

## PRINCIPLES of DEEP TIME EDUCATION

Deep Time Education connects us to our primal desire to answer fundamental questions: “Where did we come from?” “Where are we going?” “What is our purpose?” “How do we belong?” It orients us to our largest context, a vast Evolving Universe; grounds us in our Matrix, the Earth Community; evokes deep experiences of Awe and Wonder; provides a means for good decision making through Reflection and Discernment; guides us in our Actions; and cultivates Passion and a sense of Place and Purpose.

DTE recognizes that the science-based grand narrative of the Universe, infused with the humanities, constitutes a Cosmology (Origin Story) for our time, fulfilling the function that creation stories have served for cultures in the past.

DTE recognizes the importance of deep time Understanding as the basis for Action. A flourishing future for our planet will be more likely if our Action is informed by an understanding of our Context, Matrix, experiences of Awe and Wonder; and a Reflection and Discernment process.

DTE is not new. It has been practiced for decades in many settings at different levels and by different names — Montessori Cosmic Education, Universe Story, Journey of the Universe, Environmental Evolution, Big History, Deep History and others. Our goal on the DTJNetwork is to explore what is already being done in so many remarkable ways, connect different efforts in a continuum across all age levels, and to evolve a comprehensive approach. What follows are Principles, some or all of which, are shared by those engaged in this approach to education. We welcome your thoughts about these Principles on the Forum topic: Principles of Deep Time Education.

### 1. CONTEXT

#### *Orienting to a Vast Evolving Universe*

DTE orients us to a Vast Evolving Universe by:

- \* Exploring cosmologies (creation stories) and their value to cultures; how cosmologies serve as a lens for viewing the world, filtering what we see and shaping our concepts of the Universe, Earth, human relationships, personal and cultural identities, and guide our behavior.

- \* Teaching a scientifically based grand narrative of the Universe by linking together physics, chemistry, geology, biology, anthropology and history.
- \* Exploring artistic expressions of cosmology and their evocative power.
- \* Understanding principles of “Emergence” and patterns of transformation that may serve as templates for understanding transformation underway today.
- \* Understanding the history of transformation of our Universe characterized by increasing Differentiation (Complexity), Interiority and Communion.
- \* Becoming present to the Universe as a single evolving entity that is “unfinished.”

## **2. MATRIX**

### ***Grounding in the Earth Community.***

DTE grounds us in the Earth Community by:

- \* Situating the Earth Story inside the larger narrative of the Cosmos
- \* Restoring a central value of nature for its own sake, and in sustaining humans and shaping cultures.
- \* Weaving humans into the vibrant processes of Cosmos and Earth.
- \* Taking a systems approach to our interdependent Earth Community.
- \* Understanding the need for balance and reciprocity, relational resonance, or mutually enhancing relationships with others and the Earth as a whole.

## **3. AWE and WONDER**

### ***Experiencing ourselves as part of the larger whole.***

DTE recognizes that profound experiences of Awe and Wonder are primary to education leading to intense engagement, respect, humility, gratitude, love, sense of purpose, compassion, cooperation, and caring for the future. Experiences of Awe and Wonder happen when we:

- \* Realize our *dependence* upon a spectacular sequence of thresholds that preceded the evolution of humans, and our *interdependence* with the ongoing processes of Earth.
- \* Become present to the unfathomable mystery of existence.
- \* Overcome feelings of separation, loss, and suffering, and know that we belong.
- \* Know who we are, where we come from, and our purpose.
- \* Experience the Universe/Earth as a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.
- \* We make the connection between the creativity in the Universe and our own creativity.

## 4. REFLECTION and DISCERNMENT

### *Integrating Understanding and Experience; and Making good choices.*

Reflection and Discernment are processes in Deep Time Education for integrating Context, Matrix, and experiences of Awe and Wonder. This integration can serve as a basis for intention setting and making good choices. It's based on an understanding that we can intentionally enter into—and help direct—“Emergence,” the creative process of the cosmos for bringing forth the new. There's an understanding that Emergence exists in the Universe as a whole and humans are part of a larger creative process.

- \* Reflection is a process of integrating different ways of knowing derived from understanding Context and Matrix, and experiences of Awe and Wonder.
- \* Discernment is a process developed in contemplative traditions and cultivated in Mindfulness for being fully present to what is “trying to emerge” right now. It involves deep listening to the heart and asking questions such as “What's dying away?” “What's trying to be born?”
- \* Discernment can also be an intellectually rigorous process used for assessing different options with regard to: (1) their alignment with “Emergence” and the three governing themes of differentiation, interiority and communion; and (2) the scope of beneficial outcomes (individual, family, community, bio-region, planetary).
- \* Discernment can be used at individual and collective levels, and is now being used more widely in global networks for collective intention setting thus creating fields of connectivity. There's an understanding in DTE that human organization and collective intention itself is evolving and will influence our future.

## 5. ACTION and EVALUATION

### *Participating in Evolution*

DTE recognizes that an understanding of Context, Matrix, experiences of Awe and Wonder, and a process of Reflection and Discernment can lead to beneficial Action.

- \* There's an understanding that a flourishing future depends on our cosmology—our understanding of our origin, and right relationship with Earth/Cosmos and each other.

- \* Action in “alignment with the grain of cosmic evolution” furthering the three governing themes of the universe — increasing differentiation (complexity), interiority and communion — will generally lead to better outcomes.
- \* The Earth Charter principles are consistent with Deep Time Education goals for Action: 1) Respect and Care for the Community of Life, 2) Ecological Integrity, 3) Social and Economic Justice, 4) Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace.
- \* Evaluation has to do with ongoing assessment of Action in the light of Context, Matrix, Experience, Reflection and Discernment.

## **6. PASSION, PLACE, and PURPOSE**

### ***Transforming into our deeper identities inside an Evolving Cosmos.***

DTE recognizes that Passion and yearnings for a sense of Place and Purpose are core human desires and have a place in education. Orienting to an Evolving Universe, grounding in the Earth Community, experiencing Awe and Wonder; and Reflection and Discernment powerfully and naturally lead to Passion for life and an understanding of Place and Purpose.

- \* We transform our small selves into our greater Selves as part of the flow of cosmic evolution, Earth’s ecosystems, and human societies.
- \* We experience Passion as a zest for life that motivates, sustains and guides us.
- \* We understand chaos and destruction inside the larger context of transformation. Individuals and communities can live more easily with uncertainty and pain.
- \* We see humans not as accidental beings in a vast alien universe but as part of a 14 billion year process of Emergence; we see that we are embedded in, and draw nurturance from, the Cosmos and Earth communities.
- \* DTE recognizes that Passion and a sense of Place and Purpose flowing out of Context, Matrix, and experiences of Awe and Wonder, can have profound therapeutic affects.
- \* The Universe/Nature/Humans/Ourselves become inherently valuable. We feel an innate and inescapable responsibility to make something valuable of our lives.

## **7. FRAMEWORK and CONTINUUM** ***Structuring Deep Time Education.***

Deep Time Education works as a continuum across all levels, tied to planes of development over our lifetimes. It flows from level to level like a spiral moving toward higher levels of Understanding, Experience and Action. It's a model for lifelong education.

DTE is a trans-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approach that passes from whole to detail, relating all subjects to the larger context of an Evolving Universe and to each other. Narratives of the largest context, the Universe, are followed by successively nested narratives.

DTE is intergenerational in that each generation inherits a shared cosmology from the previous generation, incorporates new discoveries, and shares it with the next generation.

DTE understands that education happens in all parts of life—family, school, work and recreation.

**More Coming with your input . . .**