



Classroom Aquarium Education Program Guidelines and Parameters

Updated October 2025

Teacher Authorization, Training and Certification

1. Teacher Authorization
 - 1.1. To participate in the program, an individual must possess a valid Authorization Form to Transfer and Rear Eggs and Fish for Classroom Aquarium Education Program (CDFW 772). Successful completion of a CDFW CAEP teacher training is required for a teacher to become certified in this program.
 - 1.2. Authorization Forms remain valid provided a teacher complies with all conditions of the Authorization Form and guidelines and remains active in the program.
 - 1.3. Teachers who do not participate for three consecutive years lose their certification and must repeat the training to regain eligibility.
 - 1.4. Participants who fail to follow the guidelines stated herein, fail to comply with conditions of the Authorization Form (CDFW 772), or fail to report release data as required may have their authorization revoked or not renewed. Renewals are subject to the review and discretion of the CDFW regional manager or designee.
2. Authorization Forms (CDFW 772) may only be issued to the following:
 - 2.1. Teachers and school staff who are administering CAEP in their classrooms or school facility.
 - 2.2. Nature/science center staff who are administering CAEP in their facilities.
3. Training and Certification Training will be conducted by CDFW staff or community partners working in conjunction with CDFW staff, following the [minimum training standards](#).
 - 3.1. Trainings provided by CDFW for this program are free of cost for participants.
 - 3.2. Training materials will include information on the mission of CDFW, and its role in maintaining sustainable fish populations for their recreational, commercial and biological value.
 - 3.3. As a part of the training, CDFW will provide or make available for reproduction CDFW approved manuals on how to set up and maintain the aquarium, confirmation of completion, names and contact information for CDFW and other personnel who can provide assistance, technical support, information on laws regarding raising of fish, and various other related fishery and habitat information. A certificate documenting completion will be made available upon request.
 - 3.4. Upon successful completion of the training, teachers will be considered “certified” and may complete the online application to receive eggs and an Authorization Form (CDFW 772). Certifications are non-transferrable, and only apply to the teacher who took the training.
 - 3.5. A teacher moving from one region of the state to another may need to recertify. Teachers must contact the CDFW CAEP coordinator in the new region to learn about the logistics of receiving the services provided in that region.

Laws, Regulations and Policies Governing the Handling, Movement and Disposition of Eggs and Fish as they pertain to CAEP

1. Fish and Game Code Sections 15200, 15201, 15202, 6400, 711.7, 1802, 2081(a)
2. Fish and Game Operations Manual, Fisheries Section 2164.4
3. Related laws, regulations and policies governing that handling, movement and disposition of fish as they relate to private aquaculturists: Title 14: Sections 238.5(d) 1-4, 240, 24, Fish and Game Code 15201.

General Requirements for the Classroom Aquarium Education Program

1. No eggs or fish acquired for CAEP shall be possessed, transferred, released or otherwise disposed of except as authorized by a CDFW signed Authorization Form (CDFW Form 772). All limitations and conditions stated by that form shall be followed.
2. On completion of the program each year, participants are required to submit an online release summary within 2 weeks of release date, or within 2 weeks of the date the last fish died.

Release of Fry

1. Fry must be released no later than eight (8) weeks after the date eggs were delivered to the classroom, unless a written extension has been granted by CDFW. A final release by date will be listed on 772 Authorization Form.
2. Fry must be released into the approved waterbody as stated on the Authorization Form (CDFW 772). Approved waterbodies are determined from the following:
 - All anadromous fish shall be returned to the stream or the river basin of origin or another CDFW approved anadromous waterbody. Anadromous fish must be released downstream of any public or private hatchery or egg taking facility unless otherwise permitted by CDFW or NOAA Fisheries regulations.
 - Trout may be released into any waters approved for this program by CDFW in accordance with all state and federal regulations.
3. In cases where deformities occur, or possible exposure to invasive species or serious disease is encountered, destruction of the fish may be the only appropriate course of action. CDFW will make the final decision of the disposition of fish.
4. A release summary must be completed within 14 days (2 weeks) of the final "release by" date listed on the Authorization Form.
 - Teachers who release fish prior to the final "release by" date are strongly encouraged to submit their release summary within 2 weeks of actual release date, or the date the last fish in the aquarium die.

Conditions of the Authorization Form (CDFW Form 772)

Upon delivery of eggs, teachers will receive a hard copy of their Authorization Form (CDFW Form 772). This form lists the fish species, egg delivery date, release by date, approved release site, and an approval signature from their regional CDFW CAEP Coordinator. By applying to, and participating in, the CAEP program, teachers agree to the following conditions, which are listed on the Authorization Form:

1. Only the applicant on the form is authorized to acquire and incubate the eggs or fish.
2. No eggs or fish acquired may be possessed, transferred, released, or otherwise disposed of except as authorized by this form. Fish shall be released only at the location(s) authorized.

3. Authorization Form - Upon being accepted into the program, teachers will receive a CDFW 772 Authorization Form with the provided eggs. The CDFW 772 Authorization Form shall **remain with the eggs or fish at all times**. The authorization form must be posted in a visible location on or next to the incubation unit and accompany the eggs and fish during transport.
4. After release – The applicant must complete an online report to CDFW within 14 days of release of the fish or after the last fish dies.
5. Aquarium – Only an aquarium sterilized to CDFW specifications and dedicated for CAEP fish may be used. No other animals or plants allowed in aquarium at any time.
6. Rocks - Use uncoated gravel sanitized according to CDFW protocols. Do not collect materials such as sticks or plants from a stream or lake for use in CAEP aquarium.
7. Water - Use non-chlorinated water. Do not use distilled water, stream, or lake water. Do not add chemicals or medication.
8. Eggs and fish – eggs and fish shall remain the property of the State and decisions on final disposition remain solely with CDFW. Do NOT release deformed or diseased fish, contact CDFW coordinator for instructions.
9. Authorized teacher will devote a minimum of 10 hours facilitating the CAEP project; this includes equipment preparation and maintenance, teaching time, care of fish, and fish release.
10. The following require CDFW pre-approval:
 - Changing the release location or any changes after application is approved
 - Holding fish beyond the approved release date.
11. A violation of the above requirements may result in immediate and permanent dismissal from the program.

Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with these guidelines or conditions of the Authorization Form (CDFW 772) without the prior written permission of the Regional CAEP Coordinator will result in sanctions as described below. Failure to comply includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

Failure to comply (Level 1):

1. Submitting the release summary past the 14 day requirement, but before the school semester ends.
2. Releasing fish past final "release by" date by 2 weeks or less.

Sanctions

1. First violation of compliance: teacher receives warning letter/email
2. Second violation of compliance within five years: teacher will be de-certified but is eligible to be retrained and recertified.
3. Third violation of compliance within five years: teacher will be dropped from the program permanently.

Failure to Comply (Level 2):

1. Submitting the online release summary after the school semester ends.
2. Releasing fish 2-4 weeks past the final "release by" date, without prior authorization from the department.

3. Releasing fish, without the approval of the regional coordinator, into a waterbody location other than is listed on teacher's 772 authorization form, but that is still on the regional approved list of waterbodies.

Sanctions

1. First violation of compliance within five years: teacher will be de-certified but is eligible to be retrained and recertified.
2. Second violation of compliance within five years: teacher will be dropped from the program permanently

Failure to comply (Level 3):

The following actions may result in immediate and permanent dismissal

1. Not returning the online release summary or otherwise contacting the regional coordinator to confirm release.
2. Releasing fish into an unapproved waterbody.
3. Using chemicals or water not approved by regional CAEP coordinator.
4. Adding other plants or animals to the aquarium
5. Keeping fish from this program more than 4 weeks past the final release by date without prior written permission from CDFW.
6. Transferring the Authorization Form and/or care of the aquarium and fish to another teacher/person who is not certified.
 - This includes long term subs, partner teachers, afterschool programs etc. The certified teacher, whose name is on the permit, must be actively participating in the maintenance and care of the fish. Care of the aquarium may not be transferred to an uncertified person.

Regional CAEP Coordinators will track violations for a period of five years. Dismissals due to Level 3 violations are permanent.

The Regional Coordinator, in consultation with the CDFW Regional Manager, may immediately dismiss any teacher from the program for failure to comply with any condition of these guidelines or the Authorization Form (CDFW 772).

CDFW may deny an Authorization Form (CDFW 772) to a teacher if the CDFW Regional Manager believes issuing the permit may pose a risk to wildlife or habitat.

CDFW Statewide Administration of CAEP

CDFW oversees the statewide coordination of CAEP, which includes the authorization, delivery and proper rearing of salmonids in classrooms, training and educational programming offered to teachers, and the release of fry into authorized waterbodies throughout the state. Each region involved in the program has a regional CAEP Coordinator who:

1. Delivers educational programming related to salmonids and aquatic education directly into classrooms.
2. Coordinates efforts between interpretive, fishery, and hatchery personnel.
3. Oversees issuing of Authorization Forms to certified educators.
4. Maintains records of Authorization Forms.

5. Ensures compliance with all governing laws, regulations and policies.
6. Works with other CDFW staff to administer programs in accordance with CDFW-approved pathological, biological and hatchery practices.
7. Is responsible for egg distribution, movement and ultimate disposition of fish.
8. Identifies appropriate sources of eggs to be used in their region for this program. CDFW fish production programs have priority and eggs will be available only when surpluses exist.
9. Prescribes disposal of sick or dead fish in a manner not to contaminate public waters or other fish stocks.
10. Ensures compliance with all laws affecting Threatened and Endangered species, as they relate to taking, raising and releasing of fish and eggs used in these programs.
11. Provides live, virtual programming related to salmonids and watershed health. Provide in person classroom support and tours of facilities when possible.
12. Presents workshops or work with local community partners to ensure teachers receive training that meets CDFW requirements as stated herein. Ensures coverage of CDFW Mission and role at teacher workshops.

Role of Community Partners

In order to expand the reach of CAEP, regional programs often partner with community organizations that can directly support teachers and classrooms. These partners can include local fishing clubs, county agencies, environmental organizations, and more. The role of community partners varies by region, and may include the following:

1. Support teacher-training workshops in conjunction with CDFW CAEP staff.
2. Assist teachers in obtaining necessary equipment, materials and curriculum.
3. Assist teachers, as needed, in setting up aquarium equipment in their classroom.
4. Coordinate with CDFW to obtain the required Authorization Forms, fish eggs from approved sources, and deliver eggs to the classrooms.
5. Visit classrooms of the individual participants as needed to assist with operation of the aquariums, or with presentations of aquatic programs.
6. Assist, if necessary, with the release of the juvenile fish into public waters approved by the CDFW.
7. Assist the CDFW in ensuring all aspects of the teachers' Authorization Forms are met.
8. Maintain records as deemed necessary by the department and submit to the CDFW on completion of the yearly program.

For more information, read the [Parameters for Community Partners](#).