From Awareness to Action

Engaging Students in Environmental Issues

David Royal
University of South Florida
ESLetc.com
BART 2012 – June 2, 2012
Why the Environment?

• Great source of meaningful and engaging content.
• Exceptionally important to our students’ futures.
• Approachable from virtually every interest / discipline.

Yeah but...

• Aren’t environmental issues too big / daunting / remote?
• I’m not an expert on the environment.
• Isn’t this inappropriate? I’m supposed to be teaching English.
Three Activities Based on Local Environmental Resources

- **Green Orientation**
  - Done as part of a larger initiative to make an IEP more eco-friendly
  - Tried to familiarize students with local, eco-friendly options

- **Everyday Action Project**
  - Done in a Global Issues elective
  - Included an action and reflection

- **Label Reading Activity**
  - Could be done in a variety of units
  - Encouraged critical thinking and raised awareness
Greening HELP Project

- Hawaii English Language Program @ UH Manoa
- Developed a Green Orientation, a series of Friday activities, and made some purchasing changes
- More info @ ESLetc.com (click on “Greening an English Program”) in the sidebar
Green Orientation

- Started with a vocab / discussion activity
  - Introduced issues and relevant vocab
  - Had students share their existing experience and knowledge

- Went over an FAQ
  - Used the previous vocabulary
  - Gave additional info on the issues
Annotated Green Directory

- Extremely Local (mostly within 1 mile radius)
- Focused on 4 areas:
  - Food, Shopping, Waste / Recycling, Transportation
- Mix of “normal” and “green” businesses
- Role-played dialogs for different destinations
- Field Trips:
  - secondhand store
  - farmers' market
  - natural food store
  - regular supermarket
Some places might not have... CSAs
But they probably have... farmers’ markets
Some places might not have... curbside recycling
But they probably have... people collecting recyclables
Some places might not have... green gadgets
But they probably have... electricity-free tech
Tampa Bay Green Directory

- Try to find people from your location.
- Come up with ideas for these different areas:
  - Food (grocery, farmer’s markets, restaurants)
  - Transportation (public, bicycling, walking)
  - Shopping (eco, secondhand)
  - Waste (proper disposal, recycling)

- Brainstorm other areas for your green directory.
  - entertainment (hiking / parks / beach)
  - local environmental groups (community gardens / volunteer orgs)
Everyday Action Project

• Choose a global issue
  • Be specific!
• Research the issue
• Take action(s) to improve the issue
  • Something in daily life, not a “special occasion”
• Reflect on the experience
  • Consider both logistical and emotional components
• Share what you learned
  • (paper / presentation / video / etc.)
# Sample Student Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>child abuse</td>
<td>discipline her children withoutspanking them for 5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conserving electricity</td>
<td>unplug everything except the refrigerator when leaving the house, use the fan instead of the A/C as much as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recycling</td>
<td>collect recycling for himself and two roommates for over three weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reducing garbage</td>
<td>try to throw away as little as possible, compost food waste (fish bones, fruit and vegetable peels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water pollution</td>
<td>turn off water when possible, use eco-friendly shampoo and detergent, clean up litter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Label Reading Activity

• Focused on locally available labels, discussed where to buy them
• Products included toiletries (floss, deodorant, soap), household goods (paper products, detergent) and food (tea, coffee, chocolate, tofu)
• two things made it work better: highlighting & copying

Back to Activities
Discussion

• In what ways, if any, have you covered environmental issues in your classes? What difficulties have you run into?
• What local, environmental resources do you have near your school? How familiar do you think students are with these?
• What resources are available at your school? What resources could be set up, either by teachers / administrators or by students?
• What environmentally motivated actions, if any, have you engaged in with students?
• Have you used similar activities in your classes? How did they go?
Contact Info

David Royal
University of South Florida
droyal@usf.edu
ESLetc.com