



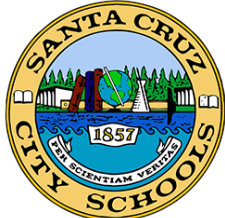
“Every Classroom a Green Classroom”
Green Classroom Profile: *Margaret Starrett*
Teacher Leadership Institute for Sustainability 2022-2023

TEACHER LEADER BIO: *Margaret Starrett*

Hello! I’m Margaret Starrett. I teach 11th and 12th grade English at Harbor High School. I’ve always had a passion for the environment, and now as an English teacher I want to make sure I’m incorporating nature and larger conversations around climate change into my curriculum. As an educator I feel it is my responsibility to facilitate a class in which students cultivate a foundation of tools and experiences that will allow them to be engaged and thoughtful community members in the future. I believe a connection to one’s place in the world is a key part of that foundation.



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Class(es)	# of student impacted by this project: 148 Grade level(s): 11th and 12th Content area(s) of focus for this project: English Student quote: “spending time outside has really helped my mental health” -C.P	
School Site	Harbor High School	
School Demographics	Grades served: 9-12 # students: 1,043 % English learners: 11.9% % qualifying for free and reduced price meals: 34.6%	
District	Santa Cruz City Schools, Public	
District Demographics	Grades served: K-12 # students: 4,584 % English learners: 8.4% % qualifying for free and reduced price meals: 29%	
General Vision/Mission of School and/or District	Mission statement of Harbor High School: Educating all students to become critical thinkers and globally-minded community members. Vision Statement of Harbor High School: Where adults and students are respectful and own their learning. Harbor High graduates are college and	

career ready and equipped with the skills needed to become the best version of themselves.

1) ORIGINAL GOALS AND INTENTIONS

What originally drew you to this program?

As an IB English teacher all of our curriculum is centered around the idea of global mindedness, however I felt like climate change and the environment were missing from the conversation. Students are getting context to the present moment in science classes, but the humanities classes as a whole should also be playing an important role in understanding the full impact behind what it means to be a human being in 2023.

Share your vision for your Green Classroom. How has this program affected this vision? (50-100 words)?

My vision for a Green Classroom is an educational environment that cultivates a curious and intentional mindset with a focus on interconnectivity and sustainability. This program has shown me not only all the incredible resources that exist for students, but it has also really highlighted how many incredible things are happening in classrooms across our county. It has all made me feel very hopeful and inspired.

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?**

The most growth has happened in my understanding of Environmental Identity. It has been really profound to have the space to think about my relationship to nature and consider the ways that it has shaped me as an individual and as an educator. These reflections have led me to feel so much more grounded in my ability to design curriculum that cultivates student engagement in their own Environmental Identity and sustainability. As an English teacher, and one that has to prepare students for specific exams, it was hard to conceptualize ways in which to build environmental literacy beyond just reading articles and watching documentaries. From this program I've not only had the opportunity to better understand my own ways of knowing, but have also been able to implement engaging, simple and effective choices in the classroom that center nature and sustainability in nuanced and community orientated ways.

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:

Implement classroom routines and curriculum that center around developing and furthering Environmental Identity.

**How does this project connect to your Green Classroom vision and the broader mission and vision of the school/district?**

My project purpose helps students access my Green Classroom vision by differentiating instruction and support in order to meet the varying needs of each learner. Harbor High's mission is to help students become globally and community minded. My goal is to create a classroom environment in which students cultivate a deep knowledge of their own experiences, identities and communication patterns as a way of building a foundation that then encourages them to more deeply engage with the community around them.

What specific learning intention(s) did you share with your students?

Ted Chiang Unit:

- What is the significance of science fiction?
- How does Ted Chiang use science fiction to address Climate Change?
- How does narrative perspective impact the audience's experience? Specifically, how did reading a story from the perspective of an endangered species impact the overall messaging of the text?

Nature Journaling Unit:

- How can we employ the ACT model to analyze John Muir Laws' blog about nature journaling?
- What stylistic choices do bloggers make? How is it different from other text types we've studied?
- What are the aims and objectives of John Muir Laws' blog?
- What is the purpose of nature journaling?
- How to write descriptively about my natural surroundings?
- What is the tone of environmental writing? What details about the text reveal the tone? How can you implement these stylistic choices in your own writing?

How did this project serve your pre-existing instructional goals?

I used my project to supplement my pre-existing instructional goals. Our department's instructional goals are centered around preparing students for the International Baccalaureate exams and collegiate level English classes. I designed and implemented new curriculum that still aligned with the rigor and obligations of my class while adding in works and activities that embodied my Green Classroom vision.

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.*

General story of implementation:

After our first TLIS meeting I went through my PLC's lesson plans for the semester and supplemented our unit on the science fiction writer Ted Chiang to address sustainability. I partnered the unit to also include journal entries and reflection points in which students were able to position their own experiences with the environment in their analysis of the text. In addition, I designed a unit about nature journaling that will be completed in May after students visit the redwoods at Henry Cowell. The nature journaling unit is made up of two-parts, the first is analyzing John Muir Laws' blog as a text type. Students are tasked with analyzing and evaluating the different stylistic choices used as a blogger. As students are thinking critically about blogging as a communication method they are also spending more time outside developing their observation skills on mindful walks. The unit completes with an assessment in which students create a blog post reflecting and discussing their experiences with nature journaling while implementing the stylistic choices of a blog.

In addition to building in/supplementing lessons I also shifted some classroom routines to include being outdoors more. For example, we now go on regular mindful walks and I prompt students with reflection questions about what it feels like to observe the sun, or hear the birds sing. We also have more intentional time about working outside and thinking about that impacts our moods and productivity. In terms of our other curriculum I've tried to make sure that each unit now has a sustainability and environmental conversation component to it. Some units are much easier than others, for example I had trouble thinking through a way to do that when teaching Macbeth, but did enjoy talking to students about the impact of such acts of violence as the bombing of Dresden on the collective ecosystem when reading Slaughterhouse-Five.

Challenges and obstacles and how you overcame them:

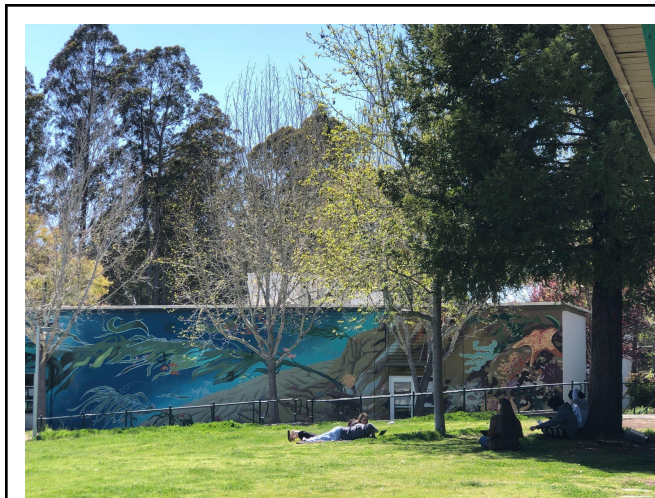
The atmospheric rivers led to great conversations, but also made timing in curriculum difficult. Also, IB is a new program at Harbor and I'm a new teacher, which means that the curriculum is still very much in development. Though the infancy of the curriculum allows for flexibility in content it also means that the depth and care in which I would like to approach each unit. Both major obstacles also presented new windows for growth and opportunity. This group helped me have more of a can-do attitude when feeling a little defeated. Every action, no matter how small, matters.

Successes and what contributed to success:

Students have said nothing but positive things about our classroom structural changes, and also have given really positive feedback about curriculum topics and shifts. Our students are so desperate to have the space to address the real issues that they, and the world are facing. My push to talk about climate change has also prompted more dialogue around bigger topics such as voting rights, food deserts and the like.

Next Steps for this project:

I'm in the process of finalizing a field trip to Henry Cowell, which will go hand in hand with my nature journaling unit. I'm also brainstorming other ways to utilize systems thinking in the classroom, for example I want to use the Habits of a Systems Thinker to create classroom community jobs for assignments. I also am drafting possible reflection questions to have students answer after mindful walks as a way to encourage more curiosity and community connection around SEL.



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: My project did not have a tangible outcome in some ways, and so success is hard to measure on a graph or the like. However, based on the thoughtful discussions that have been happening in class through the semester and the many comments along the lines of 'I love our mindful walks' and 'I feel so good working outside' and 'this made me think about the climate debate differently', I would say this project has been successful.

Ecological Benefit: I am not able to measure the ecological benefit in a way that is quantifiable, but I did notice my students picking up their trash more and other subtle shifts.

Culture & Community Benefit: Our classroom and community culture has been so much more easeful and silly with these changes. Classroom discussions have also been more thoughtful and sustainably centered. Students who were resistant to mindful moments before have been much more willing and engaged. It has been such a sweet shift overall.

Educational Benefit: I believe the project has pushed me to find more engaging curriculum, which benefits all students, and I've also felt a shift in the culture/community of the class, which leads to overall better participation, productivity and enjoyment.

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: I now understand more than ever how important it is to be approaching this work from all different angles and disciplines. This program has really made me feel like teaching for a sustainable future is not only doable but can be fun. It also allowed me to build deeper relationships with my students and the school environment as a whole, which is not a gift I will take for granted.

Commitments: I commit to continuing to employ these tools in my classroom and cultivating a community in which sustainability is at the forefront of our collective learning.