

CEL F SUMMER INSTITUTE: NEW YORK

Narrating Our Place in Nature

2025



New York Botanical Garden

CEL F hosted another powerful **Civic Science Summer Institute at the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG)** — a three-day immersive professional learning experience that brought together **28 educators** from across New York and beyond. Participants ranged from K–12 and higher-ed, representing diverse disciplines — all united by a shared goal to **deepen their students' connection to the environment through inquiry, storytelling, and action**, in ways that align to and enhance their curriculum.

28
Educators

8
NY Counties
represented

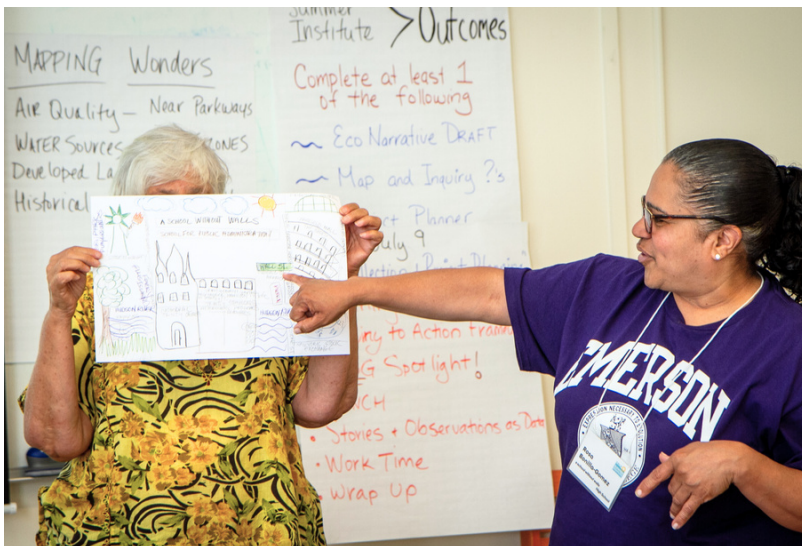
3
Days on location

Learning Through Collaboration and Creativity

Over the course of the institute, educators applied **CELf's Inquiry to Action framework to develop student project plans.** Through hands-on data collection activities, field explorations, and collaborative discussions, teachers experienced what it means to guide students in asking critical questions about change in their communities, and then transforming those questions into meaningful investigation and data-driven action.



Participants also engaged in eco-narrative writing, using personal reflection and place-based stories to connect their lived experiences to environmental themes. This creative process encouraged educators to see science not only as data and observation but as a **story of interconnection and impact.**



Using mapping tools like ArcGIS Online and Survey 123, participants practiced using geospatial tools to express data and storytelling while connecting to place and **cultivating geographic thinking.**



Building Community and Sharing Ideas

Across three days, participants formed lasting professional relationships and friendships, exchanging classroom strategies, sustainability project ideas, and resource links they can bring back to their students for the 2025-26 school year and beyond. The energy in the room — and out in the NYBG's lush green spaces — was one of inspiration, joy, and shared purpose.

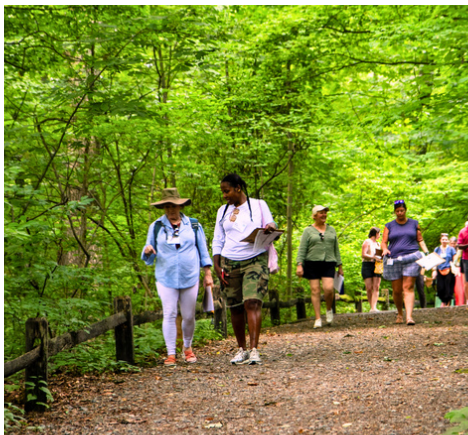
A highlight of the week was our visiting author session with Nancy Castaldo, who shared her own eco-narrative and insights into environmental storytelling. We're deeply grateful to Amy Hall and Hudson Valley Books for Humanity for helping make Nancy's book signing possible, creating a memorable moment of connection between authors, educators, and community.



Looking Forward

Building on the foundation established during the 2025 Summer Institute, CELF is continuing to support our current 2025-26 cohort of 50+ educators throughout school year with the following key activities:

- Leading a six-part **virtual workshop series** walking participating teachers through CELF's Inquiry-to-Action framework.
- Expanding our **online Civic Science resource portal** to include searchable examples of past student projects to help give teachers and students ideas and inspiration.
- Providing ongoing project implementation support through **site visits, co-teaching activities, field trips, and check-in meetings** with teachers.
- Publishing our **Green Careers Guest Speaker Portal** with searchable functionality to help connect teachers to relevant speakers, such as experts from Zenobē, to bring into their classrooms.
- Identifying authentic civic engagement opportunities in students' school communities that they can participate in, particularly opportunities related to climate, energy and circularity projects.
- Hosting CELF's annual **Student Symposium** events, with a virtual event in March and an in-person event in May at Mercy University in Dobbs Ferry.



This programming is made possible with the generous support of our donors.