



Introduction:

Climate Literacy as Resistance, Hope, and Activism

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Welcome to the first issue of *Climate Literacy in Education*! The journal is our collective effort to actively confront, in and with education, the climate breakdown and its drivers. Climate change is the key existential issue of our time. It is already eroding possibilities for human and nonhuman lives across the globe. If not addressed adequately, it will continue to erode these possibilities at an accelerating pace, leaving today's young people stranded in an unrecognizable wasteland that may become their future. But this is not the future we are willing to accept. At *CLE* we believe that the story of climate change is yet to be told. It will be told and shaped by today's youth and by all of us who stand up for young people's right to futures in which they can thrive without compromising the Earth's biospheric integrity. At *CLE* we believe that mobilizing all teachers on the ground to incorporate climate literacy in their everyday teaching can be a game changer for ushering in an ecological civilization.

CLE serves as an important tool in this transition. We are an open access journal published by the University of Minnesota Libraries and available for free to all teachers everywhere. Our double-blind, peer-review process ensures that our content is academically rigorous and constitutes scholarship in the emerging field of [climate literacy education](#). Our formula of a pocket journal, in turn, ensures that our content—up to 2000 words maximum—is accessible and practitioner-oriented. *CLE* is thus designed not as a competition to regular academic journals—in which articles are less concerned with direct classroom use and range anywhere between 4000 and 8000 words—but as an ally to their work. This is why, alongside original research, *CLE* also publishes teacher-usable content sourced by authors from their journal articles, book chapters, and longer publications that have appeared elsewhere. Our focus is always on applicability to classroom practice. Our primary audience is teachers and other educators who work with young people in formal and informal schooling settings. Our goal is to share resources that help teachers build young people's climate literacy. In every classroom, in every subject area, across all grade levels.

On this level, the work of *CLE* aligns with the mission of the Center for Climate Literacy at the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development: to develop research, training, and design solutions for climate literacy education in K-12 classrooms. This work is framed by two premises and three commitments:

The premises include **a recognition of where we are** and **a vision of where we are going**. The recognition part is our acknowledgment that the main systems of the current global civilization—our politics, industries, law, finance, agriculture, education, media, market economy, and others—were created without concern for the biosphere or designed to exploit it indefinitely. But winning a war against the planet will get us nowhere. So, our second core premise is that a different future is not just possible but necessary and nonnegotiable. The vision of where we want to be is a sustainable, just, and ecological civilization.

How do we get to that future? The roadmap we envision is reflected in our three commitments:

Commitment to Climate Literacy. We believe that in order to transition to an ecological civilization, we need to achieve universal climate literacy. We need to become a climate literate society. Climate literacy is an understanding that includes numbers and facts (i.e., climate science) but centers on developing values, attitudes, and behavioral change aligned with how we should live to build sustainable futures. For more on climate literacy, see Oziewicz’s [“What Is Climate Literacy”](#) in this issue.

Commitment to Education. We believe that teaching about climate change should be at the heart of our educational practice. Climate literacy can be scaffolded and must be taught to all K-12 students and across all subject areas: not just in science. For examples, see articles by [Hartzell](#), [Braucht](#), [Kerslake](#), [Corliss, Vicens & Young](#), [Jennerjohn](#), and [Hunt](#) in this issue. Centering discussions about issues of climate change in all subject areas and at all grade levels is the most meaningful action we can take to empower young people to become agents of change.

Commitment to Stories. We believe that stories for young audiences are ground zero for building universal climate literacy. Literature, film, games, and art forms for young people are not additional but the most important avenues for raising climate awareness and mobilizing action. This commitment to stories rests on the fact that human cognitive architecture is evolved for narrative understanding. Stories are portals to understanding, remembering, and making connections between knowledge and emotion. They help us care and better navigate reality. See, for example, articles from [Kleese](#), [Nathanael](#), [Werthwine and Panos](#), [Midkiff and Austin](#), and [Werthwine](#) in this volume.

Beyond these premises (which we share with a number of other organizations and journals) and the three commitments (whose specific combination, we believe, is unique to our work), the *CLE* journal fills an important gap. Although the vast majority of teachers and parents [support the teaching of climate change in schools](#), teaching about climate change is almost absent in today’s curricula. Teachers are not sure if and where climate change fits in their subject areas. School boards have no state policies to guide action, and state education departments have no national policies to build on. Leading literacy and educational organizations have acted as if they [live on another planet](#); climate change has been [largely overlooked by scholars of children’s literature](#); and agencies have awarded a mere [.12 percent](#) of their funding to support climate-focused research in social sciences related to the change of attitudes, values, norms, and behaviors: a change that has long been recognized as central to any effective climate policy and action. Under these circumstances, it seems naïve to wait for requirements and incentives for a transition to an

ecological civilization to trickle down from school boards, education departments, state, or federal regulators. This change can only emerge from the actual practice of ordinary people, especially climate literacy conversations that teachers can initiate in their classrooms. From classrooms, this conversation can expand to families, communities, and nations.

This is the future we can create together, acting in our capacities as teachers, educators, and students. At *CLE* we aspire to publish materials that model, facilitate, and inspire the ecocentric transformation of existing education from within: in all schools, with all teachers, at all grade levels. This effort, of course, is not limited to k-12 education. Although our primary audience is classroom teachers, we believe that climate literacy work should also be happening at institutions of higher education, professional education, community education, and in all other spaces where Earthlings learn about how to live now. The tools we promote and the resources we share are scalable, adaptable, and applicable to audiences of every age. In all formal and informal educational settings.

Each issue of *CLE* will include articles in four content categories: curriculum, reflection, critical article, creative & multimodal. For a description of each category, see [this page](#). We start with two issues per year, but we are committed to publishing as many issues as it takes to get these resources out into teachers' hands. Because we want this work to accelerate and expand as soon as possible, we aspire to a one-month turnaround about the publication decision from the submission date. Articles will be published on a rolling basis and assigned to an issue open at that point. We will learn as we go, so some policies or strategies may get modified. One thing that will remain is our commitment to this work as a force to accelerate a transition to an [ecological civilization](#).

We know you care about Earth and all its life forms as much as we do. We know you are concerned about the climate emergency and ready to stand up for the planet. Climate literacy education is a practical, everyday effort we can do together in our classrooms. This journal is a space where we share ideas, tips, and inspiration. Please talk about *CLE* in your networks. Please tell teachers about this work. Please consider publishing with us, reviewing for us, and getting involved in any capacity you are able to. We encourage contributions from K-16 educators, K-16 students, scholars, artists, and informed participants in climate literacy learning. We especially welcome contributions from scholars from historically marginalized communities and geographies, in-service educators, and students. For author guidelines, see [the submission page](#). And always, always feel welcome to reach out with any questions or concerns. Our Managing Editor Nick Kleese can be reached at clejournal@umn.edu.

Thank you for being part of building universal climate literacy in all schools everywhere!