

Project Title

Learning to Love the Natural World with the Help of Nature Journaling and

Poetry One Sentence Summary

I will study climate justice, nature journaling, and poetry writing in order to develop and teach a new unit of study that cultivates an appreciation of the natural world and instills in students an understanding of how we can work together to conserve it.

Project Description

While reading Leah Penniman's *Black Earth Wisdom: Soulful Conversations with Black Environmentalists*, I found myself instantly stilled by the Senegalese poet Baba Dioum's words that Penniman uses to orient readers to the work of this sacred collection of essays and interviews: "In the end, we will conserve only what we love." I was stilled by these words because they ushered me into this reflective space where I was prompted to consider again society's separation from the natural world, the frightening signs of the climate crisis that are ever apparent all around us, and how the product of both of these issues will become the inheritance of our young people. As an ordained person called to a ministry of compassion and justice, and as a teacher at a school with a thriving garden program, I found myself dreaming about how I might use my reading and writing class to foster a deeper appreciation of the natural world in my students in order to help repair our relationship with creation and continue to help lay the groundwork for understanding and advancing environmental sustainability efforts.

Through this fellowship, I intend to study climate change, nature journaling, and poetry writing in order to develop and teach a new unit of study. I plan to pursue professional development opportunities that will help me to teach my students how to be present in and pay attention to the natural world around them while building their skills as readers and writers. I have identified three courses that I would like to take and will follow this course of study up with a trip to the Caribbean to practice and further develop these skills of observation, reflection, and creation while learning about how climate change affects the ecosystems and biodiversity of Aruba and Curaçao. The ultimate goal of my professional development and travel experiences is to be better equipped to develop and implement a fifth-grade nature journaling and poetry writing unit that helps to foster and strengthen a sense of belonging to and wonder about the natural world while teaching about climate justice because "In the end, we will conserve only what we love."

Professional Development Goals

- I will deepen my understanding of climate change, nature journaling, and poetry writing by taking one course about teaching about climate change, one nature journaling class, and a poetry writing workshop by the end of June.
 - Taking a course on teaching about climate change will give me the tools and strategies to teach about climate change in a hopeful and developmentally appropriate way.
 - Learning how to use nature journaling as a way to record and explore the natural world and myself will help prepare me to teach my students how to use nature journaling to explore and appreciate the natural world around them.

- Broadening my own knowledge of poetry and cultivating a sense of playfulness and exploration in my own writing will better position me to craft a creative writing unit for my students that invites them to write poetry after observing the natural world around them and learning about climate change.
- By the end of July, I will create three or more nature journaling entries and three or more original poems after exploring parks and reservations in the city of Boston and traveling to study environmental sustainability in the Caribbean.
 - My plan for studying environmental sustainability in Aruba and Curaçao involves conducting informal interviews with local experts and community leaders to gain insights into current initiatives and challenges. Additionally, I will engage in field research, visiting key sites such as protected areas, renewable energy installations, and coastal zones to observe firsthand the environmental practices and impacts in these island nations.
 - The nature journaling entries and poems that I write about nature related themes will be used as mentor texts in the fifth grade nature journaling and poetry writing unit that I will develop in August. In addition to using these entries and poems to teach nature journaling and poetry writing techniques, I will use these pieces to demonstrate for students how poetry can be used to explore themes related to environmental stewardship.
 - The insights that I gain from the classes that I take from March to June will guide my own nature journaling practice and poetry writing. In addition to giving me the opportunity to exercise my own writing muscle, working with the techniques that I learn while immersing myself in the natural world near and far will provide me the space to consider how to translate the writing techniques that I learn to my fifth graders.
- By the end of August, I will use my professional development and travel experiences to create a fifth-grade nature journaling and poetry writing unit that helps to foster a greater sense of belonging to and wonder about the natural world after teaching what climate change is and exploring how climate change impacts our communities through a climate justice lens.
 - I believe that implementing a one-week fifth-grade nature journaling and poetry writing unit in September along with subsequent related lessons integrated throughout the academic year, will effectively integrate environmental sustainability into my classroom curriculum on a continuous basis.

The Goals for the Unit I Will Implement at Epiphany Following My Professional Development Experiences

- The following are three goals for the nature journaling and poetry writing unit that I will create.
 - After nature journaling, reading about the basics of climate change science, and discussing how people are disrupting climate justice, students will be able to identify at least three local or global indicators of climate change and demonstrate an understanding of meaningful solutions to climate change.
 - When teaching about the global indicators of climate change, I will present what I learn during my travels about climate change's impact on the Caribbean islands of Aruba and Curaçao and the environmental sustainability efforts in

these countries. I will then connect this to the similar indicators of climate change that can be observed in other Caribbean countries. Traveling to and teaching about the Caribbean will be meaningful for my students because it is a region of the world where many of our families come from.

- I will use my learnings from the courses that I take on teaching about climate change and nature journaling to develop these lessons.
- Students will cultivate a deeper sense of connection to the natural world after actively engaging in outdoor exploration and reflection, fostering curiosity and wonder about their surroundings, and demonstrating increased empathy and appreciation for the diverse ecosystems impacted by climate change through observations and reflections recorded in their nature journals.
- Students will be able to craft and share at least one original poem about nature that reflects their personal observations, emotions, and insights about the natural world, with particular attention to themes related to climate change and environmental sustainability.
 - This is where the poetry writing course will come into play.

Timeline

- March to June
 - Take the Mass Audubon's nature journaling class at the Boston Nature Center.
 - Take Grub Street's 6 Weeks, 6 Poems workshop.
 - Take Mass Audubon's ABCs of Teaching Climate Change or a comparable course.
 - Create three or more nature journal entries to use as mentor texts in the fifth grade nature journaling and poetry writing unit while investigating the natural world and potential field trip sites in Boston.
 - Blue Hill Reservation
 - Epiphany's Garden and Greenhouse
 - Spectacle Island
- July
 - Travel to Aruba and Curaçao to visit their national parks, learn about the impacts of climate change on these Caribbean islands, and practice nature journaling. ■ My potential travel dates are July 21st to July 27th. My exact travel dates in July are subject to change.
 - The questions that I will informally ask during my travels will be similar to the following questions:
 - How has climate change affected the ecosystems and biodiversity of Aruba/Curaçao in recent years?
 - Can you discuss any innovative strategies or projects that have been implemented to mitigate the impacts of climate change in Aruba/Curaçao?
 - How are local communities and governments collaborating to address climate change issues, and what role do you see community engagement playing in building climate resilience?

- Write 4 original poems about the natural world to use as mentor texts in the fifth grade nature journaling and poetry writing unit that I will develop in August. ■ Two of the poems that I write will be reflections of the observations that I make and insights that I gain about the natural world while nature journaling at sites around Boston. The other two will be based on the nature journaling that I do while traveling abroad.
- August
 - Create a fifth grade nature journaling and poetry writing unit.
 - Share professional development takeaways, travel experiences, and nature journaling and poetry writing unit overview with colleagues during Epiphany's beginning of the year orientation.
- September
 - Teach nature journaling and poetry writing unit.

Budget

- [Mass Audubon's Nature Journaling at the BNC](#) (PD) - \$13
- [Grub Street's 6 Weeks, 6 Poems](#) Workshop (PD) - \$405
- [Mass Audubon's ABCs of Teaching Climate Change](#) Course (PD) - \$72 ● Flights from Boston, MA to Oranjestad, Aruba and Willemstad, Curaçao - \$1,000 ● Accommodations in Aruba and Curaçao (7 nights) - \$1,500
- Food, living expenses, and nature journaling materials for myself and students - \$500
- Tours and national park entrance fees in Aruba and Curaçao - \$510 ○ Potential activities and places to visit in Aruba
 - Arikok National Park
 - Aruba Nature Sensitive Hiking and Jeep Tours
 - Electric Four-Wheeler Tour in Aruba
 - Snorkeling cruise
- Potential activities and places to visit in Curaçao
 - Christoffel Park
 - Guided Mountain Climb
 - Jeep Safari
 - Curaçao Sea Turtle Swim and West Side Natural Highlights