

Envision the Future

Environmental Sustainability Working Group

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About

Earth is a unique biosphere that encompasses a vast array of life. In recent discoveries, research has found that our planet is experiencing detrimental changes because of the destructive practices of our human populations. From the extensive use of Earth's resources to the amount of waste that is produced daily, we have developed a tendency to neglect the importance of environmental sustainability. If these practices continue, the state of the Earth will deplete until these changes become irreversible.

Climate change is a result of these negative impacts and is a long-term issue that affects populations and ecosystems around the globe. The Environmental Sustainability Working Group would like to introduce "Envision the Future." This handbook introduces a variety of environmental sustainability projects and initiatives that students across Ontario can incorporate into their school communities. The handbook provides ways that will effectively demonstrate support for environmental sustainability within schools. By emphasizing student-led participation, students in the province can make a concerted effort to reduce their carbon footprint.

Background

Air and water pollution, global warming, smog, acid rain, deforestation, and wildfires are just a few of the environmental issues we face today on a global scale. As global citizens, we encourage students across Ontario to help replenish and restore the Earth.

In addition to protecting the Earth for the safety and security of Ontario schools, the environment impacts our economy. While production and consumption are beneficial for economic output, they also lead to pollution and other pressures on the environment. We require natural resources for all of Ontario's educational opportunities. Consequently, poor environmental quality can stunt economic well-being by lowering the quantity and quality of resources.

Environmental education within schools is essential to generate awareness and cultivate an understanding of issues prevalent on Earth. If environmental sustainability is not built into schools, students will not have the chance to be educated on one of these prevalent issues. By starting now, initiatives can be implemented in schools to better educate and prepare future generations on how to protect the planet.



Independent School Compost Bin Proposal

What is it?

Currently, schools have garbage bins alongside paper and plastic recycling bins. Recycling bins are an essential addition to schools, there has been a significant impact on the reduced volume of garbage that is thrown out. Now is the time to introduce compost bins. Compost bins collect food waste. These bins will be in lunchrooms or scattered across the school, which depends on the school.

The Goal:

The goal of this initiative is to introduce compost bins into schools. By using this alternative, students will be lessening the amount of waste thrown out in landfills in their area. When food waste decomposes in landfills without oxygen, it creates methane gas. Methane gas has 80 times the warming effect of carbon dioxide, and with the slow decomposition that takes place in landfills, they are constantly sending this harmful substance into the air. By adopting compost bins, schools across Ontario can be removed from the list of contributors to this problem. This will also ensure that the only items that go in the garbage are items that cannot be recycled or biodegrade.

The Implementation:

Expectations: There may be times that students and/or staff will not use these bins properly. Resulting in the inability to serve the intended purpose of the compost bins. This could include throwing away items that are not compostable such as food wrappers. At a high school level, most students are aware of compost bins and their purpose. However, there should be consideration of ways to educate students on how to use the compost bins and address their importance. This may be represented by posters and/or announcements.

Odour: One fear regarding the implementation of compost bins is that they smell. However, compost bins do not begin to permeate their surroundings within hours of being thrown away. With students being at school for 6 hours and compost bins being emptied daily, there is not enough time for the decomposition of food waste to cause a smell. The same food waste is already being thrown away in garbage bins, the only difference now is that they will be emptied and properly recycled.



Municipality: One problem that may arise in the process of implementing these compost bins is the various municipalities where schools are located. Based on municipal laws, compost is disposed of in diverse ways and schools must adhere to the laws in their area. By having a representative from the school reach out to the different municipalities compost collectors can come to the school. This is essential to the implementation of compost bins. A task like this can be handled by principals (or vice principals) who are already within that region and must only deal with their own school.

Location & Materials: Places for the compost bins could be in lunchrooms, hallways, and lounge areas. These compost bins will require biodegradable compost bags and will be replaced often. Compost clips or bands are also useful to keep the bags in place. A dumpster or larger storage bin would also be needed to hold the compost until it is collected. This cycle would then be repeated as the program continues.

Custodian & Clean-up Expectations: In Ontario, custodians are not required to collect recycling or compost from classrooms. They are strictly paid to collect garbage; therefore, any school that has recycling programs requires students to bring the recycling to a central location before it is disposed of. A resolution to this could be to have compost bins only in central locations such as lunchrooms and hallways. This ensures that compost bins are available for students and custodians still must collect and dispose of them. It's important to mention that this is only a suggestion, and the implementation of the compost bins depends on the school.

Required:

- Compost bins (if possible, out of recycled material)
- Biodegradable compost bags
- Municipal compost retrieval
- Compost bands/clips

Results:

Over time as students become more aware of the presence of compost bins, food waste should be found less and less in garbage bins. The reduced amount that schools pay for garbage collection should help compensate for the price of having the compost collected. With this effort, schools can reduce their contribution to food waste in landfills.



Volunteer Environmental Clean-up Proposal

What is it?

Secondary school students will have the opportunity to clean up areas around their schools and communities and get volunteer hours for doing so. These clean-ups can take place on a regular basis.

The Goal:

The goal of this project is to make local communities cleaner. By picking up trash, students contribute to beautifying their surroundings and gain an awareness of the garbage that is not properly being discarded in our environments. In exchange, students can earn volunteer hours.

The Implementation:

Through communication with the student councils, emails sent to principals, and social media posts, students can be made aware of these student clean-up events. Upon implementation, students who are interested will meet with a supervisor, such as a teacher, and be provided with garbage bags and gloves. Students and supervisors will also decide on what area they would like to clean up (areas from 0-2km from their schools). From there, students will travel to their respective locations to complete volunteer hours.

Required:

- Gloves
- Garbage bags
- Teacher/Supervisor

Results:

Over time, every school should be picking up less and less garbage from each area due to constant cleanups and make their communities an overall cleaner place.

Incentives:

To get students to join in the cleaning, other incentives beyond volunteer hours can include:

- A plaque that shows the school's success that year
- A banner of congratulations
- Gift cards for students who collect the most garbage in that year/show up the most often



Freecycling Proposal

What is it?

In similarity with a school fundraiser/clothing drive, freecycling allows items around your house that are in good condition and are no longer needed to live a second life. Instead of letting them go to waste, students can list them on a freecycling website for people in the community to pick up for free. (It is important to recognize that this handbook recommends students ensure they have parental permission and supervision before using a freecycling website.)

The Goal:

The goal of this project is to spread awareness for useful websites for freecycling. Usage of a service like this also gives students the opportunity to help those around them with items they do not need instead of throwing them out. This reduces waste and saves money.

The Implementation:

Students in schools may be introduced to freecycling through engagement of announcements and posters. Depending on this school, items that students would like to give away can be collected and stored in a central location. Schools can pick a particular day to highlight the items being given away such as Freecycling Wednesdays. Teachers and students may remind students that each item in the freecycling store is free and encourages recycling unwanted clothing instead of disposing of them in an un-environmentally friendly way. Anything that is not taken that day can be reintroduced on the next freecycling day which gives students another opportunity to look at the item. Schools could also work in partnership with shelters in the area and use the website as official channels for distributing the items. Anything that is left in the school after numerous attempts to recycle can either be donated to a shelter or held onto by the office for future freecycling days. The freecycling store is not only an efficient way to recycle unwanted clothing but is an effective way to support students that cannot afford new clothes.

Required:

- Access to a freecycling website
- Items from students
- Volunteer students to facilitate opening nights

Results:

If the freecycle process is successful, students can feel more comfortable using it and encourage other students or even other schools to use the freecycling store in order to recycle unwanted clothing, instead of wastefully disposing of it. The impact of continual freecycling will create a unified community that produces less waste and a student body that's more mindful of the positive effect of helping those in their community.



Further Ideas for Proposals

- **Sustainability day (wear green, bring a 'green' lunch, use less paper)**

Sustainability day can be a spirit day to spread awareness, where students can try to be as visually green and environmentally aware as possible. During this day, schools can promote environmentally friendly habits and sustainable ways to go about their day such as walking or biking to school, bringing a litter-less lunch etc.

- **Grow native plants on school grounds**

Students can collaborate to create a garden in their own schools, or plant trees. Growing plants in school communities can help empower students' green thumbs. The usage of native plants can raise awareness about the consequences of invasive species.

- **Sustainability announcements on school days**

These announcements can be used to raise awareness about environmental issues or to celebrate what people worldwide have successfully done to make the Earth greener. Example: "Researcher A has found a way to reduce emissions from factories by 12%"

- **Construct bird feeders**

Collaborate with the woodshop class and other students to build and put bird feeders around the school grounds.

- **Add reusable lunch containers**

This can be given to students as they are going through the cafeteria instead of serving food on disposable plates.



Empty Template for Proposals

What is it?

In this area, students will describe their ideas for school proposals regarding environmental-sustainability initiatives. The student should be clear and concise regarding the idea for the initiative, so that other students can get a better understanding of the overall expectations of the proposal. What does the initiative look like, who does it involve?

The Goal:

In this area, students will summarize the objective of their proposal. Keep in mind that the goal should be realistic and may include other students' output on the goal. What should be achieved with this project?

The Implementation:

Now, students will provide some details on how this initiative should run. Consider the coordination of carrying out the initiative, and what the process requires. It is important to be realistic and think logistically about the implementation of the goal. Note that this section is not to be too extensive, instead be specific and clear on the goal of implementation.

Required:

- In this section students would put a list of all the items that are required for the idea to be implemented
- Keep the list direct and simple
- Identify the school budget for materials

Results:

In this area, students should identify the intended benefits of the proposal. By doing so, the readers will better understand why it should be considered. Also, it allows for a more authentic representation of the student's vision and how it should plan out.

Thank you,
(Student name(s)/Club name)



Works Cited

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