THE NATIONAL FISHING IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM (NFSP) is a nationwide in-school curriculum for public and private schools that uses fly fishing as the instructional tool. Founded in 2009, the Fishing Education Foundation (FEE) is the nonprofit parent to NFSP. It was established to meet the demand from physical education teachers around the country interested in teaching the sport to engage students in a lifetime outdoor pursuit.

A safe, fun and hands-on activity, the Fishing in Schools program aspires to build a foundation of knowledge for individual students and encourages them to take an interest in the out-of-doors to catch fish on a fly. Environmental stewardship, conservation and awareness are taught in the NFSP curriculum and promote “off the couch” outdoor activity.

With the declining participation of youth in the outdoor sports, and the inclination of PE teachers to move emphasis away from team sports, NFSP meets the need of educators by providing them with appropriate skills and tools to share fly fishing with their students. Cast A Fly, Catch A Student, the curriculum of NFSP, captivates students and is a proven educational program that gets youth outdoors.

To date NFSP’s Cast A Fly, Catch A Student curriculum has been implemented in over 225 schools and institutions in 28 states around the country, State and federal fish and wildlife agencies, NGOs such as the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation, Trout Unlimited, National Recreation Foundation, American Fly Fishing Trade Association, and many other groups, individuals and organizations have assisted the program in reaching nearly 60,000 youth.

Teachers and students alike are finding positive outcomes from the program. “The system you have set up is very easy to follow and straightforward. I like the mix of fishing skills and science information. That will make it easier for us to incorporate NFSP into our curriculum,” said one teacher.

What’s unique about Fishing in Schools is that it provides an all-inclusive academic program that includes training, curriculum and lesson plans that meet required academic standards, equipment and unique learning accessories called Cast targets (instructional tools usable indoor and outdoor that help teach the skill of fly casting while educating about fish, entomology and flies.)

An attractive feature of NFSP is that it is taught in schools during “winter” months when open water and/or suitable weather make on-the-water activity seasonally inaccessible. In that Fishing in Schools takes place in school gymnasiums, it serves as an effective “surrogate” for being outdoors. The program prepares students with the basic skills indoors so they have the skills and knowledge to be successful when they are able to get out actually fishing on the water. The program strives to culminate in an on-the-water experience for all students.

NFSP uses a 3-level training/certification structure for teachers and mentors. It offers online training and curriculum delivery options for educators. A key element in the effectiveness and sustainability of the program is the NFSP Mentor Program that is designed to align experienced volunteers with their local school(s) or district.

The Fishing Education Foundation/National Fishing in Schools Program depends upon public/private support that enables it to provide grants to applicants. Schools that wish to participate in NFSP, participate in the Adopt A School program, or wish to become an NFSP Mentor for their local school, please visit our website at www.fishinginschools.org to learn more.