



“Every Classroom a Green Classroom”
Green Classroom Profile: *Scotts Valley High - Green Team: Adding Green Spaces to Campus*

Teacher Leadership Institute for Sustainability 2023-2024

TEACHER LEADER BIO: *Joe Nedney*

I'm a first-year club advisor for the Scotts Valley HS Green Team. I have created rooftop rainwater harvesting systems and sustainable landscapes for 20+ years and have shifted to working with and teaching high school students about building natural and resilient landscapes. The focus of the SVHS Green Team is to teach students sustainable landscape design and implement projects on campus improving problem areas, creating new ecosystems and increasing soil biology.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Class(es)	# of student impacted by this project:15-30 Grade level(s):9, 10,11,12 Content area(s) of focus for this project:Human Ecology & Sustainable Landscape Design	
School Site	Scotts Valley High School	School Logo
School Demographics	Find ed-data here and fill in the following: Grades served:9-12 # students: 690 % English learners: 1.2% % qualifying for free and reduced price meals: 9.9%	
District	Scotts Valley Unified	District Logo
District Demographics	Grades served: K-12 # students: 2,644 % English learners: 5% % qualifying for free and reduced price meals:15%	
General Vision/Mission of School and/or district	Get students actively involved in environmental awareness by facilitating action projects related to improving the campus landscape.	

1) ORIGINAL GOALS AND INTENTIONS

I am new to introducing sustainable landscape practices to high school level students. I have years of field knowledge and plenty of enthusiasm, and wanted to collaborate with as many educators as possible to learn.

Share your vision for your Green Classroom. How has this program affected this vision?

A Green Classroom is a mutually beneficial environment. There is positive energy exchange between teachers and students. It is resilient and can weather adversities through adaptation. There is a shared group vision with goals, objectives, and action. I thought of a Green Classroom as an actual room with live plants and a recycling bin by the door. Now I see it as a larger entity involving positive relationships and a healthy learning environment. When teachers lead by example it spreads. Students then become leaders by understanding the vision and helping those around them learn, fostering a sustainable culture.

2) KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL BUILDING

A critical part of this program is building knowledge and skills related to Sustainable Schools. Examples include: Environmental Literacy & Sustainability Frameworks; Environmental Identity; Building student engagement through Campus, Curriculum, Community and Culture efforts; Continuum of Environmental Literacy Integration. **Where are you experiencing the most growth in your knowledge and skills related to being a teacher leader for sustainability?**

Building student engagement was my biggest challenge. My growth has come from trusting the process, continuing to show up and work positively with the students, teaching as I work with them, and letting the result speak for itself. There has been noticeable improvement of the campus landscape. Students are getting interested. Progress is satisfying.

3) ACTION - COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT OVERVIEW

Provide a brief summary of the purpose of your project and overall goals.

Summary of Project Purpose and Goals for student learning: Turn ailing areas of the SVHS landscape into living, resilient, sustainable, restorative ecosystems. Teach students about the cycles of nature, the precious natural resources available around us and how to harness them. Create a culture of environmental stewardship through interactive action projects.

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How does this project connect to your Green Classroom vision and the broader mission and vision of the school/district? The action projects are the fabric of my Green Classroom vision. The students are creating lasting improvements by showing up.

What specific learning intention(s) did you share with your students? I share my intentions for the project before and afterward so each member understands the goal of the day. I lay out the scope of responsibilities, designate students to certain activities, and work with them throughout, teaching them about the landscape as we work.

4) ACTION - IMPLEMENTATION STORY

Describe how implementation of your community impact project went. *If your project has not finished yet, describe how the start has gone, and how you anticipate it completing (300 - 500 words).*

General story of implementation: The SVHS Green Team organized multiple campus work days focusing on problem areas on the campus landscape. With multiple days scheduled throughout the year, students dug out compacted dirt, weeds and debris, contoured the sites to hold and sink rainfall, added landscape stone, laid mulch and wood chips to increase soil biodiversity, sowed wildflower seeds and planted native pollinators.

Challenges and obstacles and how you overcame them: Getting students to come back to school on the weekend work days was a challenge. Offering pizza and soda were a good way to overcome it.

Successes and what contributed to success: Having the support of the SVHS staff was big. If I requested tools for the work day, they were on site when I needed them. I had a small group of students who were my all stars. They showed up consistently, sometimes I only had those few on the work days, and we still got a lot of work done.

Next Steps for this project: Small amount of thinning of unwanted plants growing in the areas. Watch and see what works, what doesn't, and make adjustments.

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5) ACTION - METRICS AND OUTCOMES

- **Overall Assessment:** How would you characterize the success of your project?
- **Ecological Benefit:** If possible, how were you able to measure the ecological benefit (reduced GHG emissions, reduced waste, increased biodiversity, etc.) and what were the outcomes?

- **Community & Culture Benefit:** If possible, how were you able to measure impacts on classroom culture and community (for example, students' sense of connection to nature, stewardship) and what were the outcomes?
- **Student and Staff Learning:** *Reflect on evidence of student learning from this project, and how this project shifted your classroom to further integrate environmental literacy.*

Overall assessment: Success! We completed the scope of work in the allotted time and then some!

For the three sections below, include how you tried to measure impacts and what evidence of outcomes you found.

Ecological Benefit: The improved areas have better soil health and increased biodiversity. A wider range of insects like ladybugs and butterflies have visited. Lizards have appeared. Weed growth has been suppressed by the mulch and wood chips.

Community & Culture Benefit: One of the project areas is next to a shade structure over a picnic bench toward the center of campus. Students gather around the area during break and lunch. The surrounding planter now looks inviting and pleasing. Students are keeping the area clean and pulling a weed here and there as well.

Educational Benefit: Because the projects were implemented and completed by the students, those who put in some time have a unique connection to the area and acquired a practical knowledge base in sustainable landscape design along the way. The sense of pride in completing a project is important to emphasize. Those who showed up learned about the powerful combination of teamwork and action. They may not know it yet, but they're acquiring valuable life skills.

Impact on Students' Sense of Connection to the Environment (results of Children's Environmental Attitude Survey and any other evidence of impact):

See above

6) REFLECTION AND COMMITMENTS

What is your enduring understanding about teaching for a sustainable future? And what are your commitments for next year and beyond for this important work?

Reflection: As a teacher, my words, my actions, and my energy are very important and influential to the students. Teaching them while adding my own personality and perspective makes their learning experience unique and powerful.

Commitments: I will show up prepared to teach, engage and interact with students and create a positive learning environment.