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SHARING WONDROUS STORIES OF THIS PLACE:
A GARRISON SCHOOL WEBSITE FOR THE WIDER COMMUNITY

by

JILL CORSON LAKE

©

SYNTHESIS*
MASTER OF ARTS
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

May 2016

Advisor: Professor Peter Taylor

Abstract: This synthesis project, composed of a product and a paper, addresses the 185-acre Garrison School Forest owned by the Garrison School, a public K-8 school in Garrison, New York. The Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) proposes to purchase conservation rights from the school district to preserve the school forest in perpetuity. The HHLT proposal includes a gift of 100 acres of adjacent land that affords easier, safer access to the school forest. The thesis product is www.gufsee.org, a 52-page environmental education website created to provide teachers with resources to help them teach in the school forest on Forest Fridays. The website's audience also includes students, parents, and the greater community. The website presents lesson plans, guidelines on teaching outdoors, and information about the school's environmental education programs. It offers a wealth of resources on animals, citizen science, climate change, geography, geology, the Hudson River, local conservation history, local folklore, nature's benefits for children, local Revolutionary War history, trees and forests, and more. The website incorporates photographs, videos, audio recordings, maps, and illustrations. The paper is written

for graduate students who are planning their thesis projects. The paper describes processes that the author employed to create the website, including: action research, reflection, metacognition, and creative thinking. The paper also outlines the website's intended purposes. The paper contains nine chapters: "Introduction," "Orientation to the Location," "The Situation," "My Synthesis Project," "Rationale for My Engagement," "The Process," "Taking Myself Seriously," "Next Steps," and "Conclusion." It outlines nine goals for the synthesis project: to share resources to help the school's teachers learn how to teach outdoors, to share examples of lessons that may be taught in the school forest, for teachers to use these resources and teach in the school forest regularly, for teachers to begin sharing stories about their experiences on the website's Forest Fridays blog, for the website to play a part in persuading the school board to accept the HHLT proposal, to share stories of New York's Hudson Highlands with the greater community, to use the website as a portfolio piece to assist in the author's job search, to identify the author's vocation through this project, and to assist future students in creating their own transformative synthesis projects.

* The Synthesis can take a variety of forms, from a position paper to curriculum or professional development workshop to an original contribution in the creative arts or writing. The expectation is that students use their Synthesis to show how they have integrated knowledge, tools, experience, and support gained in the program so as to prepare themselves to be constructive, reflective agents of change in work, education, social movements, science, creative arts, or other endeavors.

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Sharing Wondrous Stories of this Place:

A Garrison School Website for the Wider Community

As a parent and community member, I want the Garrison School Forest, located in the Hudson Highlands on the east side of the Hudson River north of New York City, to be preserved in perpetuity for educational and recreational purposes. I describe here the context in which I came to develop a website to serve this end and, in doing so, put into practice many processes stimulated by my studies in the Graduate Program in Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT), especially collaborative action research and taking myself seriously, one of the goals of the CCT capstone project.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

Plate tectonics and four stages of mountain-building shaped this land. This upheaval created a great fjord that extends into the Atlantic Ocean. The Laurentide ice sheet, a mile thick, covered the land, scraping, and reshaping it. The mountains on each side of the fjord were once as tall as the Himalayas. Now, just their bases flank a mighty river that has inspired explorers, industrialists, artists, and environmentalists for centuries. This is a place that takes three years for eel larva to reach from their birthplace in the Sargasso Sea. This a place that General Benedict Arnold fled after he shared the plans for Fortress West Point with the British military. This is a place where wealthy railroad barons built castles on huge parcels of land. Their children and grandchildren later preserved some of the land to retain as open space for animals and people. This is a place where a folk singer built a river sloop and used the power of song to focus attention on cleaning up the river. This is the Hudson Highlands. And in the Hudson Highlands

sits the Garrison School, a small, public K-8 school that owns a 185-acre school forest. My synthesis project involves the Garrison School and its school forest. My project includes two parts—this paper and a product, which is a fifty-two-page Environmental Education website I created for the Garrison School. This paper contains eight sections: “Orientation to the Location,” “The Situation,” “My Synthesis Project,” “Rationale for My Engagement,” “The Process,” “Taking Myself Seriously,” “Next Steps,” and “Conclusion.”

ORIENTATION TO THE LOCATION

The Garrison School was founded in 1793. It is a K-8 school with about 235 students, and the district is academically one of the top in New York State. It received Blue Ribbon School designation from the U.S. Department of Education in 2010, and the New York State Department of Education designated it a Reward School in August 2014. The school forest makes the Garrison School unique. I know of three private schools in New York State that own school forests: the Harvey School and the Hackley School in Westchester County, and the North Country School in Lake Placid. The Millbrook School, an independent coeducational high school in Millbrook, New York, has operated the Trevor Zoo since 1936. But I do not know of any other public school in New York that owns and teaches in a forest adjacent to its school property. This significant asset gives the Garrison School the capacity to teach many disciplines outdoors and to provide an optimal supplementary learning environment for children.

The Sloan, Osborn, Duryee, and Gunther families gave the forest land to the school district in the 1950s and early '60s. Appendix A shows a map of the Garrison School Forest, which contains six trails, woods, steep ledges, ravines, a swamp, and a meadow. The school forest also contains the remains of a Revolutionary War fortification, the South Redoubt, which

was part of Fortress West Point. After British forces destroyed Fort Clinton and Fort Montgomery in 1777, General George Washington engaged military engineer Tadeusz Kościuszko to design a series of forts, redoubts, and batteries on both the west and east sides of the Hudson River. Gen. Washington wanted to prevent the British from sailing through the strategic S curve in the Hudson River between Constitution Island and West Point. Continental Army troops lived in several camps in Garrison and manned the South Redoubt from 1778 to 1781. Garrison School seventh graders engage in a Revolutionary War reenactment each April in the school forest.

Garrison is a wooded, naturally beautiful, rural community located seventy-two minutes north of Grand Central Terminal in New York City by train. It sits on the east bank of the Hudson River in a hilly area called the Hudson Highlands. In Garrison, houses sit far apart from one another, and dirt roads are common. In addition to residential property, Garrison contains farmland, New York State park land, two golf courses, a country club, churches, a library, a post office, the Garrison School, a café, and two gas stations. Significant intellectual, spiritual, and cultural institutions are located in Garrison, including the Hastings Institute, a nonpartisan research center on bioethics; the Garrison Institute, which applies the power of contemplation to social and environmental change; the Garden Conservancy; Hudson Highlands Land Trust; the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival; the Walter Hoving Home and the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center; facilities that help individuals to overcome addiction; Boscobel House and Gardens; and Manitoga, the Russel Wright Design Center, which is designated as a National Historic Landmark and on the World Monuments Watch list.

Garrison has significant ties to the modern environmental movement in the United States. Alexander “Ander” Saunders, who owned a farm in Garrison, was at the center of the successful

fight against Consolidated Edison's proposal to build a power plant on Storm King Mountain. Storm King rises from the western shore of Hudson River, northwest of Garrison. It's right across the river from the home of the late folk singer, environmentalist, and Civil Rights icon Pete Seeger. Saunders joined the board of Scenic Hudson in 1964 and served as chair or co-chair until 1976 ("Our History"). Seeger came up with an idea in the 1960s to build a Hudson River sloop, christened the *Clearwater*, to highlight the need to clean up the heavily polluted Hudson River. Saunders and his wife, Risi, were instrumental in creating the Clearwater organization with Seeger. They hosted a concert fundraiser at their farm on Old Albany Post Road in 1966 to raise funds for the sloop (United States). The Hudson River sloop *Clearwater* now serves as a sailing classroom that teaches individuals about the history of the Hudson River as a working river, a rich ecological habitat, and an important cultural landscape. Clearwater was also instrumental in the passage of the Clean Water Act. Today, Anne Todd Osborn, a member of the Garrison School's Environmental Education Committee, is the current president of the board.

Garrison's involvement in environmental concerns extends beyond Clearwater. Robert H. Boyle founded the Hudson Riverkeeper Fund in Garrison, which eventually became the Riverkeeper organization. The Hudson Highlands Land Trust, the Open Space Institute, and Scenic Hudson have worked together to preserve a great deal of land in Garrison, including Arden Point State Park; Cat Rock; Glenclyffe; the Manitou Point Preserve; the Philipstown Park; the North Redoubt, a Revolutionary War fortification on land adjoining the Garrison School Forest; and the Watergrass Sanctuary. Families and individuals including the Osborns, Lila Acheson Wallace, David Gordon, the de Rham family, Mrs. Margaret Sage, and many others have conserved acres of additional land in the Garrison area.

THE SITUATION

With recent changes in the administration of the Garrison School came a new focus on incorporating the school forest in the way the school delivers education. Administrative changes included Laura Mitchell, who joined the district as superintendent in April 2014, and John Griffiths, who joined the district as principal in August 2015. Since Mitchell joined the district, a series of initiatives involving the school forest have been proposed in an effort to conserve the forest's function. Appendix B shows the deed to the Garrison School Forest land, which stipulates that at any time after December 31, 2030, "the premises may be converted to other uses," provided that a court in Putnam County "shall approve such other uses as being in the public interest." Thus, if some unforeseen circumstance arises after 2030, such as school district consolidation or any fiscal need, it could put at risk the school forest's intended purposes as an educational laboratory for students. Governor Mario Cuomo has expressed interest in consolidating school districts with fewer than 1,500 students. The Haldane School District in neighboring Cold Spring tried to sell a 10.6 acre tract of land called the James Pond area, used for environmental field studies, to support a \$2 million sports field project. Garrison community members and I do not want the Garrison school forest to suffer a similar fate. As a result, the Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) has proposed a unique opportunity to preserve the Garrison School Forest in perpetuity. HHLT proposed in May 2015 to purchase a conservation agreement from the school district. This proposal includes a 100-acre gift of adjoining land that will afford better access to the school forest and its six trails (Chmar). At the November 4, 2015, school board meeting, the board members asked the superintendent to identify a consultant to oversee an appraisal of the school forest land and to evaluate the HHLT proposal. At the April 26, 2016 meeting of the Environmental Education Committee, Mitchell reported that the school's

attorney concluded that the district did not need to issue a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant. Mitchell said she was choosing between two consultants.

The Garrison School Board asked Griffiths to provide a report at its October 7, 2015, meeting on instructional activities in the school forest. Griffiths reported that teachers were not using the school forest much at all, other than each May for the annual School Forest Day, a six-year-old event that involves an excursion to and activities in the school forest for all Garrison School students, and for the Revolutionary War reenactment by a middle school class. Griffiths' report was eye-opening. Some members of the school board had contended earlier in 2015 that the school was offering regular instruction in forest. The deed of the land requires regular use,. and, as noted above, if this is not done, a clause in the deed may permit the land to be used for other public purposes come 2030.

One obstacle keeping teachers and students from engaging with the school forest was the lack of regularly scheduled transportation to and from the forest. Art teacher Coulter Young told Griffiths about a Forest Fridays program at his daughter's school near Danbury, Connecticut. Griffiths liked the idea and pitched it to the Environmental Education Committee, the school board, and the teachers. As a proposition, the Forest Fridays activity presumes that teaching outdoors is important to the education of children. Everyone supported the initiative. So Griffiths launched the nine-week pilot Forest Fridays initiative during the week of October 5, 2015. A Garrison School bus picked up students and teachers at 1:00 p.m. on Fridays and took them 1.3 miles to a school forest access point adjacent to 135 Snake Hill Road. All teachers had the opportunity to sign up to take their students to the school forest on a Forest Friday. The Forest Fridays pilot program ended after Friday, December 11, 2015.

After Griffiths launched Forest Fridays, I wondered what other obstacles might be preventing greater use of the school forest. I posed generative questions that I had learned to formulate in the CrCrTh 601 Creative Thinking course. How might we remove those obstacles, I wondered. How might we help to get students and teachers into the forest regularly? How might we retain the school forest in the future. I thought that perhaps the Garrison School's teachers needed more information about how and what to teach outdoors. Perhaps the district also needed to better integrate the school forest into the school's curriculum. So I decided to collect and contribute local, regional, national, and international resources to help teachers teach in the school forest. I recognized that the Forest Fridays initiative could be informed by research on place-based, outdoor, and environmental education; by research on how best to teach outdoors; and by research on outdoor activities that are developmentally appropriate for children at various ages. I also recognized the importance of learning about and sharing the impact of experiences in nature on children's health, creativity, and resiliency. I saw the benefit of collecting resources on how to read a forest, citizen science projects, local history, local conservation history, applicable lesson plans, grant opportunities, and information on plants, animals, and weather. I saw that this research could be the focus of my synthesis project, and I decided to house this research in an Environmental Education website for the Garrison School.

I wrote a proposal outlining a plan to create an environmental education website housing local, regional, national, and international resources to support instruction in the Garrison School Forest. I discussed the proposal with Mitchell and Griffiths at a meeting on November 6, 2015. They confirmed that an Environmental Education website would be very useful to the Garrison School's teachers and its community, and they approved of my preliminary plan for the website (Appendix C). So with a confirmation of need from Mitchell and Griffiths, I collected research to

inform the content and design of the website as the focus of my CrCrTh 692 Processes of Research & Engagement paper. Through my research in fall 2015, I found resources that supported the Forest Fridays program and were relevant to teachers, school administrators, school board members, students, parents, and members of the community. Later in November 2015, I received additional confirmation that the proposed content addressed the needs of the Garrison School's teachers. I talked with my sons' teachers about the website I planned to create, and both teachers told me that they welcomed such a website because each wanted more information about how and what to teach outdoors.

Griffiths sent a twenty-eight-question survey to the school's teachers on December 11 to learn about the Forest Fridays pilot program. He wanted to find out whether the teachers wanted to continue Forest Fridays in the spring, and if so, what resources they needed to help them teach more effectively in the school forest. Griffiths based his survey on a teacher assessment developed by the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point ("School Forest Needs Assessment"). I had shared the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point survey with him, Mitchell, and members of the school board in the August 24, 2015, forest stewardship plan proposal I wrote (Lake, "Proposal"). I created that proposal as an action to assist in creating a stewardship plan for the school forest. The proposal was not part of my work for CrCrth 692 Processes of Research & Engagement. Rather, I undertook the research and wrote the proposal as an engaged member of the community. Eleven of the fourteen main grade-level teachers took Griffiths' survey. All of them said that they were interested in continuing Forest Fridays in the spring. The teachers suggested the following infrastructure additions to the school forest: improvement of existing trails, a better map of the school forest, improvement of bus drop-off and parking, creating bench seating areas for an outdoor classroom, building restrooms, building an education shelter,

building a supply hut, and building access to the Blueberry Swamp. Griffiths asked “do you feel you have enough knowledge of natural resources and environmental education to effectively utilize the school forest?” Eight teachers answered “no” and two teachers answered “yes” (Griffiths, “Forest Survey”). Griffiths asked what topics the teachers would like to learn more about to enhance their school forest lessons. The teachers suggested: tree identification, geology of the area, historical links to indigenous peoples, mindfulness, wildlife tracking, nature writing, environmental conservation, and links to the colonial era. The teachers requested professional development opportunities including a group trip to the school forest to become more familiar with specific forest areas, tree types, and birds. Teachers also requested a curriculum designed by environmental educators that they could use as a resource for teaching within the school forest. The survey’s findings confirmed the teachers’ need for the environmental education website I was planning.

Forest Fridays resumed on Friday, April 8, 2016. Griffiths hopes to make School Forest Day less important over time due to a regular schedule of engagement in the school forest on Forest Fridays throughout the school year. The seventh annual School Forest Day will be a two-day event this year. Each grade level will spend one day in the School Forest. The event was planned for May 5 and May 6, 2016, but was postponed due to rain. The event will be rescheduled.

MY SYNTHESIS PROJECT

My synthesis project is comprised of two parts—a product, which is the Garrison School Environmental Education website, and this paper. I created an intuitive, well-organized, and

visually appealing website, which I launched on April 6, 2016 (www.gufsee.org). The website provides a comprehensive guide to the Garrison School Forest, environmental education programs offered by the Garrison School, how to teach outdoors, what to teach outdoors—and information on natural science topics, the Hudson River, Hudson Highlands folklore, local conservation history, Revolutionary War history, and much more. Users can find a particular snippet of information easily. Or, if they want to dig in and read primary sources, they can do that too. The site features photographs, videos, and audio recordings. It features original documents, maps, and artwork from the New York State Archives, the New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress. The website is comprised of fifty-two pages. There are twelve first-level pages, nineteen second-level pages, twenty third-level pages, and one page, “Organizations for Kids,” that is hidden and only accessible from the “Student Resources” page. Teachers, students, and parents compose the primary audience for the website. A secondary audience is anyone who lives or is interested in New York’s Hudson Highlands. Environmental educators from any region in the world form the tertiary audience for the website.

The product I have created is unique. During the research phase for this product in fall 2015, I reviewed websites of other schools in the U.S., U.K., and Canada that have school forests or zoos. I found that not many schools have a website like the one I created. However, there are two websites affiliated with schools near Garrison that offer lesson plans and very rich information. The first is growinghaldane.com which is the school garden website for the Haldane School District, a public school in Cold Spring, NY, which is Garrison’s neighboring village to the north. As the Garrison School is a K-8 school, its high school students have the choice to attend either Haldane High School or James O’Neill High School across the Hudson River in Highland Falls. Growinghaldane.com contains news, lessons plans, Common Core standards by

grade level, and many other curricular resources. The Millbrook School, a boarding school in Millbrook, NY, is 46 miles northeast of Garrison. The Millbrook School is the only U.S. high school that operates a zoo. Its website contains teacher resources about all of the animals that live in the Trevor Zoo. It also contains lots of information on conservation and environmental stewardship.

I have several ambitious goals for this synthesis project. My first goal for the website is to share resources to help the Garrison School's teachers learn how to teach outdoors in the school forest. I met this goal. My second, complementary goal, is to share informative examples of lessons in various disciplines that may be taught in the school forest. I met this goal, also. My third goal is for teachers to use these resources and take students outdoors into the school forest regularly. My work to achieve this goal is ongoing. I will address this effort in the "Next Steps" section of this paper. My fourth goal is for teachers and students to begin sharing their stories about Forest Fridays experiences on the website's Forest Fridays blog. This has begun. Stacy Ricci, the Kindergarten teacher, wrote the first teacher blog post for the Forest Fridays blog. I will continue to encourage other teachers and their students to reflect on their Forest Fridays experiences by publishing blog posts. My fifth goal is for the website to play a part in persuading the school board to accept the HHLT proposal to preserve the school forest in perpetuity. I will describe progress toward this goal in the "Conclusion" of this paper. My sixth goal is to share the wonderful stories of New York's Hudson Highlands with the greater community through the website. I am in the process of meeting this goal. The website received local press coverage. In the "Next Steps" section of this paper, I will describe my plans to share the website more broadly with the community outside of the Garrison School. My seventh goal is to use the website as a portfolio piece to assist in a job search. I began a job search while taking CrCrTh 688 Reflective

Practice in spring 2015, and the Plan for Practice I created that semester supported my job search process. However, in fall 2015, I suspended my search to devote myself to finishing the CCT program in a strong manner. With the launch of the Garrison School Environmental Education website, I am starting a new job search. I began to address this goal by listing the website on my LinkedIn profile and résumé. I have posted updates on my LinkedIn profile to announce press coverage of the website. I will discuss my work to address this sixth goal in the “Taking Myself Seriously” section of this paper. My eighth goal is to identify my vocation through this project, which has spurred an important period of personal growth for me. I am working to meet this goal. I will address this exploration in the “Taking Myself Seriously” section of this paper. Since graduate students in the CCT program compose my primary audience for this paper, my ninth goal is to assist future CCT students in creating their own transformative synthesis projects by using my project and my paper as guides. I will address this goal in the “Taking Myself Seriously” of this paper.

RATIONALE FOR MY ENGAGEMENT

I’ve engaged in this project for four reasons. First, my interest stems from my sons, who are Garrison School students. One of my sons is in Kindergarten. The other is in fourth grade. I bought a house in the Garrison School district in 2011, the year my eldest son, Mac, entered Kindergarten. So I have been involved in the school in various ways since fall 2011. I view the Forest Fridays excursions to the school forest as critically important opportunities for students to interact with and observe nature, to learn about the natural world, and to engage in learning outdoors instead of in the traditional classroom environment. Further, forest outings provide movement, muscular engagement, a change of scene, and relief from the largely sedentary

environment of the classroom. In their book *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*, Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson recommend that we “[r]ecognize and accept the high activity level of boys and give them safe boy places to express it.” The Garrison School Forest provides boys—and girls—with a safe “space for their jumping, their energy, their exuberance” (245).

Second, I feel a strong connection to this ruggedly beautiful and historic place where I live. My daily commute includes stunningly beautiful drives on three dirt roads in Garrison, including Old Albany Post Road, which dates to the mid-seventeenth century as a postal road. Long before colonists arrived in this area, Old Albany Post Road was part of the Mahican Trail, which extended from lower Manhattan to Montreal. I’ve lived in congested and poorly planned cities and suburbs in other areas of the United States. By comparison, I see how unique Garrison is. It’s different in appearance—more rural and much less developed—from the nearby Hudson Highlands towns of Beacon, Peekskill, and Newburgh. This is no accident. As discussed previously, private landowners, the Open Space Institute, Scenic Hudson, the New York State Park system, and Hudson Highlands Land Trust preserved large parcels of land in Garrison over the years. “Today the Highlands have what most places have lost: a sense of place and identity,” writes Frances Dunwell (231).

Third, I participate actively as a member of the Garrison School’s Environmental Education Committee. I became involved in the Environmental Education Committee in late May 2014, because I wanted to encourage the school to teach in the school forest more often. This goal stemmed from my knowledge of the importance of nature—what Richard Louv calls Vitamin N—for children’s development and inner lives. I found that my fellow committee members shared my desire. I assisted with clearing the school forest’s trails and installing trail

blazes in November 2014. For my project for the CrCrTh 693 Action Research class in spring 2015, I engaged in a collaborative action research project that involved staging a series of persuasive communication interventions to activate interest in and support for the preservation of the school forest (Lake, “Communicating”). I wrote a public document that explained to the Garrison community the Hudson Highlands Land Trust proposal to purchase a conservation agreement for the Garrison School Forest land (Lake, “Garrison School Forest Conservation Proposal”). Then, I led a communication campaign to educate the public about the Hudson Highlands Land Trust proposal. Later, I researched information about forest stewardship plans and created a presentation for the school board in August 2015 (Lake, “Proposal”). Then, in September 2015, I talked with foresters throughout New York and prepared a second, more comprehensive presentation for the Environmental Education Committee, the Garrison School principal, and the superintendent about creating a school forest stewardship plan (Lake, “Clearing”). I spoke at several school board meetings about the importance of using the school forest as an educational laboratory. And Pamela Doan of *The Highlands Current* newspaper interviewed me regarding the School Forest. I am not trained as a forester, an ecologist, or a teacher. I am an influential storyteller and an engaged citizen of my community.

Fourth, I see this as a generative mission for me. By sharing the wonders of New York’s Hudson Highlands with teachers, students, and the Garrison community through a website, I will help to promote the development and well-being of children in the near term and in the future. Dan P. McAdams of Northwestern University notes the connection in older adulthood between generativity and eudaimonic satisfaction with life (McAdams). Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson is known for his theory on the eight psychosocial stages of human development. Erikson marked generativity, “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation,” as the

seventh stage of human development, and the key to happiness (Erikson 293). I feel that I have joined and am continuing the tradition of caretaking of the natural environment of the Hudson Highlands. This project provides me with important feelings of purpose and satisfaction. Also, it signals my approach to a shift in my career.

THE PROCESS

I have engaged in a great deal of solitary work to create my project. I had a great deal of autonomy and agency. I envisioned the scope of the project and defined its role for several types of audiences. I made countless decisions regarding content, design, voice, and style. I invited people from my community to inform the project and collaborate with me. This project relied upon collaborative action research. It has involved a series of constituency building cycles, action proposals, proposing and planning actions, systematic research on the effects of new actions, along with reflection (Taylor, “Cycles and Epicycles of Action Research”). My synthesis project also involved what Jean McNiff defines as a personal action research project. She views action research as “a way of working that helps us to identify the values that are important for our lives and to live in the direction of those values, that is, take them as the organi[z]ing principles of our lives (McNiff). In this section of this paper, I will discuss the following steps I followed to create my capstone project: the timeline, project management, the role of collaboration, the interface design, the synthesis of content for the website, the role of reflection and metacognition, a mid-project action research cycle, and the website launch and promotion action research cycle.

Timeline

I stated in my paper for CrCrTh 692 Processes of Research & Engagement course that I would create the website in December 2015 and January 2016. That statement was overly optimistic. After completing two courses in fall term, I spent much of the holiday season relaxing. I did begin working with my synthesis course cohort in December, and I submitted my synthesis project proposal on January 17. I spent the month of January continuing to engage in research to inform the content of the website. Later in January, I created a timeline for the completion, launch, and promotion of the website. I sent the timeline to Mitchell and Griffiths on January 29. Mitchell contacted me on February 1 and asked if we could meet that week to discuss the timeline. We met on February 5 to discuss the scope of the website and the timeline for launching and promoting it. She suggested that we have four teachers review it. We identified four teachers to approach: Kevin Keegan, middle school science teacher; Amy Kuchera, fourth grade teacher; Tiffany Timmons, first grade teacher; and Coulter Young, art teacher. At that point, I identified Friday, March 11 as the launch date for the website.

Project Management

In mid-January, I created a Google spreadsheet listing all of the website's pages. The document contained notes on the status of each page. And it contained columns in which Griffiths and Mitchell could add notes and indicate their approval of each page. I updated the document as I worked on and completed pages. Additionally, I created a site map using the SpiderScribe.com mind-mapping platform. This helped me to visually map pages' relationships to one another. I gave Mitchell and Griffiths site administrator access to the website on January 25, so that they could review the pages I had completed and comment on the work. On that day, I also shared the Google spreadsheet and the SpiderScribe mind map with Mitchell and Griffiths.

Our use of the spreadsheet fell away, as Griffiths and Mitchell did not make notes in it. I stopped using it as well. Instead, I kept track of the status of the project by making a series of handwritten lists in my journals.

My practice of daily writing has been critically important to this project. I recorded and organized my ideas through daily writing. I enjoyed working in the tactile journaling format and carried my journals with me as I traveled between my home and my office. I filled three journals while working on this project, and I am working within a fourth journal as I write this paper. My journals contain drawings, lists, and writing. I found it helpful to use Post-it Note flags to identify important notes in my journals so that I could find that information again when I wanted to incorporate it into the website or this paper.

SpiderScribe proved integral to organizing the website. Originally, I planned to create “Topics” pages geared toward a student audience. These were to be housed in the “Student Resources” category. Then I planned to create “Topics” pages for adult readers. I planned to organize those pages as subpages to the “Teacher Resources” page. Creating, viewing, and reflecting upon the visual map I made using SpiderScribe helped me to realize that I would have to build far too many pages if I followed that plan. I talked about the site organization with my colleague Alison Mears, who is an architect and a former school dean at Parsons. She said she felt that I should be able to write copy to appeal to an audience of all ages. She thought I would set myself up for too much work and too much difficulty by creating two versions of each “Topics” page, with one page for adults and one for students. I felt that Mears’s advice was important and sound. I reflected upon what I learned in my Creative Thinking and Human Development courses, and realized that while some of the content might be above the level of some students, parents and teachers could use scaffolding to help the students engage with and

learn about the content. So I eliminated the duplicate pages and decided to create only one set of “Topics” pages. I revised the mind map to show that the “Topics” pages would be accessible from both the “Student Resources” and “Teacher Resources.” Though I found SpiderScribe to be an important tool in my design process, like the Google spreadsheet, I stopped using the mind map after I was satisfied with the organization of the website.

I used two online reference management tools to keep track of articles, books, and attribution of sources: Diigo and Zotero. These were useful, as I worked on my project at home, during my train commute on the MetroNorth Railroad, at the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison, and at my office at Parsons. I could add to my libraries and pull information from them wherever I was working, which was very helpful. In addition, I used the resources of three library systems for this synthesis project: the University of Massachusetts Boston Healey Library, The New School’s library, and the Mid-Hudson Library System, which is a five-county consortium of sixty-six libraries. I was able to read books online through the Healey and New School libraries. And I ordered many books from libraries in the Mid-Hudson Library system and had them delivered to the Desmond-Fish library in Garrison.

Collaboration

I relied upon collaboration with others from the inception of this project. As a component of this multicycle action research project, I began to build a constituency by pitching the idea for the website to the Garrison School’s superintendent and principal on November 6, 2015. I kept three practices in mind while working with my collaborators. I strove to be accountable. If I said I was going to do something, such as call, meet, or share information, I did it. I also strove to communicate clearly. I did not want to confuse or mislead my collaborators. Additionally, I

made a point to convey my gratitude for help that my collaborators so freely offered. These three practices helped me to engage in this capstone work with integrity. After Mitchell and Griffiths approved of the project, I continued my constituency-building cycle by telling the members of the Environmental Education Committee that I was going to create the website. I requested their involvement by asking them to contribute photographs and information and by letting some of them know that I would approach them for interviews. After Superintendent Mitchell and I met on February 5, I continued to build a constituency. I emailed Keegan, Kuchera, Timmons, and Young, the four teachers whom Mitchell and I identified as website reviewers. I told them about the website and asked if they would review it prior to the site's launch. All four teachers agreed to serve as website reviewers. These four teachers compose a significant sample audience—nearly one-third of the main grade-level teaching faculty at the Garrison School. There are nine grades at the school and fourteen grade-level teachers. The faculty also includes four special education teachers, an art teacher, a speech teacher, a music teacher, a technology specialist, the librarian, a coach, and five teacher aides.

As part of this process, I relied upon networks of what professor and researcher Jean McNiff calls critical friends and a validation group. Critical friends are people “whose opinion you value and who [are] able to critique your work and help you see it in a new light.” A validation group is four to ten “people drawn from your professional circle...who would be able to make professional judgments about the validity of your report, and would offer critical feedback” (McNiff). My critical friends included Griffiths, the principal; Mitchell, the superintendent; teachers Keegan, Kuchera, Timmons, and Young; my program director, Peter Taylor; and my fellow students Sara Kaplan and Sandra McCollin. I shared the website with them and asked for their feedback. I made changes to the site based on their comments. I will

discuss that action cycle in the “Mid-Project Action Research Cycle Example” section of this “Process” portion of this paper below. My validation group included my husband, four members of the Environmental Education Committee, two friends who are writers, and my sister, mother, and mother-in-law, who are teachers or retired teachers. I also relied on collaborators to provide information for the website. I interviewed Jen Waldron, Jonathan Kruk, Frederick Osborn III, Pete Salmansohn, Trisha Mulligan, and Anne Symmes to create original content. Engaging in metacognition, I realized that I could not presume to know everything about all of the subjects I explored on the website. I identified what I did not know, and asked specific questions of experts to learn what I needed to know. Foresters Matt Decker and Anne Osborn answered my questions very helpfully. Jen McCreary, director of the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison, recommended American History resources housed by the Poughkeepsie Library. I reached out to Hadrien Coumans, co-director of the Lenape Center, who answered my questions about Native American history in the Garrison area. Later, I requested the assistance of collaborators to make sure I had written certain pieces accurately. Radley Horton, associate research scientist at the Center for Climate Systems Research at Columbia University, affiliated with NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, reviewed the “Climate Change” and “Weather” pages. Steven Schimmrich, professor of Earth sciences and geology at SUNY Ulster Community College, reviewed the “Geology” page. Lisa Mechaley, an educator with the River of Words project run by Hudson Highlands Land Trust, teaches programs for children about local Native American history. She reviewed the piece I wrote about local Native American history. Frederick Osborn, III, read the piece I wrote about his grandfather and how the school forest land was given to the Garrison School. Jen Waldron read the news blog piece about her son, Finn Waldron, an Eagle Scout who created a welcome kiosk for one of the entrances to the school forest.

The website relies, in part, on original content created by others. These content creators compose another group of collaborators. I felt it was very important to honor and attribute others' work, so I asked for permission to use photographs, illustrations, and video and to link to material from many individuals and organizations. They include the Children & Nature Network, John Griffiths, Kevin Keegan, Amy Kuchera, the Pennsylvania Land Trust, Rae Pica, Stacy Ricci, Sharing Nature® Worldwide, David Sobel, Stenhouse Publishers, Anne Symmes, Hudson Talbott, Finn Waldron, and Coulter Young.

Interface Design

In fall 2015, I engaged in research to inform the design of the website. I learned how best to create and design a website with cost, ease, and user satisfaction in mind. Because the Environmental Education website would be used by a public school with budget constraints, cost was a consideration. I learned what free website builders were considered the easiest to use in terms of their design interface. I chose two website builders—Weebly and Wix—that offered visually pleasing website templates with intuitive navigation for end users. I also researched optimal fonts, font colors, and font sizes for web and mobile versions. When I met with Mitchell and Griffiths on November 6, 2015, I shared initial home page designs I had created using both the Wix and the Weebly web developer platforms. Mitchell and Griffiths asked me to use the Weebly platform to create the website, because the district was creating other websites using Weebly. Initially, Mitchell and Griffiths asked me to use the free version of Weebly. In early January, however, I decided to upgrade to Weebly Pro because I wanted the website to feature video, audio, and search windows, which are available only in the upgraded version. The Critical Thinking class I took as part of the CCT program influenced that decision. I wanted the website

to present information in ways that appeal to individuals with various learning styles. Therefore, I felt that the ability to show video and host audio was critical to the success of the site as a resource.

My overarching design goal was to share what I've learned in an accessible, friendly manner. I chose Weebly's "Squared" theme because it offered a left-side navigation menu that would permit me to list ten to twelve categories. Some of the other themes Weebly offers show only five or six top-level categories on the home page, which I felt would be insufficient for the amount of content I hoped to build. Additionally, "Squared" has a white background and offers a very clean look. I found, to my delight, that there is an important labor-saving benefit of using the responsive website themes Weebly offers. "Squared" is a responsive theme that automatically reformats and optimizes page layouts for mobile devices. Therefore I did not have to manually do so. I'm pleased that the site looks really beautiful when viewed on an Android smartphone or iPhone.

Weebly offers a variety of page layouts, including a blog format. When designing the website, I chose to create some pages in the blog format. Other pages feature a standard page format. I chose the blog format for subjects that I intend to add information about over time—the blog format permits me to do this without redesigning the pages. The "Forest Fridays," "News," and "School Forest Day" pages are open blogs that allow comments from readers. The other blog pages do not feature open comments. Initially, I wondered if I should choose a small number of layout styles and use only those styles as standard layouts for the website. I outlined content I had collected for each page and then sketched layout ideas in my journal based on that content. I found that the page layout depended on the content. So in the end, I did not rely on a fixed number of standard layouts. For the "Revolutionary War History" page, for example, I began

with a standard layout. After building the page, I found that the layout didn't work well on mobile devices. There was too much space between page elements in the mobile view. I therefore removed the default spacers between each section and replaced them with fine line dividers. Then I removed the default spacers from the left and right margins, which had created a narrower page. Those alterations helped me to better present the content on both desktop computers and mobile devices.

Photography plays an integral role in the design of the website. This stems from my background as a photographer. I began creating and exhibiting artwork in 1999, well before I entered the CCT program in 2013. While the website includes some of my photographs, other people created most of the photographs that I included on the website. I also tapped into my skills as a photo editor. Color captivates me, so I harnessed my sense of color to design visually interesting web pages. The "Weather" page, for instance, features indigo images. And the "Animals" page features a lovely green color that unites photographs of a cottontail rabbit and a green darner dragonfly. The images are important, and the photographs I chose help to draw interest to the content of each page. Along with photographs, I added videos featuring high quality content and design. Additionally, I decided not to include videos that feature introductory advertisements. The ads that introduce *YouTube* videos change frequently, and their content is unpredictable and unknown. Such content may be unsuitable for student viewers, and I wanted to ensure that the website would be appropriate for all.

Synthesis of Content

Jon Kolko, the founding director of the Austin Center for Design, discusses the importance of the synthesis phase in the design process. "It continues to appear somehow 'magical,'" Kolko writes. "This is because the act of synthesis is frequently performed

privately—either in the head of the designer or on scratch paper, and the *outcome* is all that is observed” (215). In this section, I’ll describe how I took a great deal of content from lots of different sources and played with it to transform it into what Kolko calls a “connected whole.”

I found in January that even though I had collected a great deal of research for the website in fall 2015, I needed more information. I needed more lesson plans on a variety of subjects, along with information about animals, invasive species, geology, Native American history, and much more. When searching for the information I lacked, I chose leading sources first. Instead of quoting a website that cited the Cornell Ornithology Lab, I went directly to the Cornell Lab. I felt it was important to lead website users to authoritative primary sources on subjects. In the CrCrTh 693 Action Research course, I learned to use the KAQF framework to organize my thinking and research. In a KAQF chart, one identifies what she **K**nows, what **A**ctions people could take on the basis of that knowledge, **Q**uestions for additional inquiry, and how to **F**ind this out (Taylor and Szteiter 105). I modified the KAQF framework to focus on the KQF portions. I used this method to figure out what I didn’t know, what I needed to learn, and how I could get that information. Accuracy was critically important to this project, as it will be used as a teaching resource. I worked for a long time to find accurate information on local Native American history. Finally, through serendipity or a happy accident, I found the Penn Museum exhibition, *Native American Voices: The People. Here and Now*, which really explained the local history to me in a clear manner. Evan Pritchard, author of *Native New Yorkers: The Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York* explained what Hadrien Coumens of the Lenape Center had not explained. Robert Grumet’s book *First Manhattans: A History of the Indians of Greater New York* helped to clarify that the Munsee people lived in the Hudson Highlands area. They were a

Lenape people. And, the word “Delaware” is European name given to the Lenape; it is not a Lenape name.

After I felt I had gathered enough information on a subject, such as Revolutionary War history, I wrote a narrative outline. This step was another technique I learned in the Action Research course (Taylor and Szteiter 104). In my journal, I wrote a story for myself about how I planned to combine, organize, and convey the information I had collected. This was what Kolko describes as the private work a designer or writer engages in to synthesize information. This step helped me a great deal. I complemented the narrative outline with drawings of the page layout, too. I identified the placement of specific photographs, videos, maps, and written information in my drawings.

While compiling content for the website, I felt deep empathy for the Garrison School’s teachers who juggle so many responsibilities. Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association, has written a compelling synopsis of all the things teachers teach children daily, in addition to teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic (García). I wanted to save time for the teachers by bringing together on the Environmental Education website leading resources on environmental education and place-based education from well-known and obscure websites. I was inspired by the report “Connecting the Dots: Key Strategies that Transform Learning, From Environmental Education to Citizenship and Sustainability” produced by Canadian organization Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF).

Connecting the Dots answers the question: what are the learning strategies for environmental education that we can employ to prepare our young people to take their place as informed, engaged citizens? Throughout the process, a secondary line of inquiry emerged: how are these strategies aligned with 21st century

learning skills including collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking? (Kosak and Elliot)

“Connecting the Dots” shares seven strategies for teaching environmental education. They are: learning locally, integrated learning, acting on learning, real-world connections, considering alternative perspectives, inquiry, and sharing responsibility for learning. These concepts are taught in the CCT program, too. I used the “Connecting the Dots” strategies as criteria to help me to choose material suitable for inclusion on the website. Figure 1 shows the cover of the “Connecting the Dots” report. It illustrates the connections I hope to help teachers make with their students by using the material on the Environmental Education website.

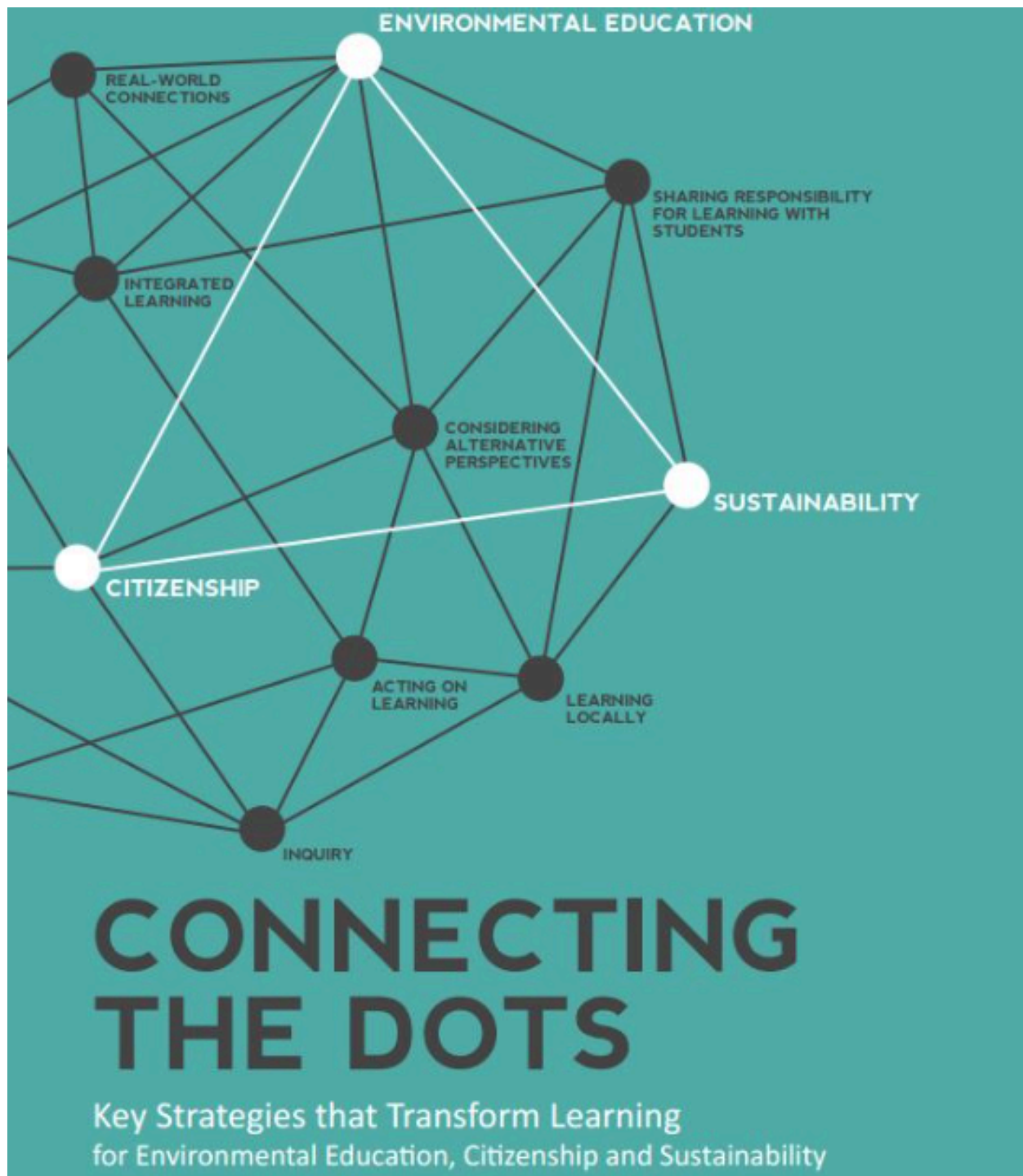


Figure 1. Cover of “Connecting the Dots: Key Strategies that Transform Learning for Environmental Education, Citizenship, and Sustainability.” *Learning for a Sustainable Future*. 2014 (Kosak and Elliot).

I didn't really devise a system to determine what sections I worked on first. Generally, I picked a topic and worked on it to completion. This practice corresponded with what I learned about myself during the CrCrTh 688 Reflective Practice course in spring 2015. In my Plan for Practice, I concluded that multitasking does not work for me. I wrote, "It's not useful to start five things. I need to focus on and complete one thing—then move on to the next thing" (Lake, "Transformative Time Management"). However, in late March 2016, as the website launch date approached, I began to work in a different manner. I worked on several different pages in fifty-minute increments. I still focused on one thing during the fifty-minute writing periods, but I did not work on each section to completion. I felt this method boosted my morale, which was lagging. After doing this, I saw that I had completed portions of several in-progress pages. I realized that this working method was useful after writing for a while, then setting aside an unfinished section while I worked on another section. This gave me time to reflect on the unfinished section. This new practice helped me to make my work stronger. When I revisited the "Water" page, for example, I found it rather thin, so I added information about groundwater, water treatment facilities, and the aqueduct for the New York City water system, which runs through Garrison. Additionally, after reflection, I added more information to the "Trees & Forests" page, which was one of the first pages I completed. I added information about the composition of the school forest, a video about how trees communicate via fungi, and a series of videos that show how to recognize various types of trees.

The Role of Reflection and Metacognition

Reflection and metacognition played key roles in the planning and production of this synthesis project. Throughout my work, I asked questions, listened carefully to answers,

challenged my own assumptions, observed, and reflected. I questioned the veracity of sources, and I examined my own thinking. I pondered how best to present information and how best to organize the site. And I gave myself time to reflect on my writing for the website and the paper before I judged the work suitable for publication.

I learned by reflecting upon my engagement in this project that I initially underestimated the amount of time it would take. I also underestimated the ambitiousness and complexity of the project. As mentioned earlier, I stated in my CrCrTh 692 paper that I would create the website in December 2015 and January 2016. That statement was overly optimistic and naïve. My plan for the website grew, and my work extended into February, March, and April. I worked on the website daily through the April 6, 2016, launch date. When I began the site in January, I devoted a great deal of time to additional research that was necessary. Additionally, I changed the original site plan—simplifying it in some ways and making it more complex in others.

I learned much about the Hudson Highlands that I didn't know before, and each topic I delved into fascinated me. I had a tendency to get too deeply immersed in research, because I found various subjects so interesting. I reined myself in by engaging in metacognition. For instance, I found a collection of Ander Saunders' personal papers at Marist College regarding Scenic Hudson's fight to keep Consolidated Edison from building a power plant on Storm King Mountain. While the collection interested me, I asked myself whether it was important to K-8 teachers and students. I decided that this information was not important to my audience, and I moved on.

In the Collaboration and Organizational Change course I took in fall 2013, we used the book *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. From the book's authors, Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty

Linsky, I learned about the “metaphor of ‘getting on the balcony’ above the ‘dance floor’ to ... gain the distanced perspective you need to see what is really happening” (7). For this project, I zoomed in on the Garrison School’s “dance floor” to learn about what information and infrastructure could help teachers engage with the school forest more often. I zoomed in by participating in a Forest Fridays outing on November 6, 2015. That field work helped me to understand the needs of teachers and students. I saw that students needed access to a porta-potty. I also saw that teachers needed smartphone access to a school forest trail map. Along with viewing the project from “the dance floor,” I also engaged in reflection from “the balcony.” I zoomed out and looked at the school in the context of the place where it is situated. Engaging in reflection from these two perspectives helped me to create a website that addresses the needs of the Garrison School’s teachers and to link teachers to external resources.

By zooming out, or viewing the project from the balcony, I engaged in metacognition and realized that things were missing from the website. Initially, for example, I created a section on “Trees.” I felt that the content was insufficient, so I expanded it to “Trees & Forests,” which would present information about forest ecosystems and explain the forest types that compose the school forest. Later, after engaging in further metacognition, I realized I had forgotten plants. I therefore added the “Plants” page. As another example, in my original outline for the website, I listed pages on “Birds” and “Insects.” Thinking about my thinking, I realized that I had forgotten the rest of the vertebrate animals that live in the school forest and the Hudson Highlands. So I created an “Animals” page that includes amphibians, birds, fishes, mammals, and reptiles. In the end, I chose not to include a page on “Insects.” However, I noted on the “Animals” page that the Hudson Highlands region is known for the quantity of dragonflies and damselflies that live here. Two final examples of metacognition: initially, I grouped many subjects under a section that I

called “Topics.” But “Topics” had sixteen subpages that were not easily navigable from the home page because of their position on the navigation menu. Therefore, I decided replace “Topics” with two new sections that I called “Earth Science” and “Hudson Highlands Topics.” This change moved those sections to higher positions in the navigation menu, permitting a user to view the subsections without needing to scroll down. Later, while working on the “Geology” page, I realized I had made an error. Earth science does not include botany, dendrology, and zoology. So I renamed the “Earth Science” section “Explore Natural Science.” Though this allowed for the incorporation of the above-mentioned sciences, it’s important to note that the title is not parallel to the other subsections of “Teacher Resources,” as it contains a verb. However, alphabetization and navigation guided my decision. The “Explore Natural Science” section has twelve subsections, and I wanted these subsections to remain visible and accessible to a website user without requiring the user to scroll down the page. Since the second-level menu from “Teacher Resources” is alphabetical, “Natural Science” would fall too far down on the page for the user to see all subsections without scrolling. As such, I added the verb “Explore” so that the category would be high enough on the list to make those subcategories visible to users.

I incorporated reflection in another way while working on this project. I maintained portions of the Plan for Practice that I developed in spring 2015 in the CrCrTh 688 Reflective Practice class. These practices, which I had identified as important to me a year ago, were essential in supporting the success of my synthesis project:

- Daily journaling for reflection, including specific gratitude statements
- Exercising
- Relying on a support group of critical friends / learning partners
- Learning to say “no”—refraining from overcommitting myself

- Learning to say “yes” and taking a risk
- Getting up and moving during the work day to replenish my energy

I had identified several other practices as important to me a year ago. Many of those practices fell away. But I continued to practice journaling, swimming in the morning, saying “no,” saying “yes,” and relying on my critical friends and validation group. Those practices were critical to the success of this project.

Mid-Project Action Research Cycle

On March 1, I launched a mid-project action cycle. I sent the URL for the password-protected website to the superintendent, the principal, and the four teachers who agreed to review the website, Keegan, Kuchera, Timmons, and Young. I also sent this information to CCT program director Peter Taylor and my classmates Sara Kaplan and Sandra McCollin. I told my reviewers that I planned to launch the website between March 11 and March 16. Additionally, I told them that I had not yet completed the following sections of the website:

- Books for Kids
- Citizen Science
- Geography & Mapping
- Geology
- Hudson River
- Migration
- Organizations for Kids

- Plants
- Weather

I told my reviewers that I would like to launch the site in two phases, and I proposed to complete the sections listed above in a second phase launch of the website. I asked the superintendent, the principal, and the teachers to let me know if they felt the site could be launched without the phase two topics I listed. Additionally, I asked my reviewers the following questions:

1. How intuitive is the interaction? How user-friendly is it? What could be improved?
2. Are there any links that don't work?
3. What would you like to see included that is not there?
4. Is there anything that you feel is not a good source?
5. How is the voice and tone?
6. Does the "Water" page work? It has content geared at both teachers and students.

I received very quick feedback regarding my action. Teachers Amy Kuchera and Tiffany Timmons said they felt that the website would be received more favorably if I included the sections I had listed for phase two. After reflecting on Kuchera's and Timmons' feedback, I found that I agreed with them. As my intent was to create a useful resource for teachers, students, and community members, I wanted to finish and include those sections before launching the website. I then initiated a new action in response to that action cycle. I moved the website launch date to March 25.

Principal Griffiths gave me feedback, as well. He said that he liked the voice, tone, interface, and design. He wrote: “You have created a good 'feel' for the visitor, both in terms of user interface, ratio of visuals/words, wording is succinct, and the whole experience is quite appealing to the eye,” (Griffiths, “Re: Environmental Education Website for Your Review”). Griffiths said that he found the home page navigation to be confusing. He suggested creating a static home page featuring a large beautiful picture, with navigation available only from the left-side navigation panel. I reflected on Griffiths’ suggestion and found that I agreed with him. I initiated a new action in response to that action cycle and redesigned the home page of the website. Additionally, Griffiths suggested that I change the name of the “Children in Nature” section to “Mission.” He said that he understood my intention with the name “Children in Nature,” but that it didn’t read or work for a site user. I agreed with his assessment. I found that the “Children in Nature” content fit well with the information about the mission of the Environmental Education Committee in the “About” section. So I removed the mission information from the “About” section and combined it with the content in the “Children in Nature” section, which I housed under the “Mission” section. I also simplified the “About” section. I decided that it did not need to have separate subpages for the “Committee Members” and for “Meeting Dates.” As such, I combined the content on those pages as a reimagined “About” page. My writing partner Kaplan suggested that I include the “Sources” page in the navigation menu instead of presenting it as a hidden page linked from the “About” page. I reflected upon her suggestion and decided to follow it.

Website Launch & Promotion Action Research Cycle

As noted above, I altered my original launch date after receiving feedback regarding the site's content. I set a new launch date of March 25 in order to incorporate the sections I had originally proposed. However, that date was during the Garrison School's spring break, so I changed the launch date to Wednesday, April 6. I shared this date with the superintendent and the principal, and they approved of it. The principal sent me a quote for the website launch press release. I wrote a press release about the website, shown in Appendix D, which I sent to Griffiths and Mitchell for their review. They approved the press release.

On March 10, I researched appropriate local and national news outlets, K-12 education reporters, and environmental reporters who might be interested in writing about the website. I compiled a list of people to contact. My list also included environmental education organizations, place-based education organizations, land trusts, and individuals I interviewed to create the website.

Before launching the site, I reviewed every page to make sure links worked, and to add photos where I had forgotten to enter them. I standardized the font size of page titles, as they were too small on a few pages. I made sure that all regular (non-blog format) pages had a flush right search window below the header photograph. I also made sure that each regular (non-blog format) page had a link to the "Sources" page at the bottom of the page, and a hairline page divider between the "Sources" link and the footer. I viewed the website on PC and Mac desktop computers using the Chrome, Firefox, and Safari browsers. And I viewed the site's mobile version using an iPad and a Samsung smartphone. I found problems with photos that I had embedded in paragraphs within blog posts. As the website theme is responsive, the layout changes depending on the computer or device on which the website is viewed. I found that

pictures embedded within paragraphs in blogs appeared in unpredictable sizes. The text-wrapping around the photos did not remain standard from one device to another. As such, I decided to present photographs in all blog-format pages differently. I removed them as embedded objects within paragraphs and re-added them as stand-alone objects within each layout. I solved the problems I had found with these revisions.

On the night before the launch of the site, I decided to make visible in the navigation menu four subpages from the “Programs” page. The “Forest Fridays,” “Hudson Valley Seed,” “Native Garden,” and “School Forest Day” pages had been accessible only from the “Programs” page. I was concerned that users would not find them. As a result, I made them visible in the navigation menu, though it is unclear whether this will reduce the number of visitors to the “Programs” page. Additionally, on the night before launching the site, I revised my *LinkedIn* profile to match the résumé that consultant Julie Jansen created for me. I will discuss my work with her in the “Taking Myself Seriously” section of this paper.

On the afternoon of April 6, I removed password protection from the website to open it to the public. I sent the press release in shown in Appendix D to about thirty local and national reporters who cover K-12 education and environmental issues. They are listed in Appendix E. I also promoted the website on social media. Griffiths posted an announcement on the school’s *Facebook* page on April 14. Additionally, he placed a link to the website on the Garrison School’s website on April 14 (www.gufs.org). He announced the website in his Friday, April 15 Garrison Weekly Update e-mail to parents and guardians with this message:

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION WEBSITE

Have you heard? Through the amazing efforts of Jill Corson Lake the Garrison School has a valuable, new educational resource for teachers, students, families and community members. Take a look: <http://www.gufsee.org/>. (Griffiths, “Garrison Weekly Update”)

I have received four types of feedback regarding the website: press coverage, suggestions from my validation group, stakeholder reactions, and website traffic. Pamela Doan of the *Highlands Current* interviewed me on April 12. She also interviewed Principal Griffiths, and a story appeared in the newspaper on Sunday, April 24 (Doan, “Garrison School Embraces”). Rebecca Fuger of the Tishman Environment and Design Center at the New School wrote a story on my project for the *#ClimateCitizen* blog (Fuger). The story was posted on April 11. Writer Andy Smith, a member of my validation group, suggested that I create a call-to-action on the home page of the site (Smith). I thought about his suggestion, then decided to change a duplicate link to the “Forest Fridays” blog to a call-to-action button that will change periodically. On April 20, for example, the button read “Build the New Garden: April 21 & 22.” A click on the button took the user directly to the news blog piece about the launch of the new garden on April 21 and 22. Appendix F shows the evolution of the website’s home page from the mid-cycle review to the present look of the home page. The following e-mail messages from stakeholders are representative of many such messages I received regarding the website:

Your press release is lovely and I think John’s quote speaks for all of us.

Congratulations on your good work and thank you for such a rich and informative

resource. – Laura Mitchell, Superintendent, Garrison Union Free School District
(Mitchell)

Congratulations! This is fabulous, and is really a significant leap forward in the
GUFSD's environmental education commitment. What a wonderful body of work
you've created. Bravo! – Andrew T. Chmar, Executive Director, Hudson
Highlands Land Trust (Chmar "Re: Garrison School Launches")

This is a phenomenal creation! And a rich resource for the entire community.
Thank you for the Herculean job you've done in the many, many steps necessary
to put this together. Fabulous! – Pete Salmansohn, Education Coordinator for
National Audubon Society's Seabird Restoration Program (Salmansohn)

Jill, I finally got a chance to look at the site...it looks great. You have created an
eye-catching, informative site packed with lots of great ideas and resources –
Kevin Keegan, Middle School Science Teacher, The Garrison School (Keegan)

The next two figures show website traffic for the period of April 5 to May 5, 2016. The website
launched on April 6. Figure 2 illustrates the number of unique visitors to the website between
April 5 and May 5, 2016. The greatest number of unique visitors to the website occurred on
April 7, when forty-eight people viewed the website.

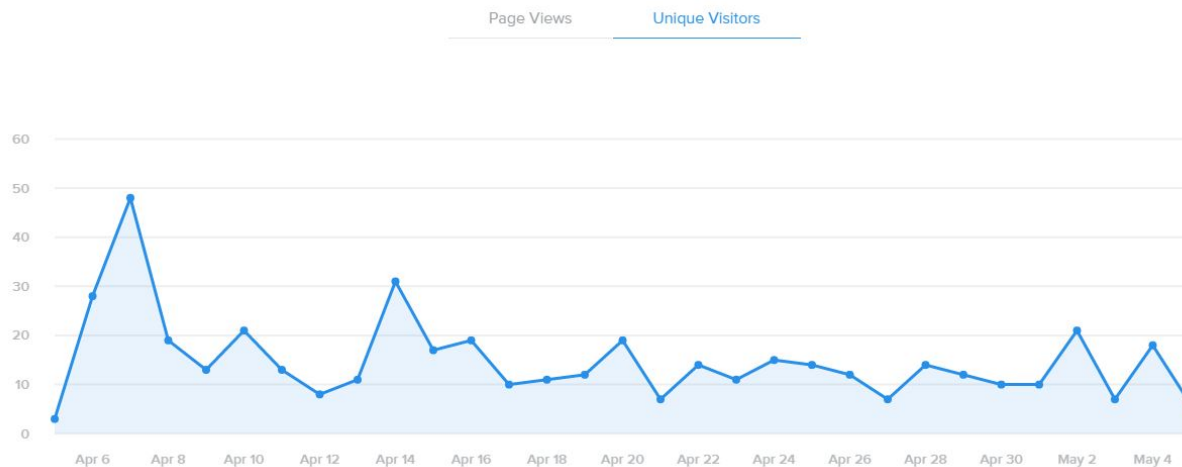


Figure 2. Unique visitors to www.gufsee.org website between April 5 and May 5, 2016.

Figure 3 shows the number of website page views per day April 5 to May 5, 2016. The greatest number of page views occurred on May 2, the date of my synthesis presentation, when website visitors viewed 583 pages. The second best day for page views was April 20, when website visitors viewed 404 pages.



Figure 3. Page views of www.gufsee.org website between April 5 and May 5, 2016.

TAKING MYSELF SERIOUSLY

I have found that I gained strength and confidence throughout the process of creating this synthesis project. I possess a new-found intrinsic strength. I feel stronger than I did about a year ago. I found that people took me seriously when I asked to interview them and when I asked them a question related to their specific area of expertise. I also found that I've become an enthusiastic evangelist about my project. When I talk about it with family, friends, and colleagues, my excitement is contagious—they too respond with enthusiasm. I think one of the reasons for this is that I found this project to be a joyful endeavor. I was learning for the sake of learning. I found it joyous and rewarding to create my own learning path—and to share what I learned with others. Jason Tesauro is a member of my validation group. He's the co-author of *The Modern Gentleman* and *The Modern Lover*. He also writes for *Travel and Leisure*, *The New York Times*, and *Esquire*. After reviewing the website in mid-March, Jason wrote to me: “you’ve put a ton of love and work into this project...and it clearly shows” (Tesauro). I agree that the website conveys my excitement about lesson plans I found, resources from the Suzuki Foundation on how to teach outdoors, along with information about sturgeon, eels, Pre-cambrian rock, phenology, invasive species, and the tale of Benedict Arnold’s treason. This addresses my ninth goal for my project. I offer a piece of advice for future CCT students. Choose a capstone project topic that you love. Choose something that intrigues you so much that you’re motivated to work on it daily. The love you have for the project will keep you going, and you’ll gain great satisfaction from the process. Don’t be afraid to tackle something that you don’t really know how to do or have mastery of. Rather, revel in being an amateur—a lover of—and begin from there. Choose a project that will allow you to use your imagination and help you to grow. Remember in your paper and your presentation to grab your audience’s attention. Orient them to the situation.

Lead them through the steps you followed, and guide them to the position you want them to appreciate (Taylor and Szteiter 90).

I see that I have grown through my work on my capstone project. I feel a renewed recognition of my ability to learn new things. Throughout the CCT program and this synthesis project, I learned how to use a wide variety of digital tools for design, presentation, source archiving, and attribution that were new to me. While I had built websites using the Arlo, Virb, and Google Sites platforms, I had never built a website using Weebly. In addition to mastering a new technology, I proved through this project that I could learn about subjects such as climate change and geology, on which I'm not an expert. I had the wisdom to recognize my lack of expertise, so I reached out to experts in those subjects and asked them review the "Climate Change," "Geology," and "Weather" web pages I created. The geologist suggested no changes. The climate change scientist suggested adding a few more websites to the "Climate Change" and "Weather" pages. Their approval of my work, and the fact that I had absorbed and could share accurate information about scientific concepts, boosted my confidence.

Before starting this project, my self-confidence had been bruised by the outcome of organizational changes at my workplace. At the beginning of 2015, I was faced with a situation concerning my career. I had been working as a director of global advising for Parsons School of Design, which is a division of The New School in New York City. A reorganization of academic advising staff throughout the university occurred. Advisors who worked within each division of The New School have become part of a centralized Center for Student Success. I was told that I would be demoted. I retained my salary and my title, but the scope of my work changed. I no longer supervise staff, and I do not work with Parsons Paris and study abroad programming anymore. I felt that this change was unsatisfactory, and I decided to engage in a job search. As

mentioned above, I created a Plan for Practice to support my job search as my project for the CrCrTh 688 Reflective Practice course in spring 2015. I began working with executive coach, career consultant, speaker, and author Julie Jansen in June 2015. She has written *I Don't Know What I Want, But I Know It's Not This: A Step-by-Step Guide to Finding Gratifying Work*. I worked with Jansen into September 2015, during which time she helped me to identify jobs I would enjoy and industry sectors that would be a good fit for me. I hired her to revise my résumé and to review cover letters I wrote. In September, I decided to stop my job search and to focus on completing the CCT program in a strong manner. This was a good decision. It was helpful to continue to work in a familiar job that was small in scope while simultaneously working on a complex, all-encompassing synthesis project.

My thinking about my thinking regarding my situation at The New School evolved. I was initially angry, sad, and fearful. My boss, an assistant dean, was in a similar predicament. After the reorganization, she was demoted to a director role, but retained her title. She found a great position at Columbia University and left The New School in July 2015. Since the reorganization began, ten other members of the advising staff left The New School. I applied and interviewed for three positions within The New School during summer 2015. I was not offered any of the positions. Again, I was angry and sad. But, in September, I decided to reframe my thinking about the situation. I decided to be grateful that I still had a job. And, I decided to be grateful for a job with a much smaller scope of responsibilities, which gave me the cognitive surplus to work on two courses in fall term and this capstone project in the spring. I learned in the Human Development course I took in fall 2015, that the way adults tell the narratives of their lives defines their happiness and mental health. Jerome Bruner notes that “a life as led is inseparable from a life as told—or more bluntly, a life is not ‘how it was’ but how it is interpreted and

reinterpreted, told and retold...” (708). The way I think about and tell my narrative shapes my outlook in critically important ways.

Parker Palmer wrote: “we must withdraw the negative projections we make on people and situations—projections that serve mainly to mask our fears about ourselves—and acknowledge and embrace our own liabilities and limits” (29). I realized that I didn’t really want to take on any of those three positions. The truth was that I was ready to change the course of my career entirely. I have enjoyed advising students. But, I realized that I wanted to do something else now. While I don’t think academic advising is my vocation, my vocation does involve education. I think it has to do with learning and sharing information in a different way from the advisor-student relationship. I am looking for something closer to journalism, such as communications positions with K-12 or higher education organizations. When I was angry, sad, and fearful, I was crystallizing my discontent and trying to flee The New School. But now, I am working carefully to identify my vocation and move with purpose toward the next thing. The change of my point of view is what Jack J. Bauer, Dan P. McAdams, and April R. Sakaeda call a crystallization of desire. They note that most life changes involve both a crystallization of discontent and a crystallization of desire. The crystallization of desire is a more positive and healthy way of looking at change. It occurs when a person comes to a realization about what she really wants to do (Bauer, McAdams, and Sakaeda).

My seventh goal for this capstone project is to use the website as a portfolio piece to help me find my next job. I am working to meet this goal. As I discussed earlier, I updated my *LinkedIn* profile on April 6 before launching the website. I listed the website on my *LinkedIn* profile, and I posted an update about the launch of the site and another update about the story

published by the New School's *#ClimateCitizen* blog. My *LinkedIn* profile now positions me as a communications professional. My profile summary states:

Diverse experience in communications strategy, non-profit leadership, education-abroad administration, academic advising, and as a represented artist working for higher education, non-profit, and venture capital organizations in various stages of change and growth. Significant accomplishments driving aligned strategic marketing campaigns, communications programs, and public relations efforts.

Demonstrated agility at synthesizing, organizing and articulating ideas and concepts, driving a key message, and integrating visual and verbal elements with a focus on outcomes. Clear writer, precise editor, and thorough researcher who is conversant with multiple communication channels including learning management systems, websites, blogs, posters, postcards, white papers, newsletters, and social media. Characterized as collaborative, an empathetic listener, highly organized, and possessing a unique blend of creativity and business acumen.

Core competencies include:

Communications Strategy • Business Writing • Research

Website Design & Development • Social Media • Project Management

Academic Advising • Study Abroad Advising • Training Design & Facilitation

Dialogue Facilitation • Coaching & Mentoring • Program Management

Photography • Executive Presentations • Event Planning (Jill Corson Lake)

I am seeking a communications position involving writing and research for an educational organization. This could be an organization focused on K-12 education or higher education. The position could also involve conservation and the environment. Ideally, I want to find a position in the Hudson Valley or a position that will allow me to work from home. I commute two hours door-to-door each way between my home and my job in New York City. I would like to reduce my commute to have more time at home and in my community. I met with career consultant Jansen on May 5 to talk with her about resuming my job search.

I also began to take myself seriously as a member of my community. Friends in Garrison asked me to run for a seat on the school board this spring, because I understand and support the HHLT proposal to preserve the school forest land in perpetuity. I thought carefully about this opportunity and the service it would entail. School board membership is a big commitment. There are two meetings per month, and members serve a three-year term. I ultimately decided to run for the School board because I see this type of service as the next step in my work to support the school forest and environmental, outdoor, and place-based education at the Garrison School. School board membership affords a different way to have a voice and an influence on decisions regarding the school, its forest, and its other assets. It provides a generative opportunity to steward the next generation. There are two available seats, and I am one of two candidates running for election. At this point, it appears that I will be elected to a three-year term on the school board. The election will be held on May 17. I learned at a recent meeting with an HHLT staff member that it appears likely that the school board will approve the HHLT proposal by the end of 2016. I will have a vote on the matter.

I applied for an opportunity that will tap the skills I've learned through the CCT program. The Good Work Institute: Hudson Valley is a program of Etsy's nonprofit organization. The

Good Work Institute seeks a cohort of 25 business, nonprofit, and civic leaders who will work in 12 sessions over six months to reimagine traditional business education. In this experiential program, the cohort of fellows will build a holistic view of their business and craft a vision for success and well-being on a personal, community, and regional level. I think this program can help me to get involved in the Hudson Valley in different and deeper ways, to use what I learn to help the Garrison School, and to find my vocation and next job. The Good Work Institute Fellows will be announced on May 15, 2016.

NEXT STEPS

I plan to update and maintain the Environmental Education website for the foreseeable future. Principal Griffiths has asked that I speak to the teachers at a yet-to-be-scheduled faculty meeting. I will show the website to the teachers, ask them if they have explored it, and ask for their feedback and suggestions. I will also ask the teachers if they would like to have a password-protected blog in which they can privately share information about lesson plans that worked, problems they have solved, and favorite areas of the school forest in which to teach. During the meeting, I will address the fourth goal of my project and encourage the teachers to post stories and photos on the Forest Fridays blog. I'll remind them that they may post stories written by their students, also. In addition to speaking at the faculty meeting, Superintendent Mitchell asked that I make a presentation to the school board about the website. The date for that presentation has not yet been scheduled. Speaking at a public, televised school board meeting will partially address the sixth goal of my project, to share the website with the greater community. I will also share information about the website with administrators of other public and private schools, the organizations listed on the "Organizations" page of the website, and even with local realtors.

I attended a community forum at the Garrison School on May 9. Five teachers and the superintendent invited parents to discuss what aspects of education are most important to focus on to prepare students for the future. Many of the parents emphasized the importance of teaching outdoors in the school forest and the new vegetable garden. Parents also discussed the importance of teaching critical thinking skills, problem-solving, foreign languages, art, music, history, typing, and computer coding. One of the teachers told the parents that we had listed a lot of important subjects and asked how we expected all of those subjects to be taught within the school day—and use the school forest, too. Julia Bellrose Wynn, another mother, and I explained that the forest is another classroom site and that almost anything can be taught there. I listed a variety of disciplines that may be taught outdoors.

I realize that I am only beginning the work to meet my third goal—for teachers to use the resources provided on the website and to take students into the school forest regularly. I need to continue to share information about what other schools have done and how outdoor education benefits children’s health, creativity, ability to learn, and resiliency. I need to approach the teachers with empathy and listen to their concerns. And, I need to build a constituency of teachers who want to teach in the school forest. I will follow up on the community forum by sharing with all participants the Learning for a Sustainable Future report “Connecting the Dots: Key Strategies that Transform Learning, From Environmental Education to Citizenship and Sustainability.” I will also share my blog piece from the “How to Teach Outdoors” page on the website regarding Laurie Rubin’s book *To Look Closely: Science and Literacy in the Natural World*. In this book, Rubin details how to teach math, science, English language arts, and critical thinking through year-round stream study. I will also share IDEO’s *Design Thinking for Educators Toolkit*, which helps members of a learning community to address challenges their

school faces by engaging in phases of discovery, interpretation, ideation, experimentation, and evolution (IDEO LLC).

To support my job search, and to meet my seventh goal for the website, I will continue to promote the website. After I complete my final course work for CrCrTh 694, I plan to contact national reporters again. This time, I will send a first-person narrative about why I engaged in this project, along with links to the *#ClimateCitizen* and *Highlands Current* stories. This narrative will highlight my love of learning and my love of sharing stories about the environment and history of the Hudson Highlands. I will engage in this promotional campaign to establish myself as a thoughtful, creative, and articulate writer who would be a good candidate to join and contribute to an organization. This work addresses my seventh goal for the website project. Specifically, I plan to target Parker Palmer and Omit Safi, who write blogs for Krista Tippett's NPR show *On Being*. I will also reach out again to Max Schorr of *GOOD Magazine* and Alia Wong of *The Atlantic*. Journalist and author Erin Siegal McIntyre may interview me for a feature story for the Education Dive publication. As additional stories are published, I will post updates to my LinkedIn profile. Finally, I will discuss press coverage of the website in my cover letters for potential jobs.

I realize that I need to create ways to attract people to the website and to lead them to explore it. I'm thinking about creating a weekly story blast that I will distribute via social media. I could do this via LinkedIn, or I could create a Facebook page for the Garrison School's Environmental Education website. Each week, I'll post an engaging, intriguing story about an aspect of the school forest or the Hudson Highlands, or about a person connected to the area. These may be written stories, or I may produce them as podcasts. To assist with this idea, I will take Alex Blumberg's online course "Power Your Podcast with Storytelling," offered by

Creativelive. Blumberg was a reporter and producer for This American Life and co-host of NPR's Planet Money. He is now the CEO and co-founder of Gimlet Media. I have the opportunity to take this course thanks to the Delores Gallo Award, which I will receive from the CCT program. I will also purchase a professional microphone for podcasting with the funds from the Delores Gallo Award. My desire to attract more viewers to the website is not spurred by vanity, a desire for increased site traffic, or "likes." Rather, I genuinely want to share the information I have collected with others. I hope people will learn from the website and in turn share what they've learned with others.

I have another important next step to take. I will begin my job search in earnest after I complete my final work for the CCT program by May 17. I will return to the Plan for Practice I created in spring 2015, and I will take my own advice. When I find an interesting job, I will apply for it—and I will follow through to submission of the application. I will not fool myself with "busyness" by continuing to search for other positions before actually submitting that one job application. After submitting each job application, I will move on to the next interesting opportunity and apply for it. Career consultant Jansen has advised that I will need to contact many individuals within my network to ask them if they know of suitable opportunities for me, and to ask them what they know about companies that interest me. She also recommends that I engage in informational interviews and meet friends and business acquaintances for coffee. I believe that because I proved that I could work productively on the website project daily, I can certainly work on various aspects of my job search on a daily basis. I am excited and optimistic about what the future holds.

CONCLUSION

I saw in fall 2015 that it was only partially effective to attend school board meetings and talk during the public comment portion of meetings about the importance of preserving the school forest. I realized that I needed to address the goal of preserving the forest with a creative solution. I needed to create something that could build a coalition and a constituency much larger than the group of ten people who vocally supported the land trust proposal to preserve the school forest in perpetuity. With the example of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater in mind, I imagined and produced a thing that I hope becomes greater than the thing itself.

Pete Seeger had a genius idea in 1966. After reading about Hudson River Sloops, Pete decided to build a boat called the Clearwater. He shared his idea with others, and soon the idea took on a life of its own. Money was raised, and the Clearwater was built. Since its launch in 1969, crews of sailors and educators have used that boat and the power of song to bring attention to the pollution of the Hudson River—and to clean it up. The boat as a thing has had a far greater reach and effect than its primary identity as a means of conveyance on water. The Clearwater and the Environmental Education website have multi-dimensional impact. Both are vehicles. One navigates fresh water. The other navigates information available through the internet. Both Clearwater and the website have an educational mission. Both of them play a role in fundraising. Both of them engage storytelling in their mission. Both the Clearwater and my project have an environmental conservation component. They're both focused on saving an environmental asset that might be lost. Clearwater helped to push for passage of the Clean Water Act of 1972. And, the Clearwater organization has pushed for the enforcement of the Act to clean up the Hudson River. The website I created brings attention to the importance and uniqueness of the Garrison School Forest as a site for education and recreation. Clearwater cultivated a coalition or

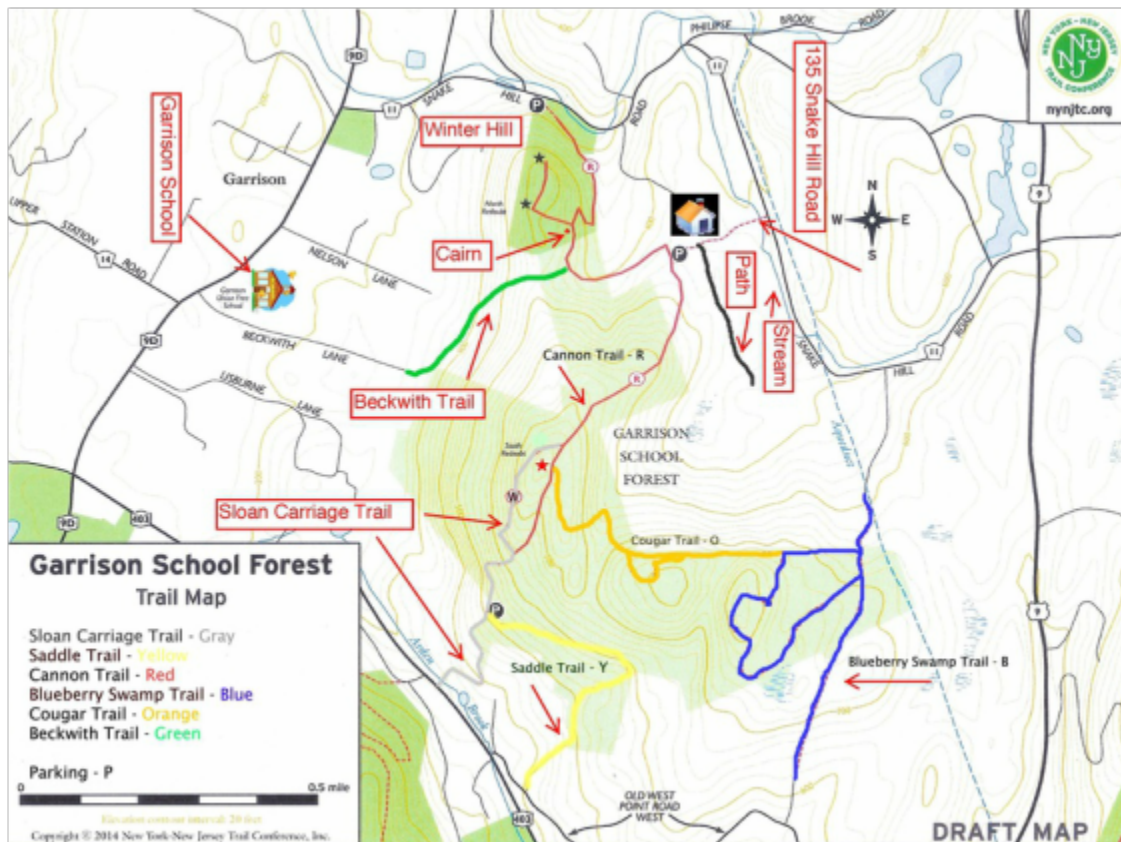
constituency of people who came to be concerned about the Hudson River Ecosystem.

Similarly, the Garrison School's environmental education website creates a coalition or constituency by allowing teachers and students to share stories about the school forest on the Forest Fridays blog. Their voices will speak to the school board about the importance of getting children outdoors, preserving the school forest as an asset, and receiving a gift of 100 additional acres of adjoining forest land with a better, safer access point. I hope to achieve my fifth goal and help to preserve the school forest in perpetuity through a series of future educational actions that teachers and others engage in, having gained information and inspiration from the Environmental Education website.

The thread common to this capstone project and others is that it required an individual to step forward to precipitate change and to create something that didn't exist before. The creative process involved ideation, collaboration, dialogue, metacognition, and reflection to generate the new. These are some of the many tools I've learned to use in the CCT program. I am so grateful to Laura Mitchell and John Griffiths for their openness to this project. I am also deeply grateful to my husband for his support throughout my work on this capstone project. I was blessed to receive support from my CCT learning partners, and help from my critical friends, validation group, and many collaborators. Through this project, I am delighted to share my wonder about the natural world and my enthusiasm for the many stories of the Hudson Highlands I have discovered. I believe that this project will lead to a variety of wonderful opportunities in the future.

Appendix A

Garrison School Forest Map



Appendix B

Excerpt of Garrison School Forest Deed, Dated February 23, 1962

Excerpt from Indenture dated February 3, 1962 between Frederick Osborn and Consolidated Union Free School District No. 4 (now Garrison Union Free School District) recorded in Liber 691 of Deeds at page 138 in the Putnam County Clerk's Office

(1) The said premises shall be used by the party of the second part and its successors hereinafter mentioned for the purposes of forestry, education in forestry, conservation and nature study in all its branches and ramifications, and related studies and activities of every kind, and may also be used as a community or public recreation area and historical site, but not for other unrelated purposes, subject to such rules and regulations for their proper use as may from time to time be adopted by majority vote of the board of education of the party of the second part or by majority vote of the governing body of such successors to the party of the second part. Such board of education or governing body may, however, appoint an administrative committee to operate and manage the premises, lay down rules and regulations for their proper use and receive and spend monies for their care, all under the authority of the party of the second part or its successors herein mentioned. It is suggested that such committee be known as The Garrison Forest Committee and that it comprise five or seven members, two to be ex officio the principal of the school at Garrison and the Garrison Postmaster and the others to be selected from among the residents of the area of the present community of Garrison for three or five-year terms so arranged that one such term shall expire each year.

(2) Except as hereinafter provided, no permanent buildings shall be erected on any of the land hereby conveyed, except [designated road], but nothing herein contained shall be deemed to prohibit the erection of open lean-tos or open shelters. The existing carriage road may be maintained and used by automobiles along that portion which is bounded on the north by the property of Samuel Duryee, but, subject to the rights of Samuel Sloan Duryee, his heirs and assigns, as set forth in deed from Osborn to School District, dated April 12, 1957, and recorded April 15, 1957 in Book 487 of Deeds, page 275, in the Clerk's office of the County of Putnam, no roads shall be built on the premises, no automobiles or other motor vehicles permitted on other parts of the premises except such as are necessary for fire protection or other forestry or maintenance purposes, and except for such road as may be necessary to provide access to any permanent building erected on said Parcel III. Except where necessary for the construction of trails for walking, riding or skiing, or

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for clearing incident to the use of the premises for recreational purposes, or where necessary for the widening and improving of the roadway or driveway by Samuel Sloan Duryee, his heirs and assigns, as set forth in the aforesaid deed dated April 12, 1957, trees shall not be cut down except in a normal forestry operation on a sustained Yield basis. It is hoped that the maintenance of the wildlife of the area will be taken into account in all aspects of the development of the forest and of the recreational activities on the premises.

(3) If and when there is established an incorporated village of Garrison or an incorporated village embracing the present community known as Garrison or Garrison-on-Hudson, the party of the second part may, by majority vote of its board of education, convey the premises to such incorporated village, subject to all Of the Provisions herein contained relating to the use of the premises, to be held by such incorporated village for so long as the premises shall be used by it for the purposes and in the manner herein set forth. If the party of the second part shall be merged into or consolidated with any other school district or districts, then upon such merger or consolidation, if the incorporated village hereinbefore mentioned shall have been established or upon the establishment of such incorporated village, after such merger or consolidation, title to the premises shall vest in and be given over to such incorporated village, subject to all of the provisions herein contained relating to the use of the premises, to be held by such incorporated village for so long as the premises shall be used by it for the purposes and in the manner herein set forth.

(4) If at any time the party of the second part or its successors by merger or consolidation shall cease to use the premises for the purposes herein directed or shall convert the same to any other use, and if, at the time of such cessation or conversion, there shall have been established the incorporated village mentioned in the preceding paragraph hereof, title to the premises shall vest in and be given over to such incorporated village subject to all of the provisions herein contained relating to the use of the premises, to be held by such incorporated village for so long as the premises shall be used by it for the purposes and in the manner herein set forth. If such incorporated village shall not then have been established, or if such incorporated village having been established and having acquired the premises as hereinabove provided, shall cease to use the premises for

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the purposes herein directed or shall convert the same to any other use, title to the premises shall vest in and be given over to The Hudson River Conservation Society, subject to all of the provisions herein contained relating to the use of the premises, to be held by it for so long as the premises shall be used by it for the purposes and in the manner herein set forth, and if the said The Hudson River Conservation Society shall not then be in existence or if said The Hudson River Conservation Society, having acquired the premises as hereinabove provided, shall cease to use the premises for the purposes herein directed or shall convert the same to any other use, title to the premises shall vest in and be given over to The New York Community Trust, absolutely and forever, in the hope that it will put the premises to uses consistent with the principles prompting this gift.

(5) At any time after December 31, 2030, the premises may be converted to other uses provided that any court of appropriate jurisdiction in the County of Putnam, State of New York, shall approve such other uses as being in the public interest.

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Appendix C

Original Environmental Education Website Plan

For The Garrison School

November 2015

The Garrison School Forest

Map

Guidelines for Visitors

History

HHLT Proposal

Offer by Chris Davis

Site Map

Current Access

Possible New Access

ADA Accessibility

Talking Points about Conservation Agreement Option

Forest Fridays

Teacher Blog and Photos

Resources for Teachers

Lesson Plans Organized by Discipline and Grade Level

Subject Areas

Reading the Forest

Trees

Birds
Migration
Mapping
Water
Weather
Hudson Highlands Folklore
Creek and Swamp Habitats
Insects
Migration
Invasive Species
The Revolutionary War
Commerce
Local Conservation History
Citizen Science
How to Teach Outdoors
Health & Safety
People
Organizations
Books
Movies
Podcasts/Articles
Grants

About

Committee Members

Meeting Dates

Mission

Definition of Place-Based Education

Definition of Environmental Education

Definition of Outdoor Education

Programs

Forest Fridays

School Forest Day

Hudson Valley Seed

Native Garden

River of Words, HHLT

Constitution Marsh

Children in Nature

Nature's Benefits for Children

Creating Stewards of the Natural World

Join Us

Explore the School Forest

Map

History

Guidelines for Visitors

Volunteer

[Call for Research Proposals](#)

[Give](#)

[Blog](#)

[School Forest Map](#)

Appendix D

Press Release Sent on April 6, 2016

GARRISON, NY: The Garrison Union Free School District shares the wonders of the Hudson Highlands through the launch today of its new [Environmental Education website](#). "The Garrison School has a rich tradition of infusing environmental experiences into its curriculum, and this website represents our commitment to continually explore cutting edge ways to impact our students' learning," said Principal John Griffiths.

The Garrison School, a public K-8 school, owns a 185-acre school forest, which it uses as an outdoor classroom and laboratory. The South Redoubt, a Revolutionary War fortification that was part of Fortress West Point, is located within the [Garrison School Forest](#). The school maintains a native plant garden, and will break ground for a new school vegetable garden on April 21.

The Environmental Education website contains [lesson plans](#) and information on: [how to teach outdoors](#), [nature's benefits for children](#), [animals](#), [citizen science](#), [climate change](#), [geography & mapping](#), [geology](#), [Hudson Highlands folklore](#), the [Hudson River](#), [invasive species](#), [local conservation history](#), [local Native American history](#), [local Revolutionary War history](#), [migration](#), [trees & forests](#), and many other topics. The site incorporates original source documents from the Library of Congress and the New York State Archives, along with audio recordings and videos. It links students, teachers, and the greater community to information from

the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies, the Children & Nature Network, Cornell Ornithology Lab, the EPA, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, NASA, NOAA, the U.S. Geological Survey, and many other organizations.

Jill Corson Lake, a Garrison School parent, created the website as a gift to the school. The website forms the base of Corson Lake's thesis work for the M.A. In Critical and Creative Thinking offered by the University of Massachusetts Boston. She will complete the program in May. Corson Lake works as a Director of Advising at The New School. [Meter](#) [Gallery](#) and [Gallery Stock](#) represent her photography.

The Garrison School's administration and Corson Lake will update the website going forward. Teachers and students will contribute to the Forest Fridays blog within the site.

For additional information, contact:

Laura Mitchell, Superintendent: lmitchell@gufs.org, 845.424-3689

John Griffiths, Principal: jgriffiths@gufs.org, 845.424.3689

Jill Corson Lake, website creator: jillcorsonlake@gmail.com, 347.922.4281

Appendix E

Website Promotion Plan

I sent the press release to:

- *The Highlands Current*, Kevin Foley, Managing Editor
- *The Highlands Current*, Pamela Doan, reporter
- *The Putnam County News & Recorder*
- The Desmond-Fish Library, Jen McCreary, director, and Pam McCluskey, cybrarian
- *Lower Hudson Newspaper*, to three reporters
- *Poughkeepsie Journal*
- *Hudson Valley Parent*
- *Hudson Valley Magazine*
- *Chronogram Magazine*
- The New School's *#ClimateCitizen* blog - Victoria Marshall and Rebecca Fuger
- *New York Times Dot Earth Blog* writer Andy Revkin
- *New York Times Learning Network Blog*
- *New York Times* science writer Carl Zimmer
- *New York Times* education writer Motoko Rich
- *Education Week*
- *NPR*
- *GOOD Magazine*, Max Schorr
- *Huffington Post*, Kate Sheppard

- *The Guardian*, four reporters
- *BuzzFeed*, Virginia Hughes and Azeen Ghorayshi
- *This Week in Education Blog* at scholastic.com, Alexander Russo
- *Administrator Magazine* at scholastic.com, Wayne D'Orio
- *The Hechinger Report*
- *The Atlantic*, Alia Wong, Stephanie Hayes, and Emily DeRuy
- *Moms Rising Blog*
- Starre Vartan, editor of Eco-Chick.com

I also promoted the website on:

- My personal *Facebook* page
- My artist *Facebook* page
- My *LinkedIn* page, as an update
- The Cub Scout Pack 137 closed group on *Facebook*
- The Philipstown bulletin board group on *Facebook*
- The Beacon Parents Network *Yahoo* group

I emailed a number of individuals to announce the launch of the website:

- Laura Mitchell and John Griffiths of the Garrison School
- Members of the Garrison School's Environmental Education Committee
- Brian McGrath, dean of the School of Constructed Environments, Parsons
- Andy Chmar, executive director of Hudson Highlands Land Trust
- Andy Smith, a member of my validation group

- Peter Taylor, Sandra McCollin, and Sara Kaplan, my critical friends

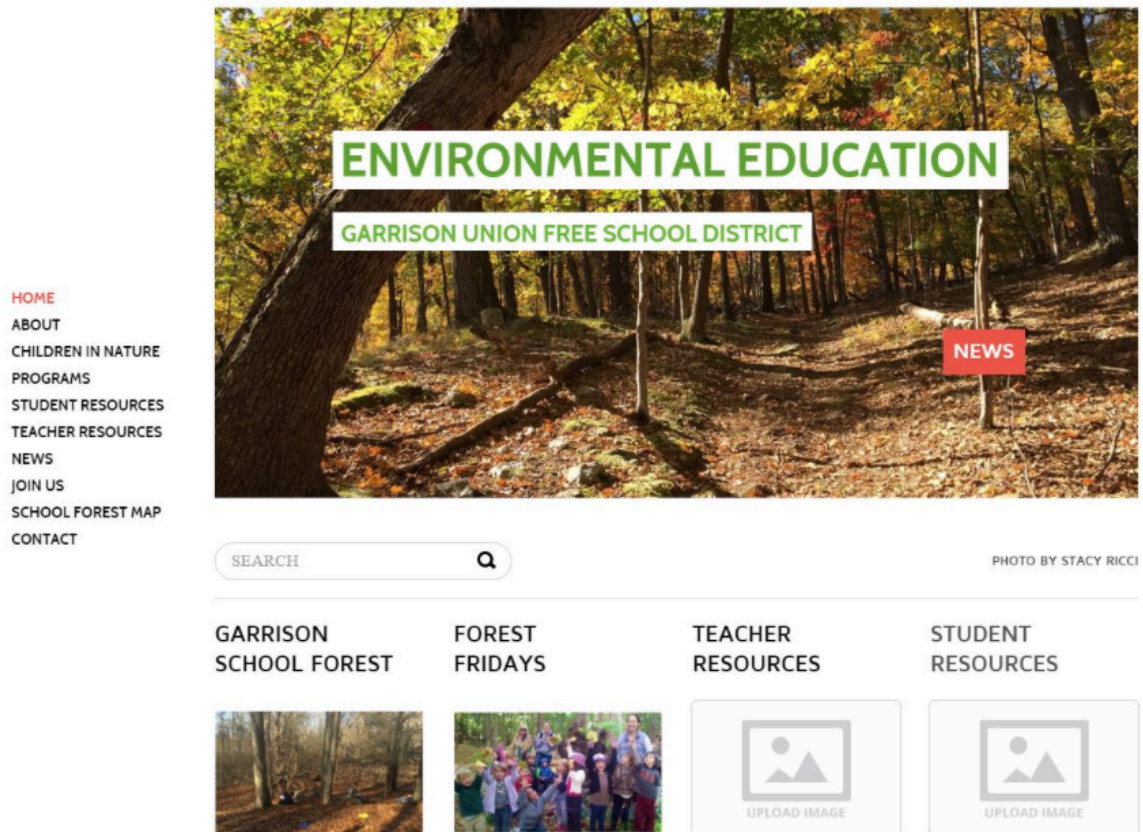
I asked Garrison School Principal Griffiths to do the following things:

- Announce the launch of the website to parents in his Friday, April 8 e-mail
- Announce the launch of the website to teachers
- Post an announcement on the Garrison School's *Facebook* page
- Create a link to site from home page of Garrison School website in the area where Garrison Children's Education Fund and the PTA links are located.

Appendix F

Evolution of Website Home Page Layout from Mid-Cycle Review to Present

Initial Home Page Layout



Second Version of Home Page Layout with Forest Fridays Button

HOME

ABOUT

MISSION

PROGRAMS

SCHOOL FOREST

STUDENT RESOURCES

TEACHER RESOURCES

SOURCES

JOIN US

CONTACT

NEWS

MAP

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

**THE GARRISON UNION FREE SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

FOREST FRIDAYS

Third Version of Home Page Layout with Call-to-Action Button

HOME

ABOUT

MISSION

PROGRAMS

SCHOOL FOREST

STUDENT RESOURCES

TEACHER RESOURCES

SOURCES

JOIN US

CONTACT

NEWS

MAP



Fourth Version of Home Page Layout with Call-to-Action Button

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[MISSION](#)

[PROGRAMS](#)

[SCHOOL FOREST](#)

[STUDENT RESOURCES](#)

[TEACHER RESOURCES](#)

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HELP WITH SCHOOL FOREST DAY: MAY 5 & 6

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