

The background of the slide features a dense arrangement of vibrant green leaves, likely from a tree, with visible veins. Below the leaves, there are soft, circular ripples in a light blue-green water, suggesting a natural, fresh environment. The overall aesthetic is clean, natural, and eco-friendly.

# **Sustainability Education**

# Why Educate for Sustainability?

- ✿ Humans are not naturally “future-thinkers”
  - ✿ We are wired to deal with immediate threats, not with subtle, slow-moving, long-term ones
- ✿ The planet is at risk because of humans’ actions
  - ✿ It is our responsibility to inform students about the risks we face
- ✿ Learning these topics takes time
  - ✿ Young people are constantly exposed to messages promoting unsustainable practices
  - ✿ Unless we integrate sustainability instruction into the K-12 educational experience, unsustainable practices will continue into the future
- ✿ Students are flexible thinkers, are passionate and have a lot of energy to direct towards positive change - we need them!

# What is the Role of the Educational Professionals?

- ✿ The Oregon State Board of Education
  - ✿ *Require integration of national K-12 sustainability standards*
- ✿ Each local ESD, school board & administrator
  - ✿ *Implement sustainability policies*
- ✿ Classified staff
  - ✿ *Model sustainable practices*
- ✿ Teachers
  - ✿ *Model sustainable practices*
  - ✿ *Teach for sustainability*
- ✿ Note: Teachers and classified staff must be educated in and committed to this initiative, because they are the ones who stay in the system long-term

# How do we effectively teach for sustainability?

- ✿ One approach - four components
  - ✿ Foster compassionate communication
  - ✿ Validate sustainable attitudes
  - ✿ Raise awareness
  - ✿ Encourage practical action

# I. Foster Compassionate Communication

- ✿ Provide positive & effective communication strategies for sharing difficult information
- ✿ Don't underestimate the importance of modeling compassion and sustainable practices

✿ *"My life is my message."*      *Gandhi*

- ✿ Bring attention to mental models - the filters through which we all see the world

✿ *"We don't see things as they are,  
we see them as we are."*      *Anais Nin*

## II. Validate Sustainable Attitudes

- ✿ Foster reverence, respect & responsibility for the Earth and all her inhabitants
- ✿ Promote ecological thinking
  - ✿ The Natural Step
  - ✿ Biophilia - love of life/living systems
  - ✿ Ahimsa - dynamic compassion
  - ✿ Systems rather than mechanistic world view
  - ✿ Ecocentric rather than anthropocentric world view
- ✿ Encourage hope rather than despair

# The Cycle of Despair

modified from *The Better World Handbook*

- ✿ 1. *Finding out about a problem*
- ✿ 2. *Wanting to do something to help*
- ✿ 3. *Not seeing how you can help*
- ✿ 4. *Not doing anything about it*
- ✿ 5. *Feeling sad, powerless, angry*
- ✿ 6. *Deciding that nothing can be done*
- ✿ 7. *Shutting down*
- ✿ 8. *Wanting to know less about problems*

# The Cycle of Hope

modified from *The Better World Handbook*

- ✿ 1. *Taking personal responsibility for your choices and their impacts on the planet*
- ✿ 2. *Seeking quality information about the world's problems*
- ✿ 3. *Creating a vision of a better world based on your values and sense of responsibility*
- ✿ 4. *Discovering practical options for action*
- ✿ 5. *Acting in line with your values*

The background of the image features a dense pattern of vibrant green leaves, likely from a tree or shrub, with prominent veins. Below the leaves, there are soft, circular ripples in a light blue-green hue, suggesting water. The entire scene is captured in a bright, natural light, giving it a fresh and serene appearance.

***“A different world cannot be built by indifferent people.”***


*Horace Mann*

# III. Raise Awareness

- ✿ Provide accurate information about relevant issues and the consequences that everyday decisions have on them
- ✿ In the first week, students are given a list of challenges, which include climate change, loss of habitat, loss of biodiversity, insufficient water supplies, and poverty (a total of 40)
- ✿ Students, both individually and in groups, **always** rank “*Lack of awareness of impacts of human actions*” as one of the top two challenges we face

# IV. Encourage Practical Action

- ✿ Students may not all become scientists or activists, but they are *all* inhabitants of the earth, are *all* consumers and can *all* make humane and sustainable decisions in their everyday lives.
- ✿ Students can think about the impacts of their actions on the 7<sup>th</sup> generation (or at least the next one!)
- ✿ Students can take personal and collective actions
- ✿ Students will one day vote (if you teach them right!)
  
- ✿ *“Look at your children not as vessels to be filled, but as candles to be lit.”*
  - ✿ *Karen Norton, 2002 Arkansas Teacher of the Year*



✿ *“Considering the problems of the world, how much should we care? First, it is pointless to care for things we cannot affect. Care is squandered where it overreaches our power. Second, our power should not overreach our care. Not to care for things we affect is to act carelessly - that is, destructively.”*

*John Nolt, Philosophy Dept., UT Knoxville*

# **Example Topic: Consumerism**

It is personal

It is collective

*The Natural Step* is easily applied

# Consumerism

## ✿ I. Foster compassionate communication

- ✿ Readings/discussion on “non-violent communication”
- ✿ Discussion comparing the characteristics of *dialogue* to the characteristics of *debate*
- ✿ Activities to demonstrate and identify mental models
- ✿ Activity to identify personal communication style

## ✿ II. Validate sustainable attitudes

- ✿ Readings on The Natural Step, biophilia, ahimsa, etc.
- ✿ Readings on/by E.O.Wilson, Jane Goodall, Rachel Carson, Albert Schweitzer, Henry Beston, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Caroline Earle White, Alice Walker, etc.
- ✿ Essay on favorite place, animal, experience in nature, etc.
- ✿ Systems game

# Consumerism


## ✿ III. Raise awareness

- ✿ Advertisers spend approximately \$12 billion a year on ads directed specifically at young people
- ✿ In 2004, teens (ages 12-17) spent \$124 billion - considered as influential a market as the Baby Boomers (ages 40-58)
- ✿ Young people 'vote' whether they realize it or not
- ✿ Spending money to buy an item is really the same as voting in support of all the practices that went into producing that item
- ✿ Money is a powerful and effective tool to facilitate change
- ✿ Companies do pay attention to consumer expectations and will change their practices (Victoria's Secret (recycled paper content in catalogs), Tillamook (BGH-free), Starbucks (Fair Trade coffee option))

# Consumerism

## ✿ III. Raise awareness

- ✿ If everyone lived like the average American, we would need four more planets
- ✿ There is no away
- ✿ Every consumer item has a life history
- ✿ There is a triple bottom line for every product or service
  - ✿ Ecological, economic and social
- ✿ The price you pay may not be the true cost
  - ✿ If an item is cheap for the consumer, it is expensive to the environment, to the workers/local populations, or both
- ✿ There is a cost to “Keeping up with the Joneses”



*“If you look at what you have in life,  
you’ll always have more. If you look at  
what you don’t have in life, you’ll never  
have enough.”*

*Oprah Winfrey*

# Consumerism

## ✿ IV. Encourage practical action

- ✿ Reduce, reuse and recycle - *in that order!*
- ✿ Don't treat shopping as a recreational activity
- ✿ Don't make impulse purchases
- ✿ Try to know the life cycle of the items you buy
- ✿ Buy Fair Trade/sweatshop-free clothing, coffee and chocolate
- ✿ Buy second hand clothing or have a clothes swap
- ✿ Consider what you eat - food choices are significant
- ✿ Becoming vegan or vegetarian has a bigger impact than making a transportation change
  - ✿ Animal agriculture accounts for 18% of our carbon footprint
  - ✿ Issues also include waste, pollution, land and water use, human health, animal treatment, worker's rights, etc.
- ✿ Avoid fast food - it is never sustainable

# Consumerism

## ✿ Personal student actions

- ✿ Keeping a consumer log for one month to one year - preparing for college/living away from home
- ✿ Buying less and making different consumer choices
- ✿ Talking with parents about consumer choices - changing family purchasing habits
- ✿ Writing letters to the editor
- ✿ Writing letters to legislators
- ✿ Taking a pledge of sustainability

## ✿ Collective student actions

- ✿ Working to make the school and school district more sustainable by using the SOSI model (purchasing, energy, water, trash, etc.)
- ✿ Participating in the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition
- ✿ Participating on the Corvallis School District Sustainability Steering Committee

# Consumerism Resources

- ✿ [www.myfootprint.org](http://www.myfootprint.org)
- ✿ *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*
- ✿ [www.thestoryofstuff](http://www.thestoryofstuff)
- ✿ *Affluenza (video)*
- ✿ *Fast Food Nation*
- ✿ *The Food Revolution*
- ✿ *The Face on Your Plate*
- ✿ [www.csd509j.net/cvhs/staff/cornelp](http://www.csd509j.net/cvhs/staff/cornelp)

# V. Inspire the Future!

✿ *“Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they’re yours.”*  
Richard Bach

✿ *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

*Margaret Mead*

✿ *“Be the change you want to see in the world.”*

*Gandhi*