

# Partnership Meetings

Sierra Watershed Education Partnerships (SWEP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing place-based service-learning (PBSL) opportunities to schools that use the local environment and community as a context for learning, and bring together a variety of community partners (agencies, organizations, higher education, businesses, and individuals) who meet their own missions by working collaboratively with the schools. The SWEP model recognizes the central value of high quality service learning projects in meeting the academic and civic engagement mission of schools.

In order to develop these connections between schools and community partners, SWEP will organize a series of Partnership Meetings in September and October of 2005. These meetings will occur at school sites in the afternoon after school dismissal. Community partners will be invited to the meetings to offer brief presentations and background materials on what they have to offer in these particular areas:

1. locally-focused (place-based) lessons which can be used by classroom teachers
2. presentations offered by the partner in the classroom and on the schoolyard
3. field trips available, with or without leadership and participation by the partner
4. support to school-site PBSL projects that include monitoring, restoration and community outreach
5. opportunities and locations for off-site PBSL projects

After the brief presentations, teachers will have the opportunity to meet with the community partner to ask questions, and to sign up for participation for the 2005-2006 school year, on a first-come, first-served basis. Partners will be asked to determine their capacity ahead of time, and to limit sign ups to capacity. Partners will be encouraged to talk ahead of time with other partners to determine if they wish to offer multi-partner opportunities. If the partner already has established relationships with specific teachers that they wish to maintain, this capacity will not be offered for sign up. SWEP has been working with a leadership team to determine how agencies can best support teachers in meeting curriculum standards and student achievement, and this work will continue so that the partners offerings are of uniformly high quality and are effectively aligned with and targeted at grade levels.

The Partnership Meetings will be offered three times:

1. for the high school level (9-12), at South Tahoe HS
2. for the middle school level (6-8), at South Tahoe MS
3. for the elementary level (K-5), at one of the four LTUSD elementary school sites

Private schools will also be invited to participate, and teachers may invite key parent partners. SWEP will also encourage both teachers and partners to develop innovative projects that involve cross-grade partnering with older and younger students working together, rather than limiting projects to single grade levels.

SWEP will schedule the partnership meetings and invite partners to participate. Though the traditional emphasis of SWEP has been on environmental quality issues due to our funding, the partnership meetings will be open to all community partners working on all community priorities. SWEP will also sign up teachers to participate in order to make sure that the meetings have a critical mass that makes partner participation worthwhile. Any meeting that does not have at least four community partners and 5% of the available teachers will be rescheduled for a later time, with interim SWEP action to increase participation.