



Shelburne Farms Institute for Sustainable Schools

Professional Learning for PreK-12 Educators

Grow, Reflect, and Connect for a Sustainable Future



Shelburne Farms is a community of learners: an education nonprofit on a mission to inspire and cultivate learning for a sustainable future. Our home campus is a 1,400-acre working farm and forest located along Lake Champlain, Vermont on the homelands of the Winooskik band of the Abenaki. Here, sustainability is more than a catchphrase. Our deeply rooted sense of place and commitment to living out the big ideas of sustainability on our farm guide the programs we offer educators --here, online, or in partner communities.

We believe that education for sustainability prepares learners to strive for, and thrive in, a more sustainable society. It cultivates student

connections with natural and human communities by fostering their love of place and their understanding of community interdependence. Within places they love and systems they understand, students are empowered with opportunities to make a difference and claim their roles as changemakers.

Our professional learning staff have decades of experience in place-based and project-based learning and educating for sustainability, serving the needs of schools and educators across the state, country, and world. Our programs connect critical social justice and environmental issues such as climate change and food systems to the classroom and local community.

A Lasting Impact

Over the last two decades, we've collaborated to transform the teaching practices of more than 15,000 teachers, reaching more than one million students in 49 states and 35 countries. Through extensive program evaluation, here's what participants are telling us about outcomes:

Teachers...

- Improve their pedagogy and knowledge of curricular approaches for EfS
- Find work more meaningful and relevant
- Gain confidence and a renewed commitment to teaching.

"Shelburne Farms has made a huge impact on what I do in the classroom. Sustainability – that's my theme from now on, and it guides everything I do."

Students...

- Better understanding of how the world is interconnected
- Apply their learning in real-world settings
- Actively engage in their communities.

"The EFS lens is powerful pedagogy and provides the space for young people to see themselves as changemakers."

Schools

- Improved school culture
- An increase in place-based programming
- More supportive, engaged colleagues.

"I've had opportunities to form better and deeper connections with colleagues while also forming positive relationships within and outside of school."

Learn with Us!

Shelburne Farms offers in-person and virtual professional learning year-round, from multi-day graduate level courses and workshops to year-long programs. All are offered in partnership and include a combination of whole systems coaching, content knowledge acquisition, inquiry and practice, reflection, differentiated instruction, leadership development, and network-building. Our EFS programs and partnerships have garnered national and international recognition.

For a full list of programs, dates, and registration details, please visit: shelburnefarms.org



Our Foundation: Educating for Sustainability

Education for Sustainability (EFS) is a compelling approach to education that engages students in meaningful, relevant learning in a rapidly changing world. It is the foundation of our professional learning for a simple reason – it has the power to create a just and sustainable future.

EFS is not a pedagogy or subject area. It has less to do with the “what” of teaching than the “why” and the “how.” EFS is learning that links knowledge, inquiry, and action so students can create positive change now, and carry this activism into their adult lives, and into widening spheres of influence. As students and teachers embrace EFS, it has the power to transform school culture through a shared purpose for education.

Essential Components of EFS

- 1 It cultivates a student’s relationship with their community beyond the classroom.
- 2 It encourages students to be curious about their world, placing them at the center of their learning.
- 3 It helps students process and respond to the complexities of their communities through systems-thinking, which leans on concepts like interconnectedness, diversity, and other “big ideas” of sustainability.
- 4 It gives students opportunities to make a difference in their communities through real-world projects.

Grow, Reflect, Connect

Our programs are based on a research-based theory of change rooted in sense of place, systems change, and rich relationships. The approach can be summed up in these three words:

Grow

Receive individualized attention

Based on assessments of individual needs and assets, faculty bring participants the resources, knowledge, and tools they need to meet their personal and professional goals within their school-specific contexts.

Build agency and leadership capacity

Participants develop action plans, curriculum, and resources to share with colleagues, while peer-to-peer conversations inform goal-setting and develop a shared sense of purpose in implementing EFS in their schools.

Engage in experiential learning

Participants engage in experiential learning rooted in place that can be adapted and applied in their own unique settings. They have choice in the projects they pursue, and faculty model EFS pedagogies.

Reflect

Develop and deepen your practice

By engaging in reflective mindfulness practices, like individual and collective journaling, participants build a deeper understanding of their values and the meaning of EFS, and a renewed passion for teaching and learning.

Connect

Connect to the big ideas of sustainability

Participants develop a deep understanding of concepts like diversity, cycles, and interdependence, and use that knowledge to connect their curriculum to current events and the contexts shaping our changing world.

Build lasting relationships

Participants connect with like-minded educators and partners from around the country and world, a network for advice and to share promising practices. They also develop deeper connections with their communities.