



## News Release

### POLAR BEARS INTERNATIONAL

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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Polar Bears International, Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, and Maryland State Department of Education, Release Polar Bear Teaching Lessons**

*Polar Bears and Ecotourism* lesson plans integrate science, social studies, and math

**Sebastopol, CA, April 8, 2008** – Polar Bears International (PBI), the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, and the Maryland State Department of Education have announced the release of a new set of lessons targeted at students in upper elementary grades. Entitled *Polar Bears and Ecotourism*, the lesson unit is cross-disciplinary, integrating science, social studies, and mathematics using current polar bear research as a context for learning. As part of the lesson, students use data collected from an actual research project to make decisions regarding ecotourism policies for the town of Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, renowned as the “Polar Bear Capital of the World.”

In October 2003, the Maryland Zoo was one of two zoos to participate in a live web broadcast with a scientist in the field studying polar bears in the Churchill area. Two Maryland schools were the first to participate in the pilot program and in October 2004, the project expanded to include live broadcasts to three more zoos around the country and Canada.

“It’s partnerships like this that demonstrate how innovative programs can make learning exciting for students,” said Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools. “For our children to compete in a global economy, we must encourage students to take advantage of programs, like the *Polar Bears and Ecotourism* lessons, that combine disciplines like science, social studies, and mathematics.”

PBI's education programs include the Polar Bear Adventure Learning Leadership Camp where each fall more than a dozen top students from four different countries don parkas and boots and travel to Churchill to take part in activities that require teamwork, creativity, computer and language skills, and commitment. The students explore a range of issues relating to polar bears, humans, and the environment. Again this year, over 30 zoos, museums, national parks, businesses, and conservation organizations will select a junior from a high school or home school program to attend the PBI Leadership Camp.

"Every year, we select a group of bright, motivated students who are eager to learn about the polar bears," said Robert Buchanan, PBI's president. "While in Churchill and out on the tundra, they communicate with their peers through online journals and when they return, the students share what they've learned through talks, slide presentations, and media interviews."

The *Polar Bears and Ecotourism* lessons, a Polar Bear Trek board game, live web-cam, bear tracker, and many other resources, are available on the awarding winning site <http://www.polarbearsinternational.org/>.

Polar Bears International is a non-profit organization devoted to worldwide conservation of the polar bear through support of research and education. World headquarters are in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, at 550-5 Donald Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L-2T4 , Canada. U.S. headquarters are in Sebastapol, California. Membership begins with a donation of \$25 and includes a quarterly newsletter. One hundred percent of donations go to support PBI initiatives. All administrative costs are covered by its on-line gift shop sales and directors' donations. Board and advisory council members receive no compensation and are not reimbursed for expenses.

For more information about the Maryland State Department of Education's Environmental Education Programs visit <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/environment/>.

For more information, see [www.polarbearsinternational.org](http://www.polarbearsinternational.org).