



## **Emerging Ecology**

Experience Interchange  
For The Global Classroom

January 2015

Essays by students at  
Forsyth Country Day School

Focus Question:

Environmental Impact

How do your individual and collective actions affect or enhance  
the natural world of which you are a part.

Student #119, 12th Grade Male

### Environmental Impact

In my daily life I have many positive and negative effects on the environment. However, what I do mostly has negative impacts rather than positive. One of my negative impacts is driving my car which uses oil and gas. My car emits carbon emissions into the environment. My family also throws away a lot of trash which goes to landfills. We could help this by recycling more often. Another negative impact I have is when my family goes to the grocery store and uses plastic bags and then throws them away instead of reusing them. Another negative effect I have is using large amounts of energy in my house to power lights, electronics, and other utilities.

One of the positive affects I have is collecting the recycling at my school every week with my sustainability class. We go around the school and put the recycling in bags which is then picked up by a company. The company the reuses the materials again so they do not end up in landfills and cause harm to the environment. Another positive impact I have is I turn off the lights at my house whenever I leave a room to prevent the waste of electricity. Also my family recycles what we can so that we are not throwing everything we use away.

Student #62, 12th Grade Female

### Environmental Impact

There are many things that make an impact on the environment every day. Some of these things are such regular activities, that you don't even think about the impact its making. For example, common things like using a refrigerator, driving to school, gardening in your garden and throwing away your trash. All of these things can either positively affect the environment or negatively impact the environment. Something that would make a positive impact is recycling. Recycling is when something you throw away gets turned into something else. This process is very good for the earth because it reduces the amount of waste by making something usefull out of it. Something that could have a negative effect on the environment would be driving a car. This is something people do so frequently that people rarely notice that it can be bad for the earth.

Student #202, 12th Grade Male

My impact on the environment around is both positive and negative. While I am at school and home I recycle products that can be recycled. This helps the environment, because all of these products can be used and turned in to other things and also be broken down into soil and other useful products. At my school my classmates and I collect all of the recycling in our designated areas. The partners I work with are Tyler Steppe, and Parker Beck. We collect recycling from the JAC, which is where math and science classes take place. We take the recycling to a truck that takes the recycling to the dumpsters.

The negative impact I have on the environment is my car that I drive on a daily bases. The car I drive is a four-door sedan so it is not very big and does not use a ton of gas. Also all of my classmates drive cars that are also harmful to the environment. Another negative impact I have on the environment is throwing away garbage that goes to landfills. Also, the chemicals we use to clean our house are not environmentally friendly for the most part. Lastly we do not use a ton of green energy, which means there is more carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere.

Student #145, 12th Grade Female

### **My Impact on the Environment**

On a normal school day of school I am woken up by my alarm clock. This is powered from electricity. Then I walk down stairs and make French toast or eggs. The stove I use to make my breakfast is a gas powered stove. While my breakfast is cooking I drink a big glass of tap water. After finishing my water and breakfast I make my lunch. Half of what I pack for lunch is in the refrigerator. Refrigerators take a lot of energy to power, meaning it is not particularly good for the environment. After I have finished packing my lunch I walk up stairs and quickly change and gather all of my belongings for school.

Once my sister and I are ready for school we get into our car and ride to school. The drive is anywhere from 15-20 minutes. We own a Kia Soul, a gas efficient car. Regardless of its efficiency, driving to school and back is still bad for the environment because of the burning of fossil fuels. Once I arrive home from school I usually run to the gym. Running to the gym saves me from using potential fossil fuels.

Once it is dinner time, my dad often uses the gas stove to cook our meal. After we are finished using our dishes, we put them into the dishwasher. Dishwashers use an abundance of heat and water. Again that impacts the environment in not the best way. Even though I shower every day, I shower for a particularly short period of time. I shower up to five minutes. I turn off the water when I put my shampoo in and then again when I put my conditioner in. I only use shampoo and conditioner every three days. By doing this I can use up a bottle of shampoo and conditioner up to three times longer than one who washes their hair every day.

Overall, I impact the environment in a negative way. I drive a lot, I put dishes into the dishwasher every day, and I use an unnecessary amount of energy.

Student #133, 12th Grade Female

### Environmental Impact

Like most people throughout the world, I probably impact the environment in more negative ways than positive. The biggest positive impact that I make on the environment in order to help enhance it as a whole is by recycling. I recycle at my house, at school, church, and any restaurants that have a place to put recyclables. Recycling makes it so we are not throwing as many things away and so that the plastics, papers, glass, etc., can then be reused again in order to make new materials. Although I do not impact the environment in many positive ways, the ways that I do can, in the end, make a big difference on the environment. On the other hand, I impact the environment mainly in a negative way. I harm the environment in the biggest way by driving to school and other places everyday. This leaves the biggest mark because the exhaust from the car pollutes the air. I, along with some of my peers, could help fix this problem by carpooling to school. I also harm the environment by sometimes using plastic bottles when I could be using refilled/reusable bottles. Another way that I harm the environment that I sometimes burn plastic, when trying to fuel a fire, this is bad for the environment because the toxins released by the burning plastic is not good for the air of for humans to breathe. One final way that I harm the environment is by wasting, or using too much water. I do this by sometimes accidentally leaving the water on when brushing my teeth or washing my face. I also waste water by sometimes taking long showers. Overall, I, like the majority of people around me, leave a much bigger negative impact on the environment than a positive, humans as a whole typically harm the environment more than they enhance it.

Student #169, 12th Grade Male

### Environmental Impact

Probably the same as many of my classmates, I, overall, do not leave the most positive impact on the environment. I do, of course, always strive to be more ecologically friendly, by recycling, reusing water bottles, and carpooling; however, I am not doing anything that promotes the environment. The biggest footprint I leave on the environment is by polluting the atmosphere. I drive my car everyday, to school and everywhere else in my community. This is the most convenient and efficient means of transportation for me. I live where everything is a couple of miles away from my home and I prefer to get to any of these locations in a timely manner. One way that I attempt at leaving a more positive impact on the environment, but also traveling in a timely manner, is by carpooling. Many times I will ride with a group to get where I am going. That way we are all still getting to our destination, but only having to drive one vehicle.

Also, at my home, my family and I are not the best at recycling and composting. We normally just throw everything in the garbage. Since we do not have any recycling at my house, throwing plastic and paper away is the only way of keeping trash out of our home. However, at school, I am much more mindful with plastic and paper. I always make sure to recycle old papers and water bottles. At school, there is an abundance of recycling bins around the school so recycling is just as easy as throwing stuff away.

Overall, I do not leave a positive impact on my environment. I do make attempts to be mindful about my environment, but, nowadays, the most convenient and efficient ways of fulfilling a task is not always the Earth friendly way.

Student #77, 12th Grade Female

### Environmental Impact Essay

There are many way an individual's actions harm and/or enhance the natural world of which they are a part. Some of these actions come from having a garden and driving. By having a garden you are greatly enhancing the natural world. Gardens are everywhere; people's homes, business areas, and schools. They can make any area look more presentable. It's also really great if you have your own vegetable garden. This way you can plant your own food instead of going to buy some, and can possibly be healthier. Driving is one action that can harm the natural world. Many trucks have exhaust coming out from it which then enters our air. Exhaust harms the air because it is dirty, black smoke. People are trying to solve a way to make this unwanted smoke from cars go away.

Student #72, 12th Grade Male

### Environmental Impact

I positively impact the environment from helping in my school recycling. My classmates and I collect the recycling that all the students at our school place in special collection bins. The materials collected are then recycled to be reused in another form. Another way I positively affect the environment is by saving energy. I try my best to turn off the lights in the room that I leave or turn off computers after I use them. I also recycle at home by putting plastics and paper in special bins so the materials are not wasted, but instead are reused.

I negatively impact the environment by driving an SUV that uses more gas and that emits gases into the air. My family does throw out a lot of trash which goes to landfills. We use chemicals to clean our house and keep bugs away that are not the most beneficial to the environment. It would be better if we cut down on the use of chemicals and limit the amount of trash that we throw out. Although I do my best to limit the amount of energy that I use, I still use a lot. This is another area that can negatively impact the environment but in today's culture the use of energy is a necessity. It is just the degree to which it is used that could be reduced even more than I am trying to do.

Student #203, 12th Grade Male

### My Impact on the Environment

In my life there are many things in which I do that have an effect within the environment. First off, I drive a car that helps limit the amount of carbon emissions emitted and that helps reduce the greenhouse gas effect on the earth. My family tries to recycle as much as possible to help limit the amount of waste created by our family. Unfortunately, my family is rather large so we produce a lot of trash that we have to put in our multiple trash cans that are picked up weekly and are put in dumps. However, we are able to limit the amount of trash because of the products my family purchases and whether is able to dissolve in a landfill. Our house is powered by electricity and uses gas to cook our food and heat our water. While this is not the best for the environment it is the most economic due to the cheaper costs. We also have a garden where we grow our own vegetables and so we have homegrown food that is much better than what we would get from the supermarket.

Student #63, 12th Grade Female

Every day in Winston Salem, North Carolina every one somehow impacts the environment. For me, I carpool to school with another family to save gas . I also enjoy being outside and taking in the beautiful environment that is around me. When I go outside, I usually take my two dogs for a walk around the neighborhood. I use a lot of electricity when I wake up and blow dry my hair and straighten it. I also tend to take long showers that use up a lot of warm water, therefore the water bill can end up being expensive. Also in my everyday life, there are many appliances that are always running and use up a lot of electricity. For example refrigerators and freezers are always running to keep food cold or frozen. At my house we have an outdoor fire pit that people can sit around and enjoy the fire. The fire pit is very nice but it is not very nice for the environment. The fire is run by gas and can waste a lot of energy. Also every Monday the recycling men come to everyone's house to pick up recycling. This system helps the environment to become more eco- friendly. In North Carolina and in my life there are many negative and positive impacts for the environment.

Student #20, 12th Grade Male

### My Environmental Impact

In my daily life, there are many ways in which I both help and hurt my surrounding environment. One way in which I hurt the environment is through the constant need to use oil/gas to drive around our city. By needing to drive so much, I unfortunately cause the release of a large amount of pollution into the surrounding atmosphere, but there is not an efficient enough/eco-friendly alternative to this problem currently. Another way I hurt in my daily life is through the inability to recycle from my home. Most houses around our city can have recyclables picked up by the garbage company, to be recycled later, at the same time as their regular trash pickup. At my house, which is not located in an area where recyclables are picked up, my family cannot recycle anything thus hurting the environment. Another way that I negatively affect the environment is by using new plastic bags each time I go to the grocery instead of bringing my own bags to carry the purchased items home. One way I help the environment is by recycling bottles and other papers and plastics at my school. If I ever purchase a snack contained in a plastic wrapper or a plastic bottle of water I make sure to recycle it before I leave school. Another way I positively affect the environment is by making sure to unplug any electronics that are not in use when I leave my house, and this helps conserve energy and resources. I also positively affect the environment by uses the smallest amount of time possible to take showers which helps reduce the amount of water used for the shower. In conclusion, my daily life tasks both positively and negatively affect my surrounding environment.

Student #69, 12th Grade Male

Despite our vast differences, the students in both Winston Salem and Maharashtra have similar experiences with how they interact with the natural environment. As an American I will have a much greater negative impact on the environment than the students of Chikhale because of our abundant production of waste and misuse of fuel and elements. In my daily life my positive and negative impacts vary based on whether I am at school or at home. When I go to school more resources are used in transportation, food, and expense because everything is not readily available like it is in my household. When I stay at home on the weekend, I use less gas for transportation and produce less waste because I am not eating the packaged food from the cafeteria. My positive environmental impacts follow the same logic, except for when I am at school I tend to think of environmental sustainability more frequently because I take the class here at school and I am consciously thinking about ways I can have a better impact on the world around me. Every Friday our class recycles, and I have the privilege of doing my recycling alone instead of in a group. It gives me time to think about more ways that our school can benefit from sustainable resources. In the future I hope to increase my amount of positive environmental impact as well as showing other people ways that they can decrease their own negative environmental impacts.

Student #208, 12th Grade Male

### Environmental Impact

I impact the environment in mainly negative ways. I use my car as my main source of transportation and with that being said, it uses a lot of gasoline. Another way I negatively impact the environment is the amount of garbage that gets thrown away. A lot of food get put in containers that are not recyclable and that results in it being put into a landfill rather than being composted or recycled. However, my family does recycle as much as possible including cans, bottles, plastic, and cardboard. Another way I negatively impact the environment is with the cleaning products that contain harmful materials. I want to switch to using friendly house cleaning products eventually. A way I save energy is turning off lights and electronics when they are not being used. My faucets have aerators on them to reduce water flow so I do not waste as much water and we are also putting some on in the sinks at school. Another thing I do is use a water bottle that is refillable so I don't have to purchase a ton of water bottles every year. Also, in our honors sustainability class, we get in groups to go around the school and take out the recycling. All in all I impact the environment in negative ways but also in positive ways.

Student #186, 12th Grade Male

I impact my environment in both positive and negative ways. I have a positive impact in several ways like by conserving energy, saving water, and cleaning up the environment. I try to turn off all unnecessary lights in my home to cut down on wasted energy. I also keep my house at a lower temperature during the winter to cut down on energy use. Both the lights and heat are unnecessarily wasteful and I try to cut down on their use. I also take short showers to save water and energy. Long showers waste lots of water and energy used to heat the water so by taking shorter ones I help the environment. Electric power used to keep lights on or heat homes or heat water is mostly created by burning coal which releases harmful gases into the environment. Finally, I actively help clean up the environment where people have littered to help the environment. Many people throw garbage outside instead of in a landfill and it harms local ecosystems. I am help clean up locations where it is really bad. The negative impacts I have on my environment, however, far outweigh my positives. Most of the negative impacts I have on my environment however are difficult to avoid like emissions, waste, and energy consumption. I have to drive to school and other places because they are too far away to travel by bike or walking. Anytime I drive my car is releasing harmful gases into the environment. Also, it is hard for me to cut down on garbage because everything is packaged and creates waste which ends up in landfills. Finally, it is impossible to not consume energy. I have to have lights on and heat and use electronics for school which is created by the burning of coal and is bad for the environment.

Student #35, 12th Grade Male

Prior to taking my Honors Sustainability class, I did not spend much time thinking about the environment. In Hindsight, this was an incredibly ignorant viewpoint, as I spend most of my time outside. Now, after having taken a class that has educated me on environmental issues, I am much more conscientious about my environmental impact. As a matter of fact, I am now motivated to go out of my way in taking care of nature. Taking care of the environment; however, does not always involve major service projects and initiatives. The most positive efforts in reducing my footprint involve simple tasks, such as turning lights off when I leave a room and recycling things that can be used again.

In my journey from environmental ignorance to conscientiousness, I have discovered that many other people are also passionate about the environment. As a matter of fact, many of my friends and I work together to reduce our impact. Every Friday, my class goes out and we manage the recycling at my school. This initiative has saved countless items from sitting in a landfill and has found new uses for these items.

Thanks to Mr. Clifton, I am now aware of many issues and have found a passion in trying to reduce my impact on the environment. My efforts, and those of my peers, may not make the greatest difference but they accomplish the greatest goal in environmental conscientiousness: spreading awareness. We should all try to reduce our impact on the environment.