Climate Optimism - Finding Creative Solutions and Making Positive Impacts
June 28, 2024
Sponsored by Wisconsin International Resource Consortium at UW-Madison

Resources and Recommended Readings
Workshop videos are available on the event website

From Workshop Speakers
Sumudu Atapattu
UN Human Rights Institutions and the Environment: Synergies, Challenges, Trajectories (2023)
Open Access content available
Cambridge Handbook of Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development (2021)
Human Rights Approaches to Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities (2016)

Sumudu Atapattu slide presentation

Li-Ching Ho and Keith Barton
Curriculum for Justice and Harmony
51(2), 276-291.

Li-Ching Ho slide presentation

Nicole Fischer
Environment and Engagement in German Studies at Carleton College - resources for teaching and research on environmental topics in German Studies
Video for Wald by Materia (lyrics in German)
Special Section: “Sustainability and Community Engagement in German Studies.” In: Die Unterrichtspraxis / Teaching German 54.2 (2021), pp. 239-327.

Heidi Kühn
Roots of Peace
World Food Prize Foundation video
Breaking Ground (Heidi’s memoir)

Carlos Arenas
Video on Gardi Sugdub relocation
Human Rights Watch: “The Sea is Eating the Land Below Our Homes”
Peninsula Principles in Action
Articles and News Items


“A Current You’ve (Probably) Never Heard of Could Change Wisconsin’s Climate Forever” (Up North News)

“The Great Lakes region as a climate refuge? We aren’t ready, but we can be”

“Abandoned farmlands could play a role in fighting climate change. A new study shows exactly where they are” (UW-Madison News)

Taking Education Outdoors: A Toolkit for Schools | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

“How the Climate Crisis Fuels Gender Inequality”

“The Connection Between Climate Change and Modern Slavery”

“Climate Change and现代 slavery: the nexus that cannot be ignored”

“Climate Refugees” (National Geographic)

“Climate Change Will Force a New American Migration”

“Climate Change and Disaster Displacement” (UN High Commission for Refugees)

A leading data scientist’s journey from doomism to climate hope, by India Bourke, BBC, February 8, 2024

Is it wrong to be hopeful about climate change? by Diego Arquedas Ortiz, BBC, January 9, 2020
From NPR 4/1:
https://www.npr.org/2024/04/01/1240026582/dystopias-are-so-2020-meet-the-new-protopias-that-show-a-hopeful-future

“Adapting Our Food System to a Changing Climate” - Pulitzer Center/PBS North Carolina (4/1-24)

Climate and Environment Articles (various) - Pulitzer Center

Urbanization, Innovation, and Solutions in Mongolia’s Capital City - Pulitzer Center/The Diplomat (12/16/23)

The New Yorker, June 3, 2024: Are We Doomed? Here’s How to Think About It

UNESCO launches new initiatives for “greening education” in classrooms

Websites and Organizations

Environmental Education | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals — Online exhibits and photo galleries:


Ocean Optimism: https://www.oceanoptimism.org/ - a marine conservation movement that focuses on solutions rather than problems, with the aim of creating a new narrative of hope for our ocean.

Fridays for Future: https://fridaysforfuture.org/ - #FridaysForFuture is a youth-led and -organised movement that began in August 2018, after 15-year-old Greta Thunberg and other young activists sat in front of the Swedish parliament every schoolday for three weeks, to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis. She posted what she was doing on Instagram and Twitter and it soon went viral.

Global Optimism: https://www.globaloptimism.com/why-stubborn-optimism Who we are and how we show up in the world defines how we work with others, how we interact with our surroundings and ultimately the future we co-create. Operating as a family of projects and partnerships, Global Optimism elevates leadership, transforms mindsets and accelerates action to protect and regenerate the web of life.

Mother Earth Project: https://mtherearthproject.org/ Mother Earth Project™, MEP, is a people empowerment campaign that encourages communities worldwide to commit to sustainable
actions and Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, filled with daily acts of saving and protecting our planet. Using artwork as the catalyst for bringing people together, MEP encourages schools, communities, and climate strikers to create Mother Earth Murals and Parachutes For The Planet®, circular works of art that are a metaphor for bringing the world back to a safe place.

Parachute for the Planet: https://motherearthproject.org/parachutes/ - Mother Earth Project’s Parachute for the Planet - Parachutes are a metaphor for bringing the planet back to a safe place, a sustainable world that is vital to our health, safety and future. Play parachutes (non-functional) are circular pieces of cloth decorated with artwork and collective commitments to sustainable actions and Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs. Decorating parachutes is a powerful activity of sharing and learning and it strengthens a community’s focus on taking action and demanding better environmental laws.

BEE GIRL: https://www.beegirl.org/ (BGO (the Bee Girl Organization) is a grassroots nonprofit centered on bee habitat conservation through research, regeneration, art, & education. We envision a future where bees and people thrive in pastures of flowers. Our goal is to regenerate bee, soil, and human communities through our research projects, art projects, and our education programs.

EDGE of Existence conservation action for “less attractive” endangered species

Pulitzer Center’s “Impact Seed Funding (ISF)” program for educators and researchers (“supports educational engagement initiatives addressing the most critical issues confronting our planet’s ecosystems and communities”)

Tai Chi Animal Frolics - help children develop a sense of stability and calm as they learn to creatively deal with the Earth's problems, we can teach them first to feel empowered and centered. Contact Gerri Gurman to learn more.

Books for Students
Simple Steps Toward a Healthier Earth by Molly Smith

More than 55 Planet-Protecting Activities (appropriate for elementary students, can be used for classroom activities or individual projects - stickers included!)

It’s Your World: Get Informed Get Inspired Get Going!, Clinton, Chelsea (2015). (Lots of ideas that will appeal to kids and can be done in class)

Climate Change and You: How Climate Change Affects You, Raij, Emily (2020).

Old Enough to Save the Planet: Be Inspired by real-life children taking action against climate change, Kirby, Loll (2020).
Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines, Fleischman, Paul (2014). Ages 14+

**Teachers Guide/Resources:**

"All the Way to the Ocean," Harper, Joel (2006) | Film short of the same name. - "It will aid me in sharing the importance of not polluting our storm drains and the children will see that the message is not only coming from me. It will also aid me in letting them know that they have the power to make a difference, like Isaac and James! Inspiring the students to perform their own campus cleanups. Thank you again for your inspirational work of art! It will most definitely assist me in spreading this important message."
– Jackie Besoyan | Environmental Outreach Coordinator | Public Works Department / Environmental Division (WPCP)

**Teachers Guide/Resources:**

"You Are Stardust" by Kelsey, Elin and Kim, Soyeon (2012) - Ages 4 and up: An exquisite picture-book that instills that profound sense of connection with the natural world. Underpinning the narrative is a bold sense of optimism — a refreshing antidote to the fear-appeal strategy plaguing most environmental messages today…a thoughtful, beautiful piece of early science education presented by two women, the most heartening such example since Lauren Redniss’s Radioactive.

"You Are Never Alone" Elin and Kim, Soyeon (2019) - Ages 4 to 12: "[You Are Never Alone] celebrates the beauty of the world and reminds young readers that not only are they protected by a 'generous world of green' but that they can make a difference by how they interact with that world." - The Globe and Mail

**Books for Educators**

Thank You For Being Late, Friedman, Thomas L. (2016).

No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal whoAttempts to Save the Planet, Beavan, Colin (2009). (Non-fiction; historical background of political and social climate which has led to messaging from climate deniers)


**The Future We Choose, Surviving the Climate Crisis, Figueres, Christiana (2020).** (Architects of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement)
What is Climate Optimism, Gennari, Anne Therese (2022)

Teaching Climate Change to Children, Literacy Pedagogy That Cultivates Sustainable Futures by Rebecca Woodard and Kristine M. Schutz (2024)

Not Too Late: Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility, edited by Rebecca Solnit and Thelma Young Lutunatabua (2023)

The Fate of Food: What We'll Eat in a Bigger, Hotter, Smarter World by Amanda Little (2021)

Climate Optimism: Celebrating Systemic Change Around the World by Zahra Biabani (2023)

Other Resources

Climate Change Conference: Loyola University, Chicago

Publications & K-12 Education from the WI Department of Natural Resources

Create a water foundation planter.

Lesson plans from the WI DNR.