



Leap into Action Project Gallery

LESSON

GRADE LEVEL 4-12

CATEGORY Outdoors, Projects, and Places

TOPICS Energy, Atmosphere & Climate, Plants, Animals & Habitats, Water, Wetlands and Watershed

TIME

1-2 class periods. Action project time not included

MATERIALS

- Copies Action Project Cards
- Action Plan Template for each group
- Chart paper

SETTING

Indoors and outdoors

GROUP SIZE

Small groups or class

SUBJECTS

Social Studies, Science, Math, Language Arts

SKILLS

Classification, comparing, evaluating, interpreting, planning, listing tasks

KEYWORDS

Action Projects, Climate Change, Energy: Environmental issues, Environmental audit, 3Rs: reduce, recycle, reuse, Solar Power

Overview

Students read action project cards and categorize them into the different types of action projects to help provide inspiration, options and ideas for a class or small team action project.

Objectives

Students are introduced to the idea of action projects and different types of actions. Students then imagine an action project for their class and plan the steps to complete the selected action project.

Background

As educators, we nurture awareness of the environment and teach students about ecological systems, habitats, biodiversity along with our interdependence and cultural connections to the Earth. Yet what of the action component – does having knowledge about an issue lead directly to taking action? Do we really prepare students to critically analyze and address real-world problems? Environmental issues and problems such as climate change, habitat loss, and declining environment health are not problems of the environment, but the results of actions driven by our own social, political and economic values, beliefs, and attitudes. Being an effective change-maker includes knowing the facts but also includes being practiced in action projects. Participating in student-developed and student-led action projects provide students with opportunities to develop real-world skills in planning, field testing, goal setting and action taking leading to knowledge of how to take action and care for issues and problems that students care about.

Action learning also helps students develop control over their lives; enhances creative and critical thinking skills; connects students to community; and, provides opportunities to develop citizenship, teamwork and cooperative learning skills while building empathy and a sense of belonging to Nature.

There are many types of action projects and successful projects often contain more than one theme, but for the purpose of the activity it can be useful to think about action projects as belonging to one of the following six action project themes*:

1. Educate and Inform

Projects that teach other people about an issue. Examples include writing newspaper articles or pamphlets; presenting plays, poems and songs; making posters, murals and advertisements; and hosting celebrations (e.g. Earth Day, Carbon Neutral Day).

2. Personal Consumer Action

Projects that reduce individual carbon footprint (amount of greenhouse gases emitted) by analyzing what individuals buy/eat/wear everyday and altering their shopping habits so that less energy is used to create, package and transport their choices. By first changing individual behaviour, people can be models for change. For example, suggest ways to buy fewer items, buy products with less packaging, reuse/recycle more, support local farmers and businesses.

3. Business Choice Action

Projects that investigate stores and businesses to see how their products and/or services can be more environmentally friendly, and make suggestions for change to reduce energy use. For example, stocking local organic produce, using recycled paper products, giving credit to those who bring their own bags, using environmentally friendly chemical products, etc.

4. Political Action

Projects that involve groups working to enact a change in public policy or governance around alternative energy choices. For example, presenting to local councils to create change in your community, developing public information on the issue, conducting surveys, petitions, and writing letters, doing media releases, etc.

5. "Get Down and Dirty" Projects

These action projects make direct changes to the environment. By enhancing green spaces, more carbon will be removed from the atmosphere, like greening school grounds, native tree planting/ habitat restoration projects, stream clean-ups, gardening, etc.

6. Transportation Choices

These projects encourage and support environmentally-sound transportation and recreation decisions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These include promoting walking, biking, car pooling, public transport, and choosing "low-impact" recreation like hiking and canoeing.

**Adapted from Project WILD (1995) and Learning for a Sustainable Future (2002)*

Procedure

1. As a class discuss the six types of action projects and post class generated definitions somewhere in the room where each small group can easily refer to them.
2. Hand out copies of the action projects to small groups and have each one and categorize the action project under one of the six types.
3. Discuss as a class, any local examples of action projects the class/school knows of or have been involved with before and add the example to a blank card and post it in the correct category. Some projects involve more than one type of action, try to pick just one for each but do discuss the point with your class.
4. Use the previous steps to provide inspiration for a brainstorm session on projects your class could do. You may wish to use a piece of chart paper to create a class display of possible projects.
5. Pick the top two or three and use the Action Plan template to describe and quantify the steps and cost of to top projects. Review these plans listing pro/con for each and review resources available to the class for each. Hold a class vote on which of project to complete.

Note: GO Grants may be a possible funding source for your class project. www.hctfeducation.ca/go-grants/

Assessment

- What category of action projects did you like the most? Why?
- Did some projects fit in more than one category, why do you think that is so?
- Which project surprised you the most?
- List any different ways to address some of the environmental problems presented in the case studies?

Extensions

Involve the students in make a video documentary of your class project.

References

Leap into Action!: simple steps to environmental action.
BC Conservation Foundation and WildBC

