Subcommittee met at Harpers Ferry earlier this year and continues to provide input and ideas on a wide range of technology issues, ranging from wi-fi in the parks to online and mobile apps for learning. NPS provided special tours for the Consortium for School Networking conference of school district CTOs in Washington, D. C. COSN is headed by Subcommittee chair Keith Krueger.

The Learning & Development Subcommittee is working with the NPS education leaders to demonstrate the value of NPS curricula and learning for integration with the Common Core State Standards, as well as the Next Generation Science Standards. This Subcommittee will work closely with the new NPS evaluation coordinator.

Next Steps

1. Ensure the Education Committee's work aligns with the newly established National Council for Interpretation, Volunteers, and Education (NCfive), especially as districts implement the Common Core State Standards;
2. Continue close collaboration with the National Park Foundation to generate support for technology projects and educational activities in and through the parks. This work will be aided by the business planning work.
3. Continue to explore opportunities for moving the national dialogue on the importance of informal and free-choice learning, such as presentations at conferences and organizing the Learning Summits.