

# NM outdoors learning group seeking 15 fellows

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The first cohort of Environmental Education of New Mexico fellows at a leadership retreat in February 2020. The organization is accepting applications for 15 new fellows. (Courtesy of Eileen Everett)

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Environmental Education of New Mexico is seeking to fill 15 fellowship positions to join its organization for the coming year and help make outdoor experiences accessible for all students.

Eileen Everett, executive director of EENM, said the fellows will also advocate for more outdoor learning in the school day.

“When kids spend enough time outside every day, it increases their ability to pay attention inside the classroom,” said Everett, a former U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist and environmental educator. “They connect in culturally relevant and meaningful ways. Those benefits extend to teachers and staff, too.”

The first cohort of 17 EENM fellows started work just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020.

New Mexico’s Public Education Department adopted the group’s outdoor

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learning guidance as part of its school re-entry plan during the pandemic.

Fiana Shapiro, a 2020 fellow and former National Park ranger, said the past year has taught her that leadership comes in many forms.

Shapiro leads ecology programs for Albuquerque and Rio Rancho fifth graders at the Sandia Mountain Natural History Center.

“Connecting with others opens up new and unplanned projects and partnerships,” Shapiro said. “Effecting the change we want to see is an ongoing process.”

Monthly online community discussions have been a big part of the group’s work during the pandemic.

Attendees have discussed outdoor-gear libraries, teacher training and cultural programs as ways to increase environmental learning for youth.

The group backed a state Senate memorial this year that asked state agencies to create a task force promoting outdoor classrooms in New Mexico schools.

The memorial was sponsored by Sen. Siah Correa Hemphill, D-Silver City, and passed the Senate 34-2 with bipartisan support.

Outdoor classrooms could expand into more schools using the influx of federal money coming into New Mexico, Everett said.

The state is receiving \$1.5 billion from three pandemic relief packages.

EENM is advocating for \$15 million of that funding to go toward implementing outdoor classrooms, internships and after-school programs at every public school in New Mexico.

EENM is accepting fellowship applications online until June 27.

Fellows will receive a \$500 stipend and attend a multi-day leadership retreat this summer at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque.

“We are trying to create as much diversity in our group of fellows as possible,” Everett said. “Meaning a diversity of identities, geographic area, and different kinds of work that the fellows do.”

*Theresa Davis is a Report for America corps member covering water and the environment for the Albuquerque Journal.*

**To apply**

Visit [eenm.org/eenm-fellowship-program/](http://eenm.org/eenm-fellowship-program/)

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