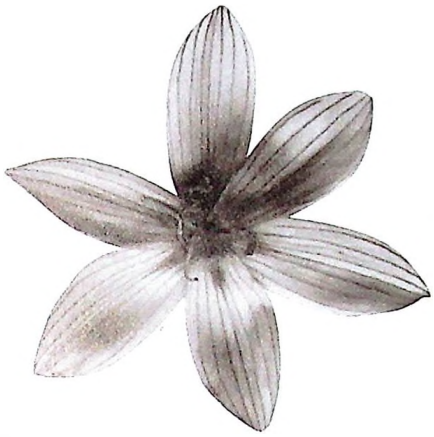
Center for Ecoliteracy

Report on Grantmaking



Mission

The Center for Ecoliteracy is dedicated to fostering experience and understanding of the natural world.

"Ecological sustainability requires a patient and systematic effort to restore and preserve traditional knowledge of the land and its functions. This is knowledge of specific places and their particular traits of soils, microclimates, wildlife, and vegetation, as well as the history and the cultural practices that work in each particular setting. Sustainability comes from the careful adaptation of people to particular places. This is as much a process of rediscovery as it is of research."

—David Orr
Director, Center for Ecoliteracy

"How can we educate children to know about the ecosystem they live in—to know the plants, the animals, the river systems? What does their biosystem consist of and what are its requirements? Those children who become ecologically literate can then create a dialogue about what must be transformed in order to listen to the land, in order to comprehend and attend to the requirements of the land. In that way, we can start becoming reconnected to the land."

—Jeannette Armstrong
Advisor, Center for Ecoliteracy

Working Systemically

The Center for Ecoliteracy adopts an ecological approach to philanthropy, working with whole systems at multiple levels of scale. Our funding strategies recognize the classroom as nested in the systems of the whole school, the school district, the surrounding community, and its local place. The diverse yet interdependent terrestrial, marine, and freshwater ecosystems of the San Francisco Bay-Delta provide the vibrant context for our work. In the Bay Area's waterways, wetlands, farm lands, and shorelines, students can discover the principles of ecology—the core concepts in ecology that are the patterns and processes by which nature sustains life.

Through immersion in living systems, teachers and students learn to appreciate and understand the natural world. We accomplish our mission by supporting educational organizations and nurturing communities in schools that both teach and embody ecologically sustainable ways of life. Our funding supports diverse efforts in fostering ecological literacy through gardening, cooking, sustainable agriculture, and habitat restoration.

The Center supports programs that nurture a collaborative culture throughout the school community, integrate curriculum around a shared conceptual language, engage in ecological action projects such as school gardens or habitat restoration, and explore the place or ecosystem in which their school is embedded.

It is my great pleasure to present this report of our grant making, donor-advised funds, and sponsored projects.

Zenobia Barlow
Executive Director
Center for Ecoliteracy

Sustainable Communities

The Center for Ecoliteracy is dedicated to fostering the experience and understanding of the natural world in educational communities. In providing support to educators, we empower them to help children learn the values, knowledge, and skills that are crucial to building and nurturing ecologically sustainable communities.

In our efforts to build and nurture sustainable communities we can learn valuable lessons from ecosystems, which themselves are sustainable communities of plants, animals, and microorganisms. Being ecologically literate means understanding the basic patterns and processes by which nature sustains life and using these core concepts of ecology to create sustainable human communities, in particular, learning communities.

Applying this ecological knowledge requires systems thinking, or thinking in terms of relationships, connectedness, and context. Ecological literacy means seeing the world as an interconnected whole. Using systems theory, we see that all living systems share a set of common properties and principles of organization. Thus we discover similarities between phenomena at different levels of scale—the individual child, the classroom, the school, the district, and the surrounding human communities and ecosystems. With its intellectual grounding in systems thinking, ecoliteracy offers a powerful framework for a systemic approach to school reform.

Fritjof Capra
Chair, Board of Directors
Center for Ecoliteracy

Principles of Ecology

Core concepts in ecology that are the patterns and processes by which nature sustains life.

NETWORKS

All members of an ecological community are interconnected in a vast and intricate network of relationships, the web of life. They derive their essential properties and, in fact, their very existence from these relationships.

NESTED SYSTEMS

Throughout nature we find multi-leveled structures of systems nesting within systems. Each of these forms an integrated whole within a boundary while at the same time being a part of a larger whole.

CYCLES

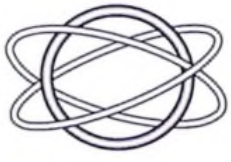
The interactions among the members of an ecological community involve the exchange of energy and resources in continual cycles. The cycles in an ecosystem intersect with larger cycles in the bioregion and in the planetary biosphere.

FLOWS

All organisms are open systems, which means that they need to feed on a continual flow of energy and resources to stay alive. The constant flow of solar energy sustains life and drives all ecological cycles.

DEVELOPMENT

The unfolding of life, manifesting as development and learning at the individual level and as evolution at the species level, involves an interplay of creativity and mutual adaptation in which organisms and environment coevolve.



DYNAMIC BALANCE

All ecological cycles act as feedback loops, so that the ecological community regulates and organizes itself, maintaining a state of dynamic balance characterized by continual fluctuations.

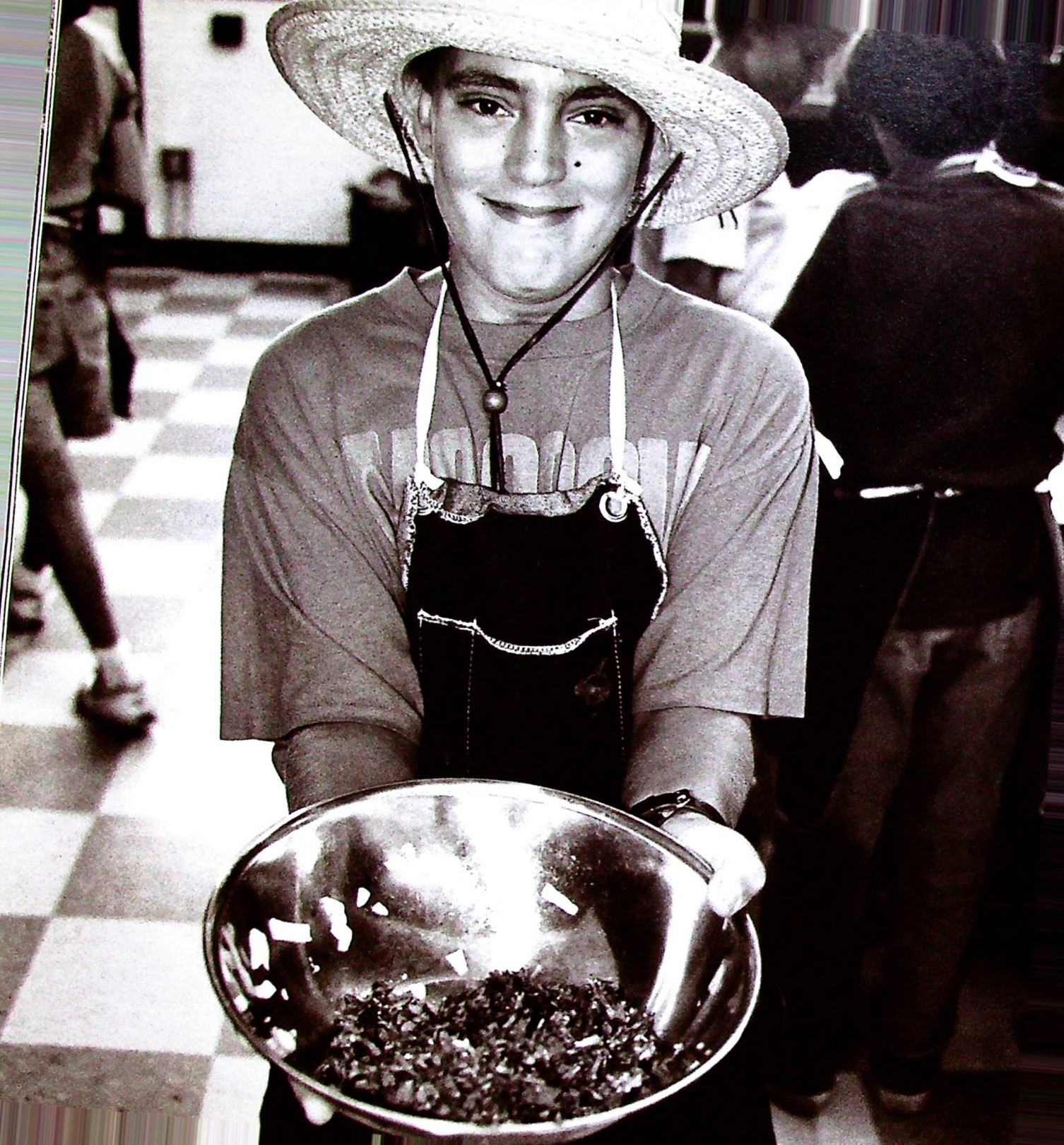
Food and Water Strategies

The Center for Ecoliteracy recognizes foodsheds and watersheds as essential systems that provide meaningful contexts for achieving ecological understanding (ecological literacy). Working with whole schools on projects that take school children out of the classroom and into the natural world to explore their local watershed or food system grounds education in the uniqueness of place.

Projects that examine the fit between human communities and the habitat in which they live instill a reverence for life and as well as a connection to the local community. They address a need to understand ecosystems and the cycles of life in order to create sustainable communities.

"We support projects that have tangible and demonstrable impacts leading to systemic change."

– Peter Buckley, a Founding Director of the Center for Ecoliteracy



Food

Food Systems Project

The Center for Ecoliteracy's *Food Systems Project* has been designated as one of four pilot projects of the United States Department of Agriculture under the Secretary's initiative, "Linking Farms to Schools." The Project currently is working to enhance a district-wide effort in Berkeley to transform the school nutrition service and related curriculum. Using a whole systems approach, the Project links family farms to schools, tackles policy issues, and improves food access and nutritional health for the community and the families whose lives are connected, through their children, to the school district.

The Edible Schoolyard

The mission of the Edible Schoolyard project at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Berkeley, California is to create and sustain an organic garden and landscape that is integrated into the school's curriculum and lunch program. The Edible Schoolyard is a unique, one-of-a kind collaboration of remarkable people, yet this project also embodies basic elements that contribute to its success: strong leadership with a clear vision, a rich web of relationships, and a community working together on a tangible project that fosters both an experience and an understanding of the natural world. The Center for Ecoliteracy is honored to be among a core group of funders committed to the fruition and sustainability of this project.

GARDENING, FOOD, & AGRICULTURE

Selected Grantees

Berkeley Community Food Security Council

To support fundamental policy development and enhancement of food security of Berkeley's school-age children. 1998, $50,000 (Food Systems Project—CEL)

Berkeley High School

To further develop their ecoliteracy/environmental studies projects. 1998, $5,780

Berkeley Unified School District

A planning grant for *From the Garden to the School Cafeteria* to support the work of the BUSD Food Policy Collaborative in connecting school gardens with the district's food service program. 1998, $15,000 (Food Systems Project—CEL)

Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)

To support Open Garden Day, a tour and celebration of community and school gardens throughout the Bay Area. 1999: $3,300

Chez Panisse Foundation

Founding benefactor to this grant-giving organization, started by Alice Waters, that "supports projects that teach young people the interwoven pleasures of growing, cooking, and sharing food, inspiring them to respect and care for the land, their communities, and themselves." 1997, $5,000

Hayes Valley Neighborhood Parks Group

To support garden mentors and develop appropriate garden-related curricula at John Muir Elementary School in San Francisco. 1997, $11,000 (San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners)

Jefferson School

To provide support for the use of an organic garden to teach Berkeley students about nature, science, and nutrition. 1998, $3,525

Laytonville High School

To provide support to *Sustainable Forestry and Small Scale Agriculture*, an applied math/science program in which students participate in hands-on projects designed around themes of ecological sustainability. 1997, $13,200

Life Lab Science Program

To fund the manuscript development of *Getting Started: A Guide for Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms*. 1997, $4,500

Market Cooking for Kids (MCK)

To support a program that gives urban school children access to and experience of local, seasonal food through an integration of ecology, biology, geography, and cooking. 1996, $5,000; 1997, $25,000 (CUESA)

Occidental Arts and Ecology Center

To provide support to teacher training and a network for Sonoma County elementary, middle, and high school teachers interested in creating school gardens and garden-based curriculum. 1997, $30,000; 1999, $20,000

San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG)

To provide support to *Growing Together*, a pilot program that focuses on developing and maintaining school gardens in San Francisco. 1997, $10,000

Sierra Youth Center Market Garden

To support the Youth Center and the Sonoma County Office of Education in creating a two-acre environmental education and market garden that serves as an outdoor science classroom, produces organic fruit and vegetables for the kitchen, and provides job training and socialization skills for incarcerated youth. 1997, $12,000; 1998, $12,000

Slide Ranch

To support *Teaching Ecology to Youth*, an environmental education program that offers hands-on, direct experiences with a farm and organic garden, coastal wildlands, and rocky shoreline complete with rich tide pools. 1997, $7,500; 1998, $9,780

The Classroom of Strawberry Creek Park

To provide support for a garden program to incorporate watershed education, native plant identification, and a youth-run landscaping/plant nursery business. 1998, $25,000 (Berkeley Youth Alternatives)

Tule Elk Park Children's Center

To support transforming 20,000 square feet of asphalt into an environmental learning landscape. 1995, $5,000; 1996, $1,000; 1997, $5,000 & $10,000; 1998, $14,000 (Center for Ecoliteracy)

Willard Middle School

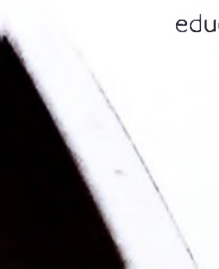
To support incorporating the *Greening Project* into 6th, 7th, and 8th grade curricula, giving students the opportunity to take care of the school gardens, while learning about composting, nutrition, and other garden-related subjects. 1997, 15,000; 1998, 25,000

Water

STRAW: Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed

Loss of riparian habitat is one of the most critical issues in the San Francisco Bay Area. In an effort to address this issue, STRAW, a joint project of The Bay Institute and the Center for Ecoliteracy, coordinates and sustains a network of teachers, students, and community members as they plan and implement riparian habitat restoration projects in Marin and Sonoma counties.

Over the past seven years, the project has grown to include classes from dozens of schools that are actively engaged in restoration projects on miles of creeks flowing through ranches and public land. Participants in the STRAW project recognize the importance of understanding the pattern of relationships between water, vegetation, land, wildlife, and human communities.



HABITAT RESTORATION & WATERSHED

Selected Grantees

Adopt-A-Watershed

To provide support to broaden the Bay Area network of watershed educators and to support leadership teams in the area. 1999, $20,000

California Freshwater Shrimp Project

To support an award-winning project initiated by fourth and fifth graders at Brookside School in Ross Valley to complete the planting of native trees and bushes on Stemple Creek in Marin and Sonoma counties. 1995, $10,000

Lincoln Unified School District

To support development of an *Eco-Historical Sense of Place*, a program to involve teachers and interested community members in exploring the agricultural land and the rich system of waterways of the Delta. 1997, $16,000

Literacy for Environmental Justice

To support teachers as they develop student competency in environmental justice issues through a hands-on, community service program of stewardship and civic action in Bayview Hunter's Point. 1999, $15,000 (The Southeast Alliance for Environmental Justice)

Mill Valley School District

To support bringing the principles of ecology into the classroom in a district-wide watershed effort. 1995, $8,000; 1996, $20,650; 1997, $14,850

Richmond High School

To provide support to Friends of the Estuary and Richmond High School for *Creekkeepers*, an after-school and summer employment program. 1997, $5,000

River of Words

To provide support to implement the River of Words project, which encourages communities to engage in river cleanups, creek walks and watershed-related readings, seminars, and performances, in Bay Area schools. 1995, $20,000; 1998, $25,000; 1999, $30,000 (International Rivers Network)

Science Interchange (SI)

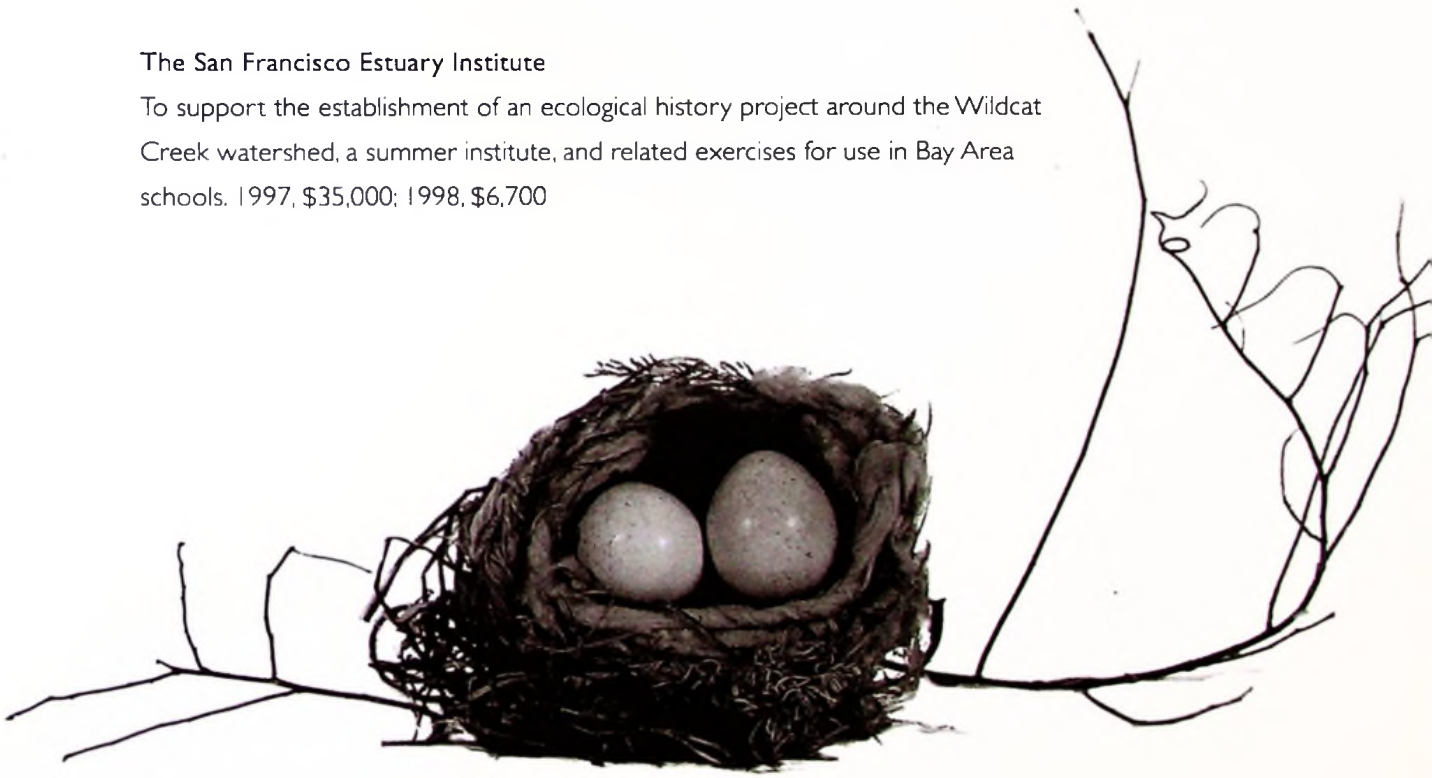
To provide support to The Communications Support Program. 1998, $10,000

Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed (STRAW)

To support the STRAW Teachers Leadership Institute that explores the significance of watershed projects for San Francisco Bay and the importance of fostering a sense of place. Participants gain an understanding of watershed curriculum that integrates art and science. They have field experiences with stream restoration, bird studies, and aquatic ecosystems. 1999, $20,000 & $30,125 (The Bay Institute)

The San Francisco Estuary Institute

To support the establishment of an ecological history project around the Wildcat Creek watershed, a summer institute, and related exercises for use in Bay Area schools. 1997, $35,000; 1998, $6,700



A Network of Educators

The web of life, itself a network pattern, inspires the formation of the Center for Ecoliteracy network of school-based grantees. Leadership teams, including principals and teachers, from exemplary schools embedded in the landscapes of urban, rural, and suburban communities are convened in an ongoing cycle of seasonal retreats and educational experiences. Our purpose is to discover, with educators, how to reconnect children to the natural world.

"The whole school change process involves structure, culture, and community; three components that are totally interdependent. For example, if you begin to shift instruction, assessment, and the curriculum, then you are also going to have to change the way the school community works."

– Gay Hoagland
Director, Center of Ecoliteracy

Selected Grantees

Brookside School

To support *Grounds for Learning in the Real World*, a school-wide program that teaches environmental awareness and interaction through lunch-time recycling, creek restoration, raised bed gardening, and an annual Visitors' Day. 1997, $17,200; 1998, $19,000

César Chávez Elementary School

To provide support to *Natural Perspectives: Garden, Nutrition and Curriculum Project*, a school-wide project designed to foster the understanding of child nutritional health and how food is produced. 1998, $18,788; 1999, $23,300 (CUESA)

Edna Maguire School

To provide support to an effort to infuse new life into a school garden through ecology, systems thinking, and environmental project-based learning. 1999, $13,400

Laytonville Elementary and Middle Schools

To support *Earth Stewards: Linking Ecology, Community, and Culture*, a program that promotes sustainable community, earth-centered values, and marketable job skills in a rural Mendocino County school. 1996, $11,000; 1997, $25,000; & 1999, $15,000

Park School

To provide support to environmental project-based learning and the children's garden as a basis for teaching ecoliteracy and engendering in students a greater sense of place. 1999, $12,700

The Edible Schoolyard

To provide support to an organic garden and cooking program at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Berkeley that is being integrated into the curriculum and school lunch program of the school and to fund the curriculum development process. 1995, $35,000; 1996, $50,000; 1997, $61,984; 1998, $119,000; 1999, $73,500

Donor-Advised Funds

The Center for Ecoliteracy administers philanthropic funds established by individuals and families. The Center's services include donor consultation and fund management. Donors may recommend grants from their funds for tax-exempt charitable organizations.

"The funding we support through the Center for Ecoliteracy is some of the most successful funding we've done. We're particularly interested in holistic funding that will result in changes in environmental education. The gestalt of understanding systems attracts us. We live in a system and if we think systemically, we can come up with solutions that are healthier for the planet. We also believe that the process is as important as the end product. By working with educators and whole school systems we can address issues at a policy level as well as at the level of direct service. Working with the Center is a reciprocal and rewarding process; we're excited about the work in general and the specific niche we've found there."

– Wendy Boals
Michael and Wendy Boals Fund

Selected Grantees

Center for Commercial Free Public Education
To provide support to the Consumers or Citizens Program, initiated by a coalition of activists, environmentalists, parents, teachers, and students for the purpose of eliminating corporate advertising from public schools. 1997, $7,500

Center for Urban Agriculture

To support a film project, directed by John de Graf, that celebrates the "rebirth of small-scale organic farming around the world." The film is based on Michael Ableman's book, *From the Good Earth*. 1996, $8,000; 1999, $15,000

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)

To provide general support to CAFF, which works to redirect the food and farm system toward sustainability; and to support an outreach campaign. 1997, $15,000; 1999, $20,000

Habitot Children's Museum

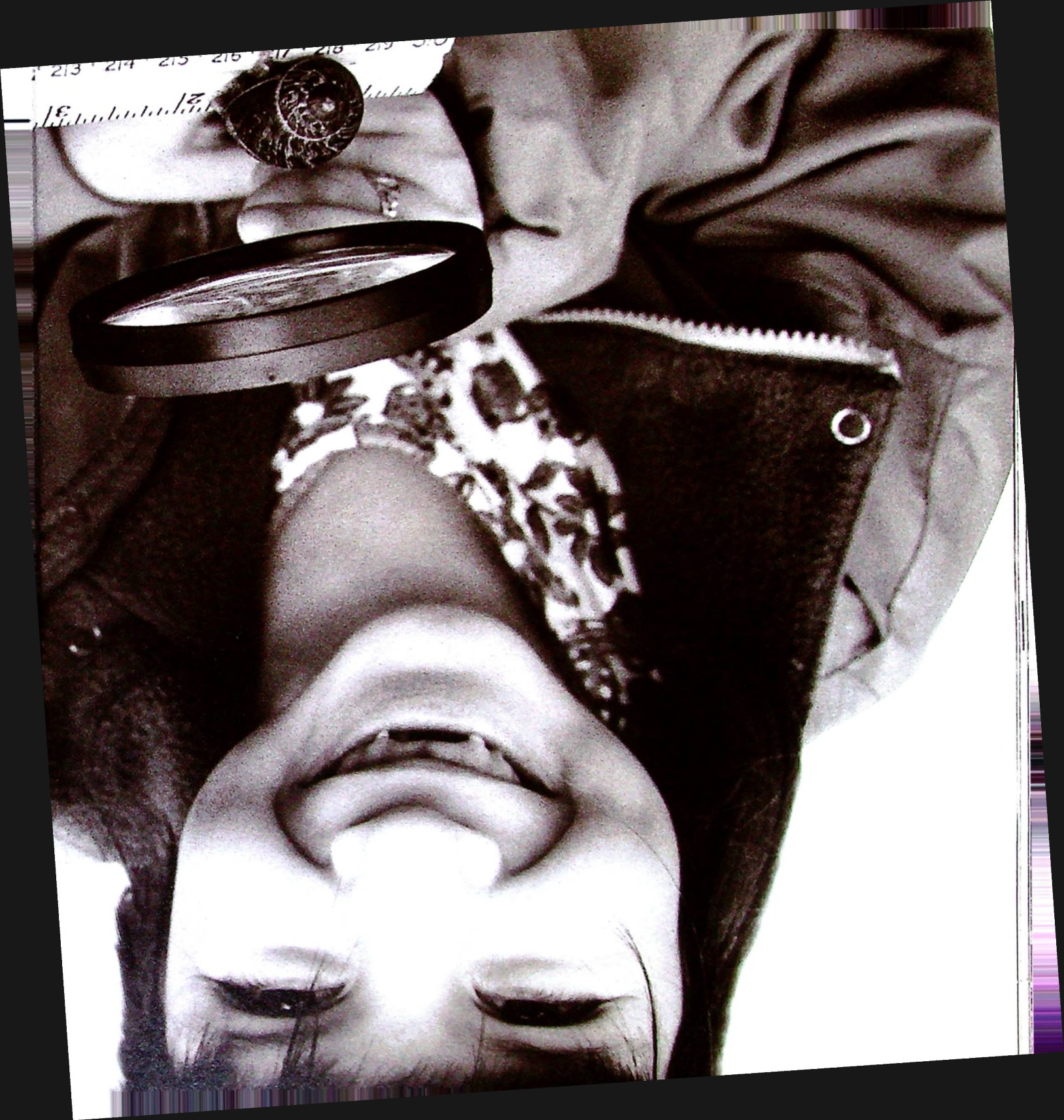
To provide support to the first discovery museum for young children in the East Bay for their *Back to the Farm* dramatic arts program that offers young children the opportunity to discover the connection between farms and food. 1998, $10,000; 1999, $10,000

Mothers & Others

To provide support to the West Coast office of this national consumer education organization to launch regional programming that includes a consumer research and education services component. 1998, $10,000; 1999, $10,000

Rudolf Steiner College

In support of *The Waldorf Approach Applied in the Public School Classroom*, a two-week summer institute that provides K-6 teachers with hands-on experience in integrating the arts and active learning, with an ecological base, into the curriculum. 1999, $20,000



Learning in the Real World®

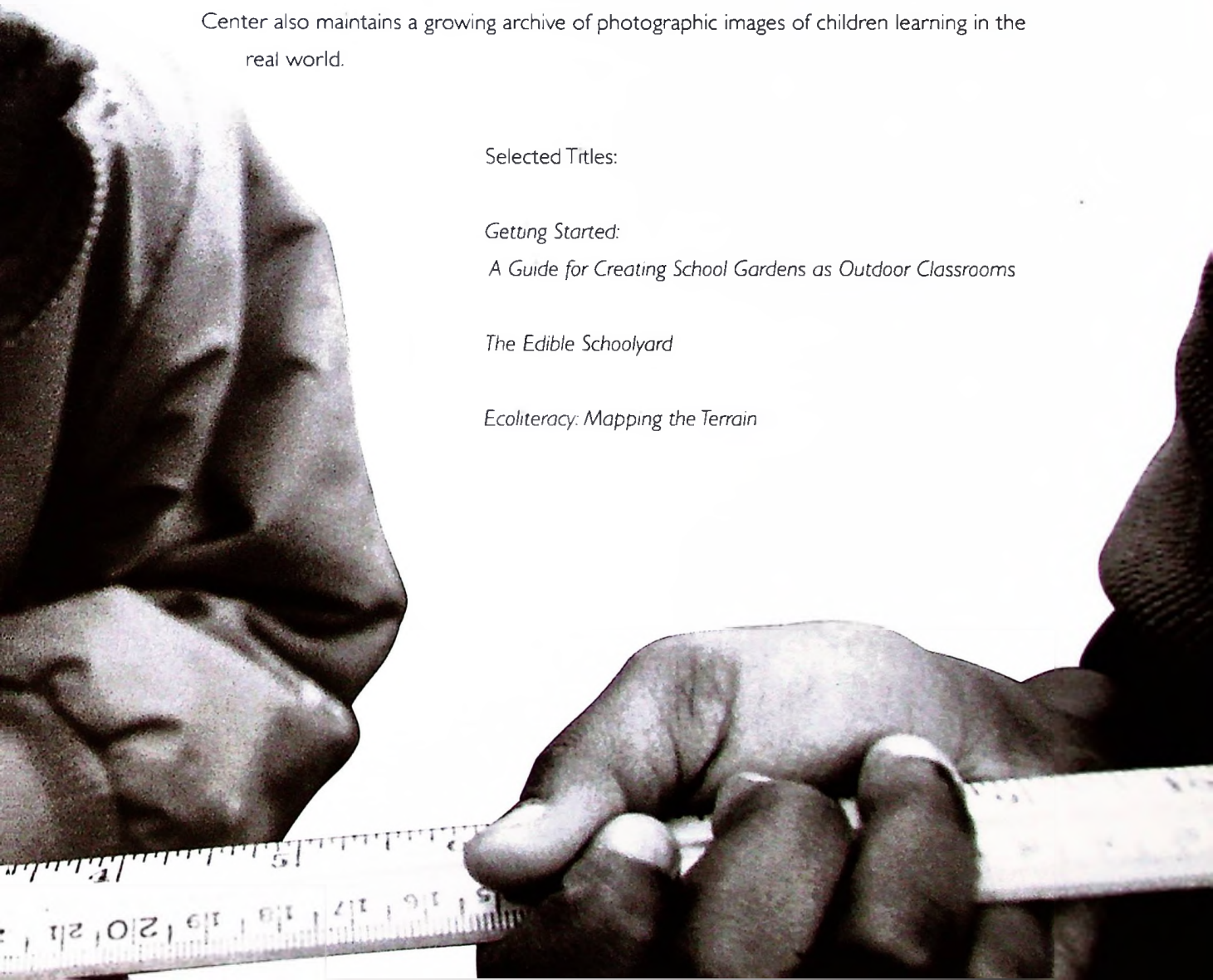
Learning in the Real World® is a publishing imprint of the Center for Ecoliteracy. The Center acts as a publishing resource, providing consultation, editorial, design, and production services. The Center also maintains a growing archive of photographic images of children learning in the real world.

Selected Titles:

Getting Started:
A Guide for Creating School Gardens as Outdoor Classrooms

The Edible Schoolyard

Ecoliteracy: Mapping the Terrain



To Write a Letter of Inquiry

Grants are made to school communities and educational organizations whose views and activities are consistent with the mission of the Center.

To be considered for a grant, please send a letter of inquiry briefly outlining your proposal. Your letter should be on 8 1/2 x 11 paper, in a font size no smaller than 11 pt., and no longer than two pages. Letters of inquiry must be mailed, faxed, or emailed. Telephone inquiries are not encouraged. If your proposed activities fall within the mission of the Center, and if our resources permit further consideration, we will request a full proposal from you for review by staff and presentation to the Center's Board of Directors. The review process may involve conversations with applicants, site visits, and revisions or modifications of proposals.

The Center is engaged in a project that takes a critical look at the indiscriminate use of computers in grades K–3, and we are not inclined to support computer-based educational programs in these grades.

DEADLINES AND GRANT CYCLES Letters of inquiry can be submitted at any time of the year. Full proposals will be considered by the Center's Board of Directors twice a year during the weeks following the equinoxes. Proposals for review at the Autumn Equinox must be received by April 15. Proposals for review by the Spring Equinox must be received by October 15.

The Eight Questions

These questions are central to the Center's grant-giving program. While you do not need to address these questions in your letter of inquiry, we urge you to use them to evaluate your proposed project from the perspective of the Center's funding goals. If you are invited to submit a full proposal, you will be asked to answer the following questions.

1. Will the program foster ecological knowledge and systems thinking?

2. Is there evidence of strong leadership with a clear vision?

3. Is there evidence that the program will have tangible and demonstrable impacts, leading to systemic change?

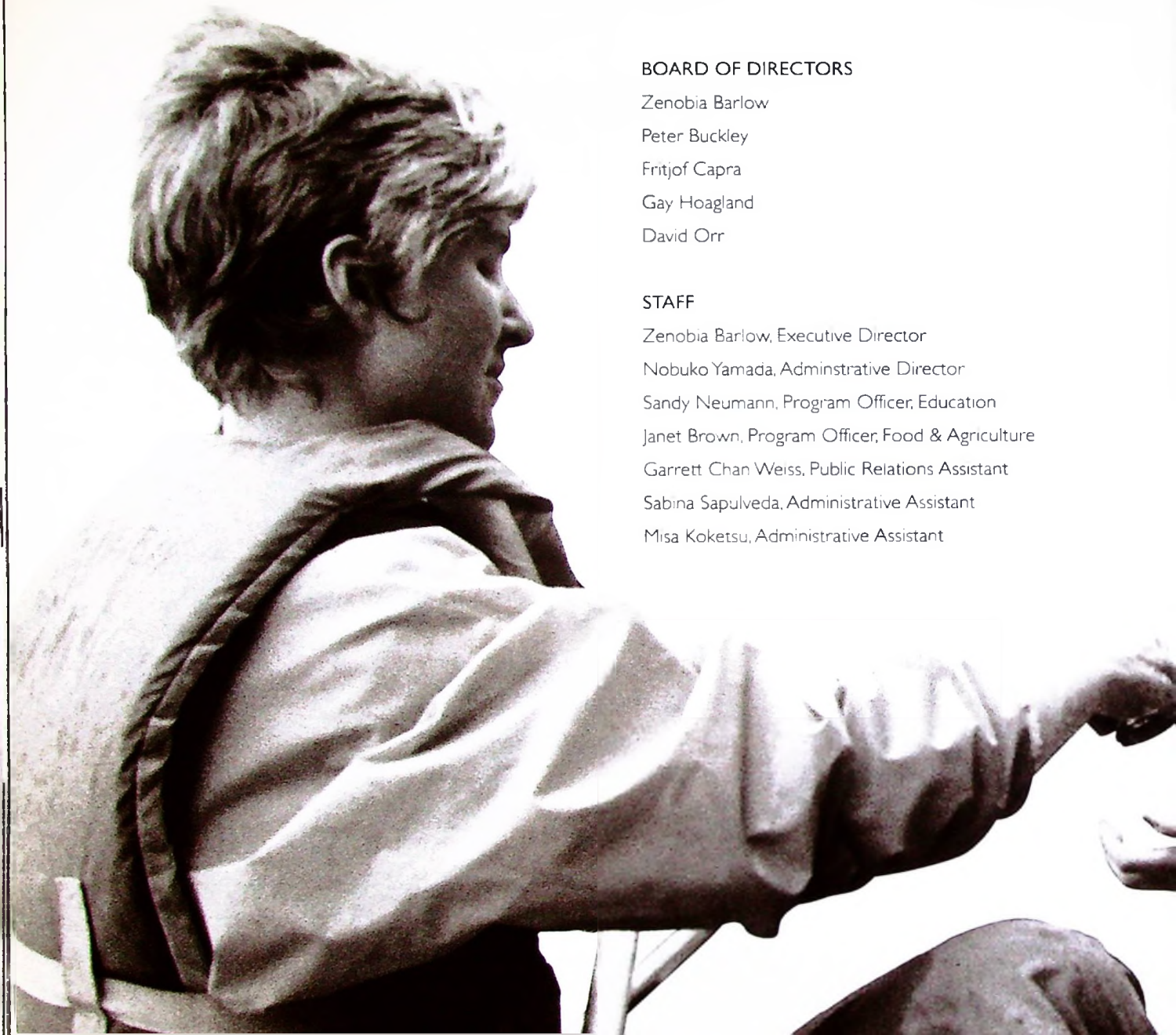
4. Is there inherent potential for becoming self-sustaining?

5. Will the program build on local knowledge of how ecosystems work, and demonstrate the cultural wisdom of a particular place?

6. Is change understood within the context of the whole school?

7. Is there a rich enough web of relationships to sustain the program?

8. Does the work encourage a reverence for life and an appreciation of the natural world?



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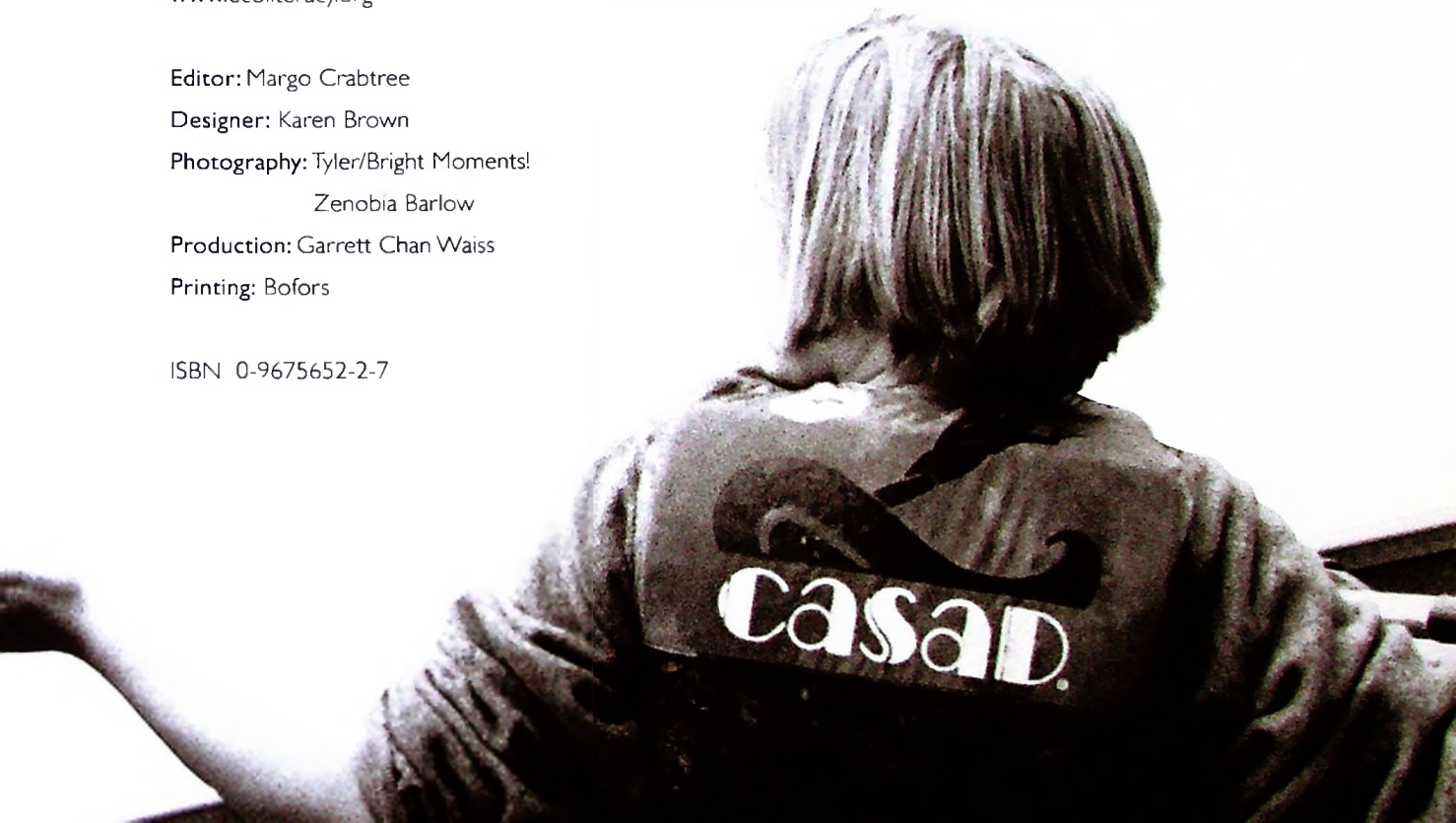

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