

EarthConnections Pathways: Linking Geoscience Learning and Community Involvement to Develop Community Science Literacy

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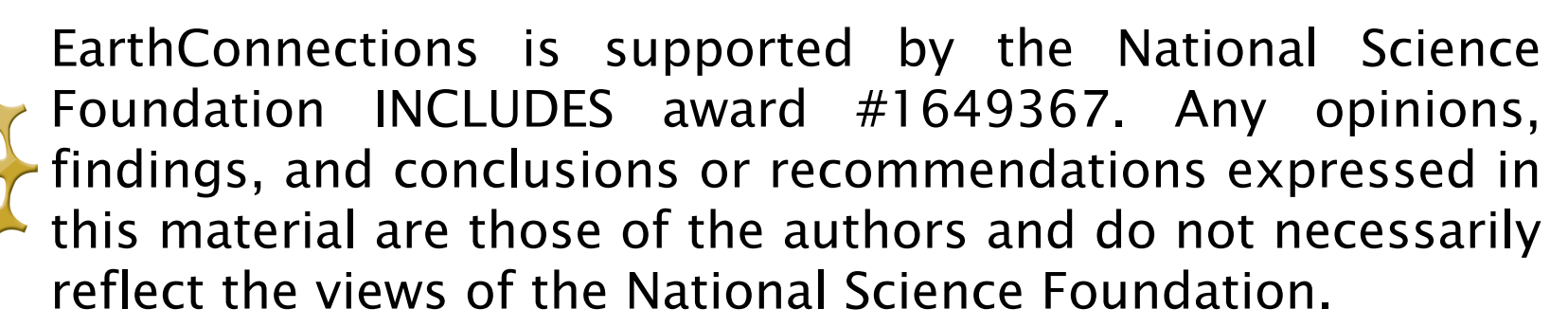
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Abstract

Community science is a collaboration between scientists and communities including their citizens and their leaders. In this collaboration, the scientists and communities together determine the questions to be studied, the approaches to be taken, and the interpretation of the results. Such a collaboration requires a foundation of scientific literacy within the community to enable both individuals and the community as whole to access the needed scientific understanding and to participate in the scientific process. It also requires that scientists and educators learn about the knowledge, values, norms, and priorities of the communities in which they are working—a kind of scientific community literacy. The EarthConnections Alliance supports the engagement of educational institutions and programs in community science while building community science literacy and scientific community literacy. The EarthConnections Alliance is formed of regional groups that are invested in linking geoscience learning and community service across grade levels within their communities as well as program partners who have expertise needed to create these learning opportunities. All members share a vision of creating learning pathways with four critical elements: 1) they connect opportunities to learn geoscience with opportunities to use this knowledge in service to the local community; 2) they link geoscience learning opportunities and learners across grade levels; 3) they use signposting and mentoring to guide and support students; and 4) they lead to local employment opportunities and geoscience-related careers. Initial funding for EarthConnections explored the creation of regional pathways in diverse sites across the country, the development of strategies and tools for supporting pathway development, and mechanisms for sharing resources and expertise within the Alliance. Over 125 individuals and groups are now engaged in this effort. Further information is available on the EarthConnections website: serc.carleton.edu/EarthConnections.html.

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