

EarthComm Professional Development Program - Description and History of EarthComm

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Introduction

Workshop leaders should understand the process by which EarthComm was developed.

1. Teachers provided significant input throughout the development process. Teacher input helped to ensure that the program is workable in the classroom and is appropriate for its intended uses.
2. Scientists and educators collaborated throughout the development of EarthComm, ensuring that the product is both scientifically and educationally sound.
3. The process has been iterative. Repeated cycles of development, review, and revision yielded an educational product that became stronger and more focused with each cycle.

The material below provides more information about the development process.

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Overview of EarthComm

EarthComm (Earth Systems Science in The Community: Understanding Our Environment) is an NSF-funded curriculum project guided in design and approach by the National Science Education Standards (NRC, 1996), AGI's Earth Science Content Guidelines for Grades K-12 (AGI, 1991), and other major science education curriculum and reform programs. This program builds on the strength of other successful AGI Earth science education projects such as the Earth Science Curriculum Project (known to many as Investigating the Earth). EarthComm does not cover as many topics as the traditional Earth science textbook. It emphasizes important concepts, understandings, and abilities that all students can use to make wise decisions, think critically, and understand and appreciate the Earth system. The goals of the EarthComm program are:

- To teach students the principles and practices of Earth science and to demonstrate the relevance of Earth science to their life and environment.
- To approach Earth science through the problem solving, community-based model in which the teacher plays the role of facilitator.
- To establish an expanded learning environment that incorporates fieldwork, technological access to data, and traditional classroom and laboratory activities.
- To support the development of communities of learners by establishing student teams and by building a greater regional and national community through telecommunication access.
- To utilize local and regional issues and concerns to stimulate problem-solving activities and to foster a sense of Earth

stewardship by students in their communities.

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Development

Hundreds of teachers, scientists, and students helped produce EarthComm. In the summer of 1998, teams of Earth science educators wrote 122 inquiry-based investigations. Teachers and scientists reviewed EarthComm chapters, which were then revised for pilot testing by 26 teachers in the spring of 1999. Seventeen teachers from the National Earth Science Teachers Association collaborated with project staff to revise EarthComm in the summer of 1999. EarthComm underwent a national field test in the 1999-2000 school year, and each chapter was reviewed by as many as five scientists and a senior content editor during commercial development.

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Publication

AGI has partnered with Its About Time, publishers of outstanding reform-based math and science curriculum projects (Active Physics and Math Connections), to publish, market, and distribute EarthComm and to develop and deliver teacher enhancement and professional development workshops. Over time, AGI will develop a complete suite of materials to help teachers implement EarthComm. These will include CD-ROMs, resource packets, videos, slide sets, and black line masters.

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EarthComm Development Timeline

1998

- Teams of Earth science educators develop the first activities, with direction from the American Geological Institute.
- Scientists and teachers review and revise activities.
- First teacher enhancement workshop in preparation for pilot testing.
- Pilot testing begins.

1999

- Pilot testing is completed.
- Development and revision continues, with input from scientists, other reviewers, and teachers.
- Teacher workshops are conducted at four regional testing centers, in preparation for the field test.
- It's About Time publishing joins project.
- Field testing begins.

2000

- Field testing is completed.
- Content reviews are completed.
- Final pre-publication revisions are made

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