

Environmental education in schools: Lessons from schools in Israel

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An Indiana University study examining the adoption of environmental education by schools in Israel, measured by Green School Certification, found that school change was assisted by community-based grassroots efforts, not just 'top-down' school policy. It also found that some types of schools were more likely to adopt the earth-friendly changes than other types. IU Sociologist Oren Pizmony Levy, lead author of the study, said the findings have implications for U.S. schools.

"Programs of environmental education certification for schools are on the rise worldwide," said Pizmony Levy, who will discuss his study on Saturday at the American Educational Research Association meeting in New Orleans. "Given the United Nations declared 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, this paper might offer ways to transform schools with regard to sustainable development."

Here are some findings:

- Primary schools and state-secular schools were more likely to adopt the environmental education changes than secondary and state-religious schools. Open-ended interviews with Israeli principals suggest the primary schools and state-secular schools have more "soft" or flexible curriculum that enables the incorporation of environmental education.
- [Socioeconomic background](#) of students in schools did not

influence the likelihood of a school getting a Green School Certificate. Pizmony Levy said this means that environmental education is available for all children, regardless of their background.

Educators, activists and [policymakers](#) have been interested in implementing environmental education concepts and programs in schools for at least 40 years. The recent idea of developing a certification program for 'green school', which is inspired by environmental standards in the business world, typically requires schools to address three areas – teaching about environmental issues, develop pro-environment behavior and civic participation. In Israel, less than 8 percent of schools were awarded Green School Certification in the six years that the program had been available. In the U.S. about 1 percent of schools, or just under 400, are registered in the Eco-School Program. Since the mid-1990s the Foundation for Environmental Education, based in Europe, has implemented the Eco-Schools Program in more than 50 countries, linking tens of thousands of schools. In the U.S. this program has been coordinated by the National Wildlife Federation since 2008.

More information: Pizmony Levy will discuss his study, "Green School Certificate in Israel: Social Predictors of Early Adoption," on Saturday, April 9, at 8:15 a.m. in the Ile de France III room at JW Marriott New Orleans during the session "King Cake: Examining Practices and Capacities for Environmental Education in Schools." Co-author of the study is Dafna Gan, an environmental educator working with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel.

Provided by Indiana University

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