

Creating Experiences for Ecological Literacy

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Abstract

On September 19th, two events occurred simultaneously. Data from the National Snow and Ice Center (USA) confirmed the lowest amount of Arctic ice coverage since 1979, when recording was initiated. NASA scientist James Hansen said two important things. The first was that “we have a planetary emergency.” The second statement was “ There’s a huge gap between what is understood by the scientific community and what is known by the public...unfortunately, the gap is not being closed.”

On the same day, the new Apple iPhone was released. The NASA scientist’s words were nowhere to be seen within most mainstream media sources.

The fact that impending ecological changes will undoubtedly affect all systems on Earth is given much less serious political or media attention than it deserves or is needed. Why is this? Many educators (Such as David Orr) have argued that our inability to take action has to do with a lack of an ecological literacy, an uncertain understanding of critical concepts like sustainable development, and the inability of formal education to teach critical concepts as interrelated systems.

What if we challenge and engage students by allowing them to deconstruct modernist truths, such as growth, democracy, and consumerism, by providing experiential opportunities whereby they could truly think critically about the how we live? In this session, classroom examples will be shared as to how young people can **experience** some of the industrialized fallacies that have created this emergency. Through these methods, students can come away with an ecological literacy fundamental for human survival.