

PLT History



In 2011, National Project Learning Tree celebrated 35 years in bringing forestry education to educators across the United States. PLT began in 1976 in 13 Western states and has since grown to all 50 states and 11 other countries. PLT was developed by two organizations: the Western Regional Environmental Education Council (now a national program called the Council for Environmental Education) and the American Forest Institute (now the American Forest Foundation).

"PLT is unique because it represents the work of education and resource management professionals working together to do something important for kids," said the late Rudy Schafer, former environmental education staff specialist for the California Department of Education and one of PLT's creators.

He also emphasized the rigorous process through which materials were researched, written, and field-tested in classrooms. "We were able to say from the start that we had a quality program that would work at the 9 o'clock Monday morning level," he said, referring to PLT's easy usability in classrooms. "Working closely with on-the-job professionals helped us gain widespread interest in the program."

"We've been around for 35 years, but we are *not* 35 years old," stressed PLT Director Kathy McGlaufflin. "The program continues to learn and grow to meet changes in education and in environmental issues." In fact, a major revision of the curriculum was completed in late 2005 to address such 21st-century challenges in education, for example, new technology and differentiated instruction, as well as environmental issues such as energy demand and global warming.

At the core of PLT is a *PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide*, filled with 96 lessons that can fit into science, language arts, social studies, and other parts of the school curriculum. Individual modules on such topics as Solid Waste and Risk Assessment are tailored for high school students. Each activity provides background on the topic being studied, hands-on ways to learn about it, and a way for teachers to assess student learning. Activities meet national and state standards, including Georgia's Performance Standards.

In 1986, PLT started in Georgia with folks like Laura Newbern with Georgia Forestry Association, Sue Shaddeau with the American Forest Institute, Sharon Dolliver (now retired from the Georgia Forestry Commission) with the Georgia Forestry Commission and a host of support from industry professionals like Cliff Woods and Dave Francis as well as the University of Georgia's Warnell School of Forestry. In addition, in 1987, Carla Rapp was trained to be a facilitator and took over the co-coordinators position in 1999. "I took my first PLT workshop when I was in graduate school in 1980 and knew that I wanted to be involved with PLT for the long haul and now I'm really pleased to be a part of PLT at the state level".

Since 1986 over 20,000 educators have attended PLT workshops in Georgia. Nationally and internationally, more than 500,000 adults have been trained in how to use PLT. Over the life of the project, the overwhelming majority who attend a workshop continue to use the materials with students. Although the exact figure is not known, literally millions of children have, as a PLT saying goes, "learned *how* to think, not *what* to think" through exposure to PLT.

Through the years Georgia has been proud to recognize its' National PLT Educators of the year.

1994	Chris Johnson
1996	Wanda Barrs
2000	Angie Davis
2002	Kris Irwin
2004	Jimmy Sanders
2007	Gail Lutowski
2010	Joy Cowart