



June 28, 2002

Dear fellow teachers,

We have had a wonderful and exciting time developing The Elephant Project for the Science Education Partnership. It has all the ingredients that an excellent teaching tool should have: engagement for students, integration between science, reading, writing, communication, mathematics, social studies, technology and the biotechnology workplace. It also addresses nearly all of the EALR's required by the state of Washington! It enables students to participate in real life applications of molecular biology tools, and gives them a perspective on the use of these techniques by a global society.

This particular project focuses on using biotechnology in the conservation efforts of a species, in this case the African Elephant, and can be incorporated in many different places in a biology curriculum. For example, this material could be placed in a genetics unit, focusing on the structure and function of the DNA molecule. Or it could be part of an evolution unit, focusing on populations and how minor changes in DNA could occur over time. Furthermore, it could be part of an ecology unit dealing with species conservation or even a culminating activity at the end of the year to combine all of the student's knowledge in a final project.

The options for its use will depend on you, since each teacher has his/her own style and focus. We have all included our "customized" approach to this project in the Appendix, and we hope you will find our alterations and timelines helpful as you decide how and where to use it in your curriculum.

We also strongly suggest you spend some time learning about elephants, poaching and the CITES council prior to engaging your students in this project. You will be more comfortable and confident in your ability to field student questions and guide them toward a better understanding of the social, political and financial issues regarding the conservation of elephants as a keystone species for African ecosystems.

We hope you will enjoy The Elephant Project as much as we have enjoyed being involved in its development. Please feel free to give us any feedback via SEP.

Best to all of you!

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