

ECUITY: Empowering Change Makers - Urban Biodiversity Initiative for Teachers and Youth

Youth Allies in Biodiversity - Descriptive Transcript

Describer: *This video contains audio descriptions for the blind and visually impaired.*

ECUITY, spelled E-C-U-I-T-Y. Empowering Changemakers: Urban-Biodiversity Initiative for Teachers and Youth. A product of WestEd, the K-12 Alliance at WestEd, the UCLA Institute of the Environment & Sustainability and L.A. Sanitation & Environment.

ECUITY Project: Youth Allies in Biodiversity.

Travis Longcore, UCLA Institute of Environment & Sustainability. As he speaks, photos and video plays showing students and teachers interacting in classrooms and outdoor spaces.

Travis Longcore: The focus from the start is for a student-centered curriculum and that the students undertake investigations because it's one thing to be told something and memorize it. It's another to understand in a visceral, personal way how that information was learned and is gathered, and also how science is as a way of understanding the world.

Describer: *Images of web articles, printed ecological research, and classroom posters go by. Brian Learn, Los Angeles Unified School District, speaks from his classroom.*

Brian Learn: Typically in a unit, I wanna know where the unit is going to end up. Like, I'm thinking, "Oh, in three weeks, here's exactly what students are gonna accomplish," but with this unit, I had to give more agency to the students, and there were times when the students had an idea and I realized that my job as a teacher is to support that idea and to do what I can to make it happen, even though it's not an idea I initially thought of, and so I had to let go of my sense of control as a teacher and really let their learning blossom.

Describer: *Karen De Leon, Los Angeles Unified School District, speaking from a park. Video shows students interacting in their school's outdoor garden.*

Karen De Leon: So, we were fortunate enough to join ECUITY in this unit, and so the kids were able to go from just reading a textbook, being on the computer to getting outside and learning real science, so that was a really nice transition for them. It felt a little weird in the beginning, but I think that they adjusted well to the idea of, like, "Hey, science is outside. It's actually not just in a textbook and it's every day around us."

Describer: Next, several eighth grade students, Candy, Rodrigo, Vincent, and Ogechi, speak.

Candy: I felt personally that my mental health increased and along with my other peers 'cause we had a lot of fun talking to each other and figuring out what we should do for the project, and we all worked together to come up with our own solution.

Rodrigo: When something was wrong, we just have to figure something out until it was right or something that when we saw change, that meant that we were doing something good.

Vincent: It, like, changed my mind, so now I'm, like, more mindful to, like, little bugs and stuff like that.

Ogechi: My hopes are that they, like, improve the city so that it can, like, use methods to, like, cool down the area and not make it, like, warmer like it already is.

Describer: As Karen De Leon speaks, video shows lush outdoor scenery near the school's outdoor garden.

Karen De Leon: It went from kind of sitting in their car and maybe texting or, like, listening to music, but, like, not really talking to their parents to now observing what's going on the outside on their drive to school or, like, walking around. Like, "How many critters do we have on campus?" Just a lot more awareness of the natural life that's around us.

Describer: Stacey Vigallon of the Nature Nexus Institute.

Stacey Vigallon: Some of the best science conversations I've ever had have been with L.A. Unified School District students, on their schools and in the field.

Describer: Aaron, Felix, and Leahanna speak.

Aaron: I hope it can spread to other places, maybe not even schools, because it's really nice to learn about all this science surrounding us with biodiversity. When a lot of people see L.A., they don't think about, like, a lot of plants and greenery. They think about big skyscrapers, so it's important in that way.

Felix: They can encourage other people and pass it down from generation to generation to help people plant, and plant, and plant, and plant more and more and more, which will help people and make a greener earth.

Leahanna: Now that I've learned more about that biodiversity, I do go outside more and just check out the trees and just see, you know, what happens outside.

Describer: As Brian Learn speaks, photos of groups of students in the nature center are shown.

Brian Learn: I thought, “Wow, how in one unit can I have students actually improve the biodiversity at our school?” yet by the end of the unit, I was surprised that students made a small yet measurable impact on our community, not just in terms of increasing biodiversity, but increasing student engagement with others on campus and improving our mental health.

Describer: *Mas Dojiri, Los Angeles Sanitation & Environment, speaking from a deck overlooking trees.*

Mas Dojiri: If we teach our youths about biodiversity, healthy soils, environmental science, maybe they’ll grow up to be stewards of the environment. That’s hugely important. It’s not just a, you know, an assignment that they have to do and turn in. These kids are pumped. That’s saying something, I think.

Describer: *This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation, NSF, under award number 2200830. Any opinions, finding, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials does not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.*

A production of Empowering Changemakers: Urban-Biodiversity Initiative for Teachers and Youth. Produced by Jill Grace. Directed by Chris Olivas. Coordination by Dianna Cazarez. Features Mas Dojiri, Brian Learn, Travis Longcore, Stacey Vigallon, Karen De Leon, and students Aaron, Candy, Rodrigo, Vincent, Ogechi, Felix, and Leahna.