**A Lack of Scientific Literacy, Geographic Literacy and Global Literacy:**

**Can the UN Sustainability Goals Help?**

Margie Turrin

Over the last dozen years a majority of my projects have addressed climate change education/ communication with a focus on changes in the polar-regions linking global to local. Working with the US public over this time, from adult to K16 populations, I have experienced a concerning lack of literacy, not just scientific literacy, but also geographic literacy and what I would refer to as global literacy, or a failure to be familiar with world events often connected to global resources and global processes. Taken together I see a real challenge ahead in dealing with educating for sustainability. The solution, I believe, lies in systems thinking and instruction…and I would propose the U.N. Sustainability Goals could be leveraged to address this void.

We are a global society facing global challenges that extend beyond parochial boundaries. For example, our goods and resources are harvested and developed on a global scale, and our impacts are just as far reaching. Raw materials are being harvested, consumables are being produced and goods are being delivered across geographic boarders at inequitable scales. We cannot make sustainable choices if we don’t know the source of the raw materials for the products we use or own, the processes for how they are being obtained, or the production methods and ultimate disposed of products as they become ‘obsolete’ to us. Our economy drives many of our issues of sustainability, and we fail to educate about a circular economy. Much of our educational instruction is still not applied or focused on systems.

If we teach through systems we include the building blocks of sustainable education. We must begin to teach the Earth as a system, the human/environmental interaction as part of that system, and social justice as critical. The U.N. Sustainability goals are broad categories and have the ability to be address science, geographic and global literacy. Additionally, they reach across multiple nations and economic levels. Maybe we need to think about not creating our own but how to link to what exists and build from there.