

## **Cultivating Sustainability and Cultural Awareness: A Transformative professional development in Hawaii.**

Alicia Eberle has been a part of the Boston Public Schools community for over ten years. She originally began her career as an English as a Second Language teacher (ESL), working with middle and high school students. She taught all levels of language, from newcomers to level 4. In the evenings, Alicia taught ESL to adult residents of the city of Boston. In addition, she worked with BPS and the Department of Education to offer an online course to Boston Public schools teachers who wanted the endorsement to teach language learners in their content classes. As a teacher, Alicia was fortunate to be the recipient of two Pat Cook Fund scholarships, in 2022 and 2023. In the first project, she studied ecological pencils created and built by students from an elementary school in Brazil; in the second one, sustainable Mayan agriculture in Guatemala.

As a result of the scholarships and learning, Alicia was able to make global connections in the classroom for students, and had the opportunity to work on a sustainability project with another class in Mexico. Students worked on the same projects and had the opportunity to meet virtually once per month to share their projects and experiences. Moreover, the Fund helped to introduce sustainability to all levels of English classes, both in high school and adult education

This is Alicia's second year as the Assistant Head of School at Boston Arts Academy, where she invited the Pat Cooke Fund to a new group of inspired educators. Alicia eagerly continues connecting the educators of BAA with Pat Cooke to explore how arts, sustainability, teaching, and learning can intersect.

## **Promote environmental sustainability:**

As an educator dedicated to promoting environmental consciousness and sustainability within my school, I intend to create a professional development (PD) opportunity that emphasizes hands-on learning in one of the most ecologically and culturally vibrant areas: Hawaii. This fellowship will concentrate on three primary aspects: participating in reforestation and cultural preservation efforts at Kipuka Olowalu, examining permaculture techniques in Hawaii's lush rainforests, and visiting the UC Davis School of Education, that brought together diverse expertise to develop and implement a transdisciplinary field curriculum ecology after devastating wildfires hit Maui in 2023.

I will be collaborating with and working alongside local conservationists at Kipuka Olowalu to remove invasive plants. Furthermore, I will work to plant endemic species in order to restore native Hawaiian ecosystems. In addition to being an act of sustainability advocacy, this practical reforestation project is a step toward comprehending how biodiversity, land management, and cultural heritage are interconnected. Moreover, the hands-on permaculture training will give me practical knowledge of sustainable farming methods that support ecological balance and resource preservation. Equally important, I will get to know how UC Davis School of Education has addressed this so destructive and ever-present issue, wildfires, in a culturally responsive and sustainable way.

I hope to return from these experiences with creative approaches and practical examples that will encourage the staff and students to think critically about sustainability, broaden their awareness of environmental issues around the world, and take significant community action. In particular, I would like to concentrate on offering professional development to the visual arts department in collaboration with the humanities department in order to inspire a cross-curricular student-made gallery exhibition that emphasizes environmental issues in our area.

Educating high school students about my involvement in reforestation and cultural preservation initiatives is especially crucial because it fosters in them a deep appreciation for their art and a connection to the environment. Students will deepen their understanding about how human activities affect ecosystems and discover useful ways to help restore the environment. One day a year, Boston Arts Academy students work on service learning projects throughout the city. I'll be able to match services projects in Boston with sustainability and environmental preservation, thanks to the knowledge I will have gained from this professional development. Furthermore, these kinds of experiences encourage students to think critically about their roles in creating a sustainable future and instill a sense of responsibility. Incorporating these teachings into the curriculum not only promotes environmental literacy but also equips students to take the initiative and lead in solving global issues.

## **Project goals/ outcomes:**

1. **Acquire Comprehensive Knowledge of Permaculture Principles**
  - Attend workshops and hands-on training sessions in permaculture techniques, including soil regeneration, water conservation, and sustainable crop rotation.
  - Document practices through detailed notes, photographs, and video recordings to create an instructional guide for classroom use.
2. **Participate in Reforestation Projects**
  - Contribute to the planting of native trees at Kipuka Olowalu.

- Collaborate with conservationists to understand the methodologies behind successful reforestation and invasive species management. Moreover, have a deepened understanding of how invasive species impact the rainforest and vegetation throughout the region as well as other environmental impacts.

### 3. **Develop a Cross-Curricular Environmental Education Plan**

- Design a curriculum module integrating environmental science classes with the visual arts department to create a cross-curricular project. These projects will align with the current curriculum from the quarter 4 in Humanities 1 unit and will be inspired by Hawaiian ecological practices and cultural traditions.
- Provide space to support Visual Arts teachers and the Humanities 1 teachers to develop lessons to support a cross-curricular project.

#### **Timeline:**

The project will begin by flying into Maui, Hawaii. I will begin by participating in contributing to the reforestation and culture preservation at Kipuka Olowalu. I will engage in hands-on reforestation and cultural preservation activities, as well as participate in guided tours of native Hawaiian plant sites to learn about native species. I will spend a day at The Olowalu Cultural Reserve, learning about the environment and the culture of the Native Hawaiian land and practices. I will work with locals to clean up marine debris found in the ocean environment. I will continue the project by learning about permaculture deep in the rainforest of Hawaii. Here I will participate in air layering and propagating plants, trees, and bamboo, and deepen my understanding about the important impact this has on the environment. Finally, I will visit UC Davis school of Education to learn about a highlighted project called *Cultivating Youth and Community Resiliency*. This experience will enhance my understanding of using science to educate the community about land stewardship.

#### **Bringing the Experience Back to My School:**

Upon returning, I aim to transform my Hawaiian experiences into tangible benefits for my school community. First, I will share my learnings through a professional development workshop for my colleagues, emphasizing how environmental sustainability can be incorporated into various subjects. This workshop will include an introduction to permaculture principles, reforestation techniques, and the cultural significance of land stewardship.

Additionally, I plan to develop a school-wide sustainability project inspired by my fellowship. I will be offering professional development to the visual arts department in collaboration with the humanities department in order to inspire a cross-curricular student-made gallery exhibition that emphasizes environmental issues in our area. This project would not only enhance environmental awareness but also foster a sense of responsibility and connection to the natural world, while allowing students to incorporate their artistic vision.

Addressing environmental challenges requires not only scientific and technical solutions but also a profound shift in cultural perspectives and values. Integrating an artistic view into environmental issues allows us to explore the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of sustainability. Art has the power to make abstract concepts tangible, evoke empathy, and inspire action by connecting people to the natural world in deeply personal ways.

## **How This Learning Trip Will Deepen My Understanding of the Environment:**

Participating in this awesome learning experience will greatly deepen my understanding of the environment by immersing me into Hawaii's unique ecosystems and cultures. Working on reforestation projects at Kipuka Olowalu will give me hands-on experience with the delicate balance needed to bring back native habitats, showing how human actions affect biodiversity. The hands-on training in permaculture in Hawaii's rainforests will help me learn about sustainable farming methods and why they're super important for saving natural resources. Visiting UC Davis School of Education will provide learning about how students are engaged with collecting data on invasive plant species, removing flammable invasive grasses, and planting native drought-resistant species. These experiences will not only grow my knowledge of ecological ideas but also show how closely linked environmental sustainability is to cultural heritage, ultimately strengthening my role as a school leader and supporter of the environment.

### **Costs:**

The \$4000 scholarship will be used to cover the cost of roundtrip travel to Maui, Hawaii, the cost of meals, lodging and transportation while in Maui, Hawaii, including transportation to and from the airport as well as daily rides to get to and from volunteer sites. Please see the [budget document](#) here.

### **Resources:**

<https://www.gohawaii.com/islands/maui/malama-maui/voluntourism>

<https://travel2change.org/listing-tag/nature-preservation/>

<https://www.worldpackers.com/positions/71191>