

Request for Project Supplement to Support
2001 SCHOOLYARD LTER PROGRAM
 At the
FLORIDA COASTAL EVERGLADES (FCE) LTER PROGRAM

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Florida Coastal Everglades (FCE) LTER program is in its first year of funding, and thus we propose to use this supplemental request to begin our Schoolyard LTER program. The Schoolyard LTER program is currently the cornerstone and focus of our education and outreach efforts, and the 3 coordinating Principal Investigators of this request are the FCE Education and Outreach Working Group. Our objective for the 2001 Schoolyard LTER Program is to provide graduate-level training in environmental research techniques for up to 6 Miami-Dade County secondary school science teachers. Our longer-term objective is to use the FCE Schoolyard LTER program to grow long-term connections between FCE scientists and the secondary school system of Miami-Dade County. The focus on teachers rather than students is a model that we feel is necessary because Miami-Dade County is so large (population > 2,000,000). Thus, our strategy is to create links between our scientists and teachers that will ultimately allow the FCE LTER Program to positively affect dozens of students per teacher. As our FCE education and outreach efforts grow, we anticipate expanding this hierarchical style of influence to primary schools and community groups. We are currently working through the Development Office of the FIU College of Arts & Sciences to find a local industry, business, or organization that is willing to donate the funds necessary to support a full-time education coordinator for the FCE LTER Program. This level of staff support will allow us to grow our outreach efforts in a coherent and organized fashion.

To initiate the FCE Schoolyard LTER Program, we propose to provide a variety of training opportunities in Environmental Research for up to 6 Miami-Dade County Public School high school teaching professionals during Summer 2001 (June 15 – August 15). Selected high school teachers will be paired with FCE scientists, and will work in the laboratories of these scientists on LTER-related projects. These projects will likely involve both laboratory and field experience, and will focus on hands-on training in environmental research techniques. In some cases, these projects will be short-term experiments that a teacher may complete during the 2 month program. In other cases, the teachers will work with FCE scientists to set up long-term experiments, and then will return on field with their classes to sample during the regular school year. The Schoolyard LTER Program will provide participating scientists with a supply budget that they will use to support teacher projects during the summer and throughout the school year.

A primary function of the 2001 Schoolyard LTER Program will be the nurturing of connections between teachers and FCE scientists, such that these teachers may continue to view our FCE LTER Program as a “living” field lab that their classes may visit or in which their classes may participate. As an added bonus to maintain these long-term communication linkages and to enhance teacher enthusiasm for the value of their connection to the FCE LTER Program, we will provide funds for all teacher participants to travel to Tampa, FL in November 2001 for the International Estuarine Research Federation Conference (\$625 each). At the end of the summer, all participating teachers will be asked to provide a statement summarizing their experience and how their work with FCE scientists is expected to positively affect their teaching. They will also be asked to propose a mechanism for maintaining connection with the FCE LTER Program and for involving their classes in FCE activities.

As a further incentive to participate in our Schoolyard LTER Program, we will offer a graduate-level 3-credit course during the Summer 2001 semester for participating teachers. This course will be taught through the FIU Department of Biological Sciences, and will take the form of an Independent Research class (a likely title for this course is “Everglades Research Experience”). This course will focus on the directed research experience, and we are currently working with Miami-Dade School Board officials to ensure that these credits can be applied by participating teachers to their continuing accreditation process. The Schoolyard LTER Program will pay the full tuition for these

courses for the students. As an additional incentive to maximize our outreach effort under this program, the FIU Division of Sponsored Research has agreed to charge indirect costs of only 8% on this supplement, and organizational assistance will be provided by our FCE Project Manager.