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Teachers Generate Groundbreaking Green Curriculum at Sustainability Workshop supported by National Grid Foundation



Pictured: BLS Youth Can students, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools, Dr. Carol Johnson, Carmen Fields, National Grid Foundation board member, Institute participants and presenters

This past week, 34 forward-thinking Boston area middle and high school teachers from 16 schools met at Simmons College to generate curriculum for change. The lessons they created will become part of the MA Education for Sustainability (EfS) Campaign: a grass-roots effort to incorporate sustainability into the Massachusetts school curriculum led by students from Boston Latin School's Youth Climate Action group.

Facilitating this work was the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELf). The NY-based non-profit joined forces with Boston Latin School Youth Climate Action Network (BLS Youth CAN) and the National Grid Foundation to bring its Summer Institute for Sustainability Education (SE) to Boston for the first time from 19-23 July. At the workshop, educators gained the knowledge, skills and resources to incorporate the 'big ideas' of sustainability, such as understanding connections between the economy and ecosystems, or that there is no 'away' when it comes to disposing of waste, into their teaching. SE, also known as Education for Sustainability or EfS, emphasizes the balance of economic, social and environmental interests, and promotes positive, community-based action. Creative Change Educational Solutions, a national non-profit based in Michigan, provided facilitation and curriculum resources to guide the teachers' learning and instructional redesign.

The workshop received funding from the National Grid Foundation, enabling CELF to offer tuition scholarships for public school teachers from urban districts. Board member Carmen Fields says, *“given the need for sustainability education in MA, we applaud every educator for their leadership and commitment to creating an Education for Sustainability curriculum for MA. What makes this pilot especially exciting is that students are the ones leading the campaign for this statewide sustainability curriculum.”*

Presenters covered topics ranging from the ecological footprint to the carbon economy, sharing tips on using the outdoor classrooms and designing greener products. The last 2 days of the Institute were spent developing curriculum for the MA EfS Curriculum Pilot. On Thursday, Youth CAN students joined the presenter line up to explain how the pilot ties into the group’s other efforts such as the annual Climate Summit at MIT as well as future plans for a sustainable roofscape and community learning center at BLS.

BLS Headmaster Lynne Mooney-Teta notes, *“the climate crisis calls for a swift response from the K-12 education system to prepare students adequately for 21st century challenges. BLS is excited to be at the forefront of this movement by piloting the first part of a MA EfS curriculum starting this fall.”* Rebecca Park, President of the BLS Youth CAN, the group who pushed for the EfS pilot, highlights why students are leading the way in promoting sustainability curriculum, *“we are the ones who will be part of a green economy, who will have to change our lifestyles and thinking to avert disastrous effects to the world we live in. There’s no better time to start learning how to do that than in school. Once we have tried and tested the curriculum pilot at BLS, other interested schools will be encouraged to incorporate it, before we push for EfS to be adopted statewide”.*

The National Grid Foundation works to enhance the quality of life in areas where National Grid provides services by supporting opportunities for solutions to educational and environmental issues. The Foundation’s philosophy is based on the principle that giving people the tools to build hope is an essential ingredient in the development of individuals, families, and communities.

The Children’s Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELF) www.celfoundation.org is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization that collaborates with public school districts and individual teachers to raise awareness of sustainable development and to help incorporate related principles into K-12 curricula and programs.

BLS Youth CAN www.blsyouthcan.org is an after school club at the Boston Latin School working in their community and beyond to address the problem of global climate change and promote education for sustainability. BLS Youth CAN maintains multiple community partnerships with youth and adults in support of its numerous initiatives.

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