

Bringing Global Warming and Sustainability into the Classroom

There are an infinite number of ways to approach global warming and sustainability in the classroom. Below, are the various stories from 3 classes, all here today.

**Forest Ridge Elementary, Optimum Learning Environments Charter
Salem-Keizer School District
Teacher and Environmental Coordinator: Laurie Aguirre**

Classes learn to present Power Point slide shows, which provide a frame work for teaching about a variety of environmental topics and practices. The shows provide students a meaningful purpose for learning. They become deeply engaged, knowing they will be educating a variety of audiences to “Help Our Planet Earth”.

Sustainability is inherent in many of the shows, such as:

- Earth Friendly Shopping
- Kids Care About Conservation
- 100% Reusable Lunch Bags
- Kids Can Compost – You Can Too
- Wormi-vermicomposting
- Naturescape Your Schoolyard
- Go Native! in Your Backyard

The “Kids’ Carbon Credits” show introduces students to the concept of global warming. This show empowers students to become proactive about reducing global warming by selling carbon credits and transferring the money to the Climate Trust of Oregon. The Climate Trust invests in carbon-offset projects and forms of renewable energy.

They are currently developing a slide show devoted to sustainability. It includes the definition of sustainability and many examples of how we can make sustainable choices in our lives.

“We are eager to share these and other resources with teachers interested in environmental content with an action component.”

Grant Community School, Middle School Science Class
Salem-Keizer School District
Teacher: Daniel Jamsa

This year the 7th grade class explored important local environmental topics, in order to find a service learning project. The result: dynamic student-led curriculum utilizing concepts of place-based learning. The class of 33 kids meets for 80 minutes, every other day. The same teacher has the kids from 6th - 8th grade.

“Even though global warming is definitely a global problem, many of the steps needed to help the issue begin locally. The kids watched the Al Gore movie and were sold. After a month of looking at possible courses of action to help, the class synthesized their best ideas into one action plan; Plant many trees.”

To pay for the trees, they’re going to hold a community Global Warming Awareness Festival on June 2, at which they’ll collect aluminum cans (and maybe some donations). At the festival they’ll teach children using activities, and teach adults using the Al Gore movie or a similar presentation. They’ll conclude by walking to the Capitol and holding a Climate Crisis Awareness rally.

Furthermore, topics studied over the next few years will be spiraled around the issue of global warming. For example, in chemistry they’ll look closely at the element carbon and the carbon cycle. When studying ecological topics they’ll study the effects of climate change on the biodiversity around the globe.

POWER Academy, (High School), Portland Public Schools
Teacher: Eliza Schorr

Three years ago POWER Academy became a small school within Roosevelt High School. There had already been a Health Occupations Program, so the new school developed a health focus to allow students to explore health fields and understand how the body works.

It’s part of the mission for students to investigate local, community and global issues. Environmental science has always been a part of the plan, and next year they are excited to launch a Natural Resource Program. Students will be able to “major” in either Natural Resources (Environmental Science) or Health Services.

This new Natural Resource Program will empower students to address environmental issues in the community around them. They will all complete service hours, ranging from restoring an adopt-an-acre site at the Sandy Delta, monitoring and restoring Smith and Bybee Lakes, assisting in their community garden to working with the student-run environmental group.

Today is an opportunity to increase their understanding of sustainability, global warming and local efforts. They’ll gather service learning project ideas, including how to improve their own school’s impacts, take back information to share with their peers, and gain a sense of urgency for their studies next year.