

The case for hope: Educating as if survival matters

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The world is facing ever-more-dire warnings from scientists about the faltering health of the environment and the negative consequences for humans, habitats, and the creatures with whom we share the Earth. Still, a new article in the journal *BioScience* suggests there's reason for hope. It boils down to what we teach today's young people.

"It would be easy to throw up our hands in despair," says article author Nancy Trautmann, education director at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York. "The problems are just so big."

Trautmann and co-author Michael P. Gilmore at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, write that teachers need to get their students fired up about investigating environmental issues on their own, collecting and analyzing data, and participating in citizen science and conservation action. They believe that taking such direct actions will counteract feelings of hopelessness and lead students to question how their own lifestyles, goals, and assumptions may be harming the planet and how they can take corrective action.

"One way to accomplish this is by connecting deeply with people from drastically different cultures," says Trautmann, "especially those who live in more direct connection with the natural world through more sustainable lifestyles in places such as the Amazon rainforest."

Trautmann and Gilmore are collaborating with other educators and the Maijuna indigenous group of the Peruvian Amazon to develop curriculum to engage students at the K-12 and college undergraduate

levels in this type of work.

The authors conclude that education for sustainability must build on the creative tension between anguish and empowerment, capturing students' attention while inspiring a sense of responsibility to build a better tomorrow.

More information: Nancy M Trautmann et al, Educating as if Survival Matters, *BioScience* (2018). [DOI: 10.1093/biosci/biy026](https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biy026)

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