



**Grounding Sustainability Education
in Place and Community**

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What do I mean by sustainability?

- Don't eat your seed corn or turn your forests into deserts.
- Don't pump wastes into your drinking water or the air you breathe .
- Don't let some people have so much that others—both now and in the future--are unable to live secure and meaningful lives.

Need to nurture citizens who:

- Understand the nature of humanity's current circumstances
- Feel connected enough to their place and community to want to get involved
- Have the capacity to analyze and then solve problems
- Possess the confidence to take action

Ecophobia – a fear of the natural world that can lead to a withdrawal from nature
Biophilia – love of life or living systems



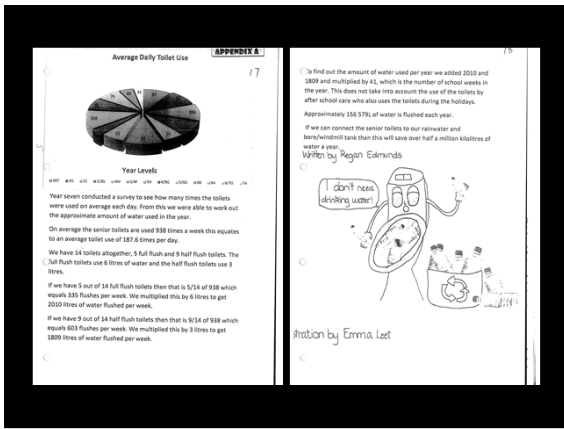
Place- and community-based education is a holistic approach to education, conservation, and community development that uses the local community as an integrating context for learning at all ages. It fosters vibrant partnerships between schools and communities both to boost student achievement and to improve community health and vitality--environmental, social, and economic.

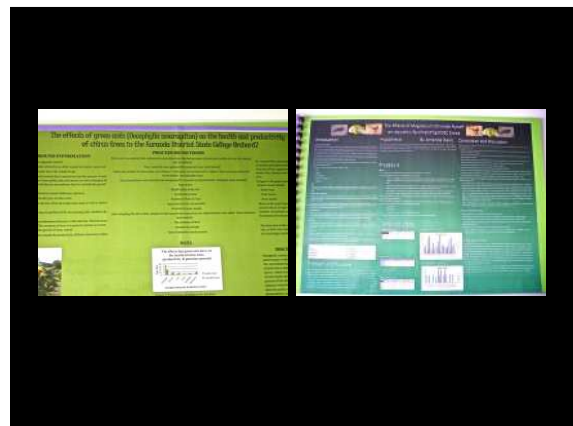
Place- and community-based education provides a vehicle for nurturing such citizens by

- Connecting learning to where students live
- Giving them the opportunity to become problem-solvers capable of looking at issues systemically
- Supporting them as they gain the skills needed to take action

Connecting: Making use of the grounds of two schools in north Queensland







Connecting:
Moving beyond
the school
grounds into
the community



Problem-solving:
Promoting Resolutions with Integrity
for a Sustainable Molokai (PRISM),
Aka'ula and Kualapu'u Schools,
Hawaii

PRISM Projects

- Solid waste disposal
- Ecotourism and habitat
- Alternative fuel vehicles
- Avian-flu virus
- Hunting rights
- Fish-farming
- Ballast water and invasive marine species
- Ungulates and soil erosion
- Disposable diapers
- Natural disaster preparedness
- Shoreline erosion
- Restoration of Hawaiian fish ponds



Investigating and Evaluating Environmental Issues and Actions (IEEIA)

- Problem
- Issues
- Players
- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Values
- Solutions

“Everyone can express his or her viewpoints and consider others’ viewpoints surrounding issues of local significance. This participation is evidently infectious. When adults become more knowledgeable of the issues through students’ presentations, they become more than spectators. They become participants themselves. This in turn has enormous impact on the motivation of the students to thoroughly investigate the issues they choose. Publication of the students’ findings place demands on their communicative skills and fuels their drive to refine and polish their products and presentations.”

- Trudi Volk & Marie Cheak

In 2007 Hawaii governor Linda Lingle praised the Aka'ula School for creating a “community of critical thinkers who are able to investigate and take informed action on social, cultural, and environmental issues.”

“I see these kids and the ones that have graduated and gone on and they’ve learned how to learn. They’re not afraid. They’re not afraid to ask questions.”

a parent quoted by Cheak, Volk, and Hungerford

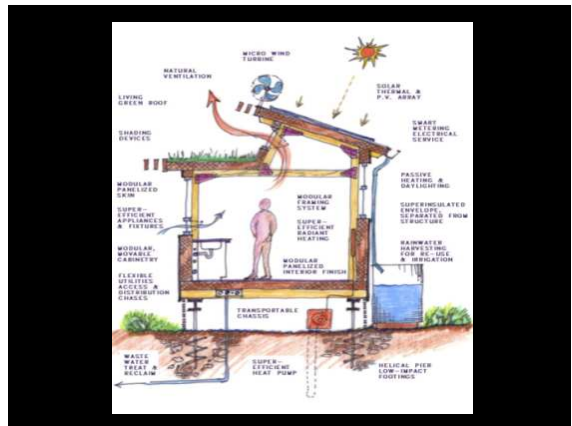
Taking action:
Al Kennedy High School
Cottage Grove, OR

Sustainability themes

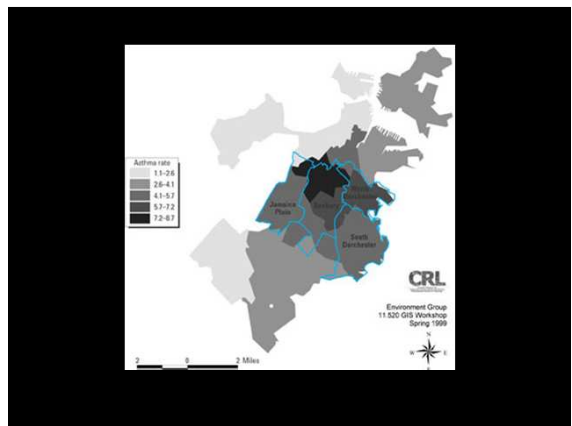
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Energy
- Architecture
- Water

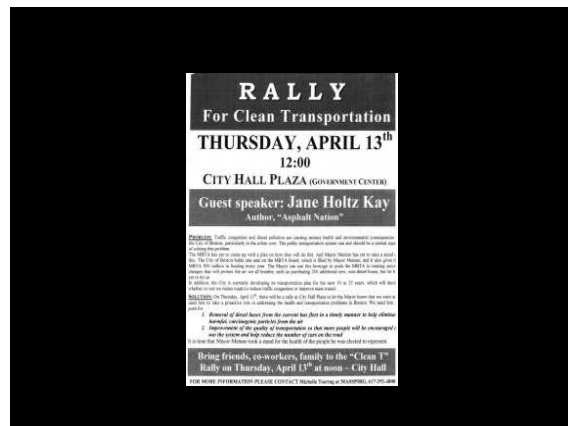
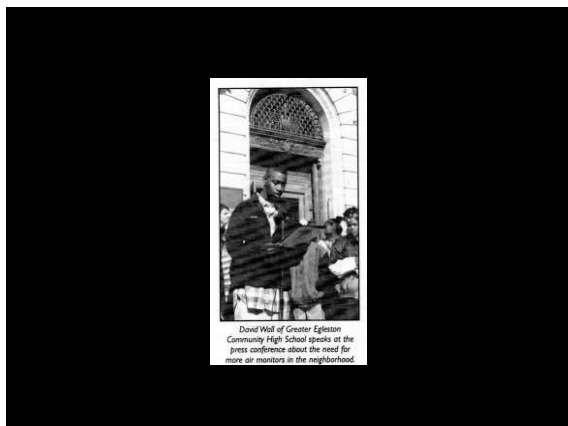
- Evaluate, discuss, question, analyze, and apply
- Understand that knowledge and intellect should accompany goodness and commitment to community
- Develop the intellectual and physical capacity that ensures a love of learning





Taking action: Greater Egleston Community High School, Boston, Massachusetts





I am proud of my accomplishments in environmental justice this trimester. Most importantly I have been able to gain confidence to speak in front of large groups of people. Before presenting to the City Council I was very nervous. But after watching them and my classmates somewhat debate I realized they are regular people just like my family, my teachers, and my friends, and I should not be nervous when it comes to speaking my mind.

Challenges

- Teachers must become curriculum creators.
- Teachers must link unpredictable and uncanned learning experiences to standards.
- Teachers must bridge disciplines as they engage students in inquiry, problem-solving, and action.
- Administrators must trust teachers and students in non-classroom settings.
- Parents and community members must expand their definition of legitimate learning experiences.
- Agencies and businesses must be willing to participate in children's education.
- Adults must come to see children as citizens now.

Research studies from the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative show that this approach:

- Encourages students to become environmental stewards and active citizens
- Helps students learn
- Energizes teachers
- Transforms school culture
- Leads to stronger connections between schools and communities