PART 4 RECAP

The environmental education leaders featured in part 4 employed different strategies to achieve their outcomes. Adam Ratner at the Marine Mammal Center trained volunteers to deliver short interpretive talks that connected the center’s exhibits to the issue of climate change, with the goal of inspiring community-level action and hope in visitors. Jennifer Hubbard-Sanchez trained students at Kentucky State University in basic climate change information and empowered them to create climate change outreach programs. In the Desert Oasis Teaching Garden, Karen Temple-Beamish engaged classroom students and community members in climate change mitigation, such as building soil to sequester carbon and maintaining the campus’s trees with soil sponges. Maria Talero led conversation circles and film forums to bring the environmental community together in a way that encouraged learning, community, resilience, and action.

All four educators think carefully about their audiences’ values, needs, and knowledge. Jennifer knew that before her students could develop climate change action plans, they would need a basic understanding of climate change, so she developed a “Climate Change 101” curriculum. She infused it with humor and levity to keep students engaged and hopeful. Maria understood that her audience came to her accepting anthropogenic climate change, so she focused on collective action and building resilience rather than literacy.

Educators also used what they knew about their audiences and environmental education practices to frame their program messages. Karen focused on collective actions to maintain her students’ and volunteers’ hope. Adam used explanatory metaphors drawn from NNOCCI to explain climate change. Maria avoided
catastrophe frames that might induce a feeling of helplessness in her already concerned audience.

All four educators emphasized the importance of staying positive and building self- and collective efficacy among their audiences. They spoke of inspiring hope and approached climate change from a solutions-oriented perspective. Through these approaches, they fostered climate literacy and action in their communities.