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## Enhancing Youth Awareness of Protecting the Environment: What We Save, Saves Us

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# ENHANCING YOUTH AWARENESS OF PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT

Enhancing Youth Awareness of Protecting the Environment: **What We Save, Saves Us**

Alexa N. Hanson

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

## Enhancing Youth Awareness of Protecting the Environment

### **Introduction**

Children are learning an abundance of new information every day, however it's shocking the lack of education surrounding environment protection. It is essential for children to understand that we need to take care of our Earth to protect it for the next generations after us. There are multiple different messages that the children will learn from knowing the importance of protecting the planet and specific good habits will stick with them for their futures. At the Porter Youth Center, I will be creating a two-day lesson for the second and third graders to show the importance of fixing the simplest details of the day-to-day use around the house, school, and the PYC to help protect and keep the environment clean.

### **Needs Statement**

Environmental education needs to be at the forefront of daily topics. Parents, educators, and caregivers should provide good examples of changing certain habits to help protect the environment. Taking shorter showers or using metal straws are simple fixes that children can understand and execute. Each household and families are different in trying to be environmentally friendly. Children who do not learn good habits about taking care of the environment and protecting our Earth can potentially create self-destructive qualities for themselves and others. I will be focusing on three subareas of the problem, which are; 1) knowing that there are different cultures and different routines they have 2) good habits to help form personality awareness 3) the impact it makes on the world with daily activities around environmental protection.

Within each family and households, the cultural upbringing of the children will influence how they act in their early stages of life, but when provided with new information, they can begin to develop their own sense of independence and grow into environmentally safe adolescents and adults. When considering the diversity of cultures, the steps are to first reflect on one's own culture and then gather the unknown knowledge about other cultures. Next is to be open, listen, and be curious about other cultures while asking questions. Lastly, is to do more research so it can clear any confusion of the different cultures. With different options, children can find which is most fitting for them and their beliefs. They can also learn what other cultures do in their households. With my activity for the children at Porter, they will share with one another on different ways they protect the planet. Some will have similar ideas, and there will be other ideas that some kids have never heard before. Some households will dry their clothes outside on a clothing line which saves energy by drying their clothes with the sun and wind instead of using energy from a dryer. The children at the Porter Youth Center are from all different grades, but my focus will be on the second and third graders. By showing them how precious water is and how we can conserve it to ultimately help them admire all that nature has to offer.

Values that develop from learning to be eco-friendly will allow the child to have a positive outlook on life, enjoying the little moments and marveling at the rare sightings our planet has to offer. To enjoy this world to its fullest, we need to protect it and keep it clean. While learning about environmental science, children can pick up behaviors and values to shape their personalities. It is the good choices they make that will keep the Earth clean. Observation will allow the kids to slow down and look closer into the hidden beauties of nature. From gathering new information, children can learn to question, observe, research, hypothesize, and finally come

to a conclusion, or it remains a mystery. If a child learns to be gentle with observation, they start to build a schema to then use at home to be gentle with siblings. It's a learning ripple effect.

Learning a new value, such as love, can be used in many other different scenarios. Omran (2014) states that "Research shows that a sense of responsibility created in childhood is an important factor in guiding social and environmental behavior in adulthood". When children feel they are essential, they will want to contribute to the environment. The new information they learn can give them social confidence to teach others how to make a difference. By building self-esteem in children, they are given the confidence to try new things and try again when things do not go as planned, do things that they might not enjoy or normally be good at, and face challenges rather than avoid them (Little, 2021). Providing education on the environment can shape them to see the world around them and everything that belongs on the Earth. There are abiotic factors, such as rocks, water, air, soil, and biotic elements such as plants, animals, and micro-organisms, that all bring value to our planet. When they grasp the idea of knowing that there are many different species of different organisms and non-organisms, selflessness can develop and increase their desire to make a difference in their daily routines to help protect those things around them.

In our day-to-day routines, many of us have forgotten how easy it is to make simple environmental choices that will help protect our Earth. Turning off lights or reducing the amount of water usage can help limit the amount of energy and decrease water waste. For example, at the Porter Youth Center, they only use paper towels to dry their hands, clean off their area where they ate and clean up messes. Fight for Climate Change (2020) explains how to dry wet hands with one paper towel, reducing the amount of waste. The video is short and straightforward, which I will be showing to the children at Porter. Reducing the number of paper towels can save

waste but also can save money for the center. Another simple problem that can be solved is showing kids how to use the water when brushing their teeth. Turning off the water when not in use in between brushing your teeth in the long run will save water. Even though it is a small amount, it can still make an impact. A fact from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (2021) states, "...accounting for nearly 17 percent of residential indoor water use- for the average family, that adds up to nearly 40 gallons per day," which is an insane number to think about (para 1, Shower Better). We are blessed to have access to fresh, clean water, and children need to be more aware of that. The simple gifts of our planet have been taken for granted and we need to teach our younger generations how to preserve them. As adults, we are worried about global warming and water stress, but if we teach kids the importance of environmental science, they will want to make a change, putting the future in their hands. Schools and youth centers are also responsible for the teachings of environmental science/awareness. I included awareness because it expresses what other values come with learning about the environment.

From the planned lessons on early environmental education, the children at Porter will learn how to fix daily problems, become more aware of who they are and those around them, and get involved in helping save the planet. The morals and values come with children learning how they want to make a difference in this world, even if it means doing something small such as unplugging items that are not in use. The planned lessons will show kids how to be team players by contributing to the environment and expressing selflessness. By showing them our planet needs their help and it's their choice to make these changes it can lead to more confident adulthoods. Also, by getting their hands dirty and working hard at an important task can lead to great work ethics in the future.

### Theory/Development

The theory that related most to the project was the Multiple Intelligence Theory by Howard Gardner that suggests there are eight different bits of intelligence and our profiles of that intelligence may differ based on the individual's genetics and experiences (Marens, 2020). With most of the content for the participants stemming from naturalistic intelligence, which is someone who is skilled in understanding nature and its processes, the other intelligence will also be uncovered. The activity that has them write down four different ways to protect the Earth will help them build on their Linguistic intelligence. The worksheet will be black and white, so if they were to color it, each one would be different, for they would use their Visual/ Spatial intelligence to be creative. If the children find the activities enjoyable, they will want to share the new information and learnings with their friends and family. By the children being social and excited, this works on Interpersonal intelligence, which is someone who has the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people and how to work with people effectively (Marens, 2020). The book that will be presented will have the kids use logical and mathematical intelligence to evaluate different possible answers. Naturalistic intelligence is something that needs to be more present in children. An individual who has more naturalistic intelligence will show patience, kindness, and appreciation of details. Schultz (2002) stated that "Environmental problems are **caused** by human behavior, and solving these problems will require changes in behavior" (p.4). I believe the project can teach children about sustainability, how to be environmentally conscious, and get them excited about nature.

### Consideration of Diversity

My project will be conducted at the Porter Youth Center. I will be focusing on the second and third graders, however, they offer programs for School-Age children(K-5th Grade), Middle

School, and High School youth, where there is a wide variety of activities. In the daily programs, they provide their 5 Core Service Areas which are; 1) Education, Support & Care Exploration 2) Health, Wellness & Life Skills 3) Character and Leadership Development 4) Sports, Fitness, Recreation 5) The Arts. At Porter, they are unique and have a pledge for the members which states, “To support Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines, DoD Civilians and their Families by providing quality Family Programs that enhance all aspects their lives,” meaning not only do they look over and teach their children, but they also offer programs for the parents or family members (<https://presidio.armymwr.com/programs/mst#>). The Facility Director gave me the statistics of the children who attend the center. There are a total of 74 Registered Members, 47% Youth of Active Duty Service Members, 11% Youth of CYS Employees, and 31% Youth of Department of Defense Civilian Employees. Next, she provided the Ethnicity-Registered Members showing 3.56% African American, 16.67% Caucasian, 0.28% Chinese, 63.39% Declined, 0.43% Filipino, 0.57% Japanese, 1.57% Korean, 0.85% Mexican, 4.42% Not Assigned, 3.70% Other Asian, 2.14% Other Hispanic, 1.28% Other Race, 0.57% Puerto Rican, and 0.57% Samoan (D.Coman, personal communication, November 29, 2021).

This project was designed for a specific age/grade group, being the second and third graders. I expect that my participants do not reflect the overall population of The Porter Youth Center. The curriculum was designed for younger children at the center but not the youngest. If the participants were too young, they could not complete the worksheets themselves or not cooperate properly while performing the hands-on activity. If the participants were older, the curriculum would have to change to a more complex book, and the worksheet would need to be more elaborate.



### Learning Outcomes

1. Distinguishing how each household can contribute to protecting the Earth differently and making the choice to do so as a family.
2. Demonstrating that daily activities and decisions can increase environment awareness and make an impact in our future.
3. Identifying how healthy behaviors and personality traits can be formed to help protect our plants longevity.

### Method

#### **Day 1**

The children already know who I am, so I will be gathering about 15 kids who will be outside at the dining tables and chairs. Examples will be shown to the kids to use at the center, plus developing good habits at home. First, I will start by showing a short clip on how to use just one paper towel to dry off your hands ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_NXuviu8Cg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_NXuviu8Cg)). (This activity may need to be done inside on a laptop.) I will pass out one single sheet of paper to each child and some water with a bucket. They will wash their hands then use the new method they have learned to execute using just one paper towel. Next, I will then show them how I brush my teeth by not wasting water. Then I will ask them for three examples they can do around the house to help protect the Earth. An example could be turning off the lights when not using that room. Those three activities, a single paper towel lesson, brushing teeth presentation, and asking for three examples, should take about 10 minutes to execute.

#### **Day 2**

The next day I will start by reading a book titled, *Why Should I Protect Nature?* By Jen Green, which shows examples of good behaviors and bad behaviors. The story presents nature's

importance and how children can make an impact. From seeing what information they have obtained from the book and the previous day, I will pass out worksheets that have a picture of the world that they will color, and in the middle will be a small hole where they will cut four sections; see Appendix A for the Our Amazing Earth worksheet. Under the flaps they created, they will write down ways to protect the environment by having good habits in their daily routines. They will already know three examples, so they can write those down if needed, but I will encourage them to think of new ways. The last day of the planned lesson will be around 10 minutes.

### **Results**

The children at Porter learned from Learning Outcome 1 that we are all different in how we protect the environment. The answers they provided in the worksheets showed how each was different and related to what they do at home. For example, one of the girls wrote, “clean up my messes,” which can translate to cleaning her messes in her room, cleaning messes up from the ground, cleaning messes from the dining table, or whatever she would like it to mean for herself. The youth center is where the kids spend a reasonable amount of time, so I wanted to focus on the center and how to help it out. Examples to help the schools and households were also provided for environmental protection.

Learning outcome 2 showed that the participants would demonstrate that daily activities and decisions can increase environment awareness, which proved successful. While reading the book, *Why Should I Protect Nature?*, examples that were provided allowed them to use them on their worksheets however they also came up with new ideas. In table 1, the highlighted responses are the examples from the book. 8 out of 20 were highlighted. However, an older child used the

examples from the book but added his own meanings to it. He used terms like carbon dioxide and pollination, using his knowledge to connect it with the information that was discussed. While the children were trying to create their own ideas, I would give them hints on what to write but not fully tell them an answer. For example, I said, "What are some ways to save electricity?" Then they were able to decide which option to pick and talked with each other about different ways, such as turning off the lights or unplugging electronics that are not in use.

Lastly, is the results on Learning Outcome #3, where healthy behaviors and good choices can help express their personality traits. Trying to protect the environment is important, but telling the kids how to do it will not be as beneficial as them coming up with their own ideas. Making a connection they can relate to will be more impactful. The book that I read for them showed the consequences of not protecting the Earth and how it affects us all. For example, the book said that we would have no more honey for our breakfast if we swat at the bees. It has a hidden message showing the kids that it will affect what they want later in life if they harm the environment. Children need to see the bigger picture that having selfish tendencies can be hurtful for everyone, including animals and plants.

### **Discussion**

The learning outcomes were all met where the kids were able to distinguish that each household has a different way to protect the environment, realizing simple tasks can be changed to reduce waste, and respectful personality traits were being made by having more understanding for nature. The children practiced patience and used examination and questioning to further their knowledge. When the lesson was over, one of the kids went to the bathroom and came back telling me he used the paper towel technique. I was thrilled and suggested that he teaches other kids around the center this new technique which will allow him to use his social skills. The

center is impacted with kids, and I could only reach out to a few of them, but I encouraged them to teach the other kids around the center what they learned with me. When the kids were completing the worksheets, some of the other kids saw what they were doing and wanted to join in on the activity, however, I did not make enough worksheets. If I were to have done the activity to a larger group, I believe I would still be successful in meeting all the learning outcomes even on a larger scale. The planned lesson was for two days but we decided to combine the material into one day, which resulted in a 30 minute lesson.

### References

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Table 1

List of responses from participants about protecting the Earth

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do not leave litter!  | Recycle   | Throw away litter!*   | Don't break branches  |
| Recycle   | Help plants   | Help others   | Keep water  |
| Save water  | Be kind to Earth  | Save Plastic  | Save land   |
| Use metal straws*   | Clean up my messes*   | Turn off lights when not home*  | Recycle*  |
|   |   |   |   |
| Do not break off branches from trees because leaves refresh our air from carbon dioxide | Don't swat bee's or else there won't be that much fruits or veggies left. | You can plant flowers for bee's to pollinate, and we can get honey out of that! | Do not litter or else the animals we eat will be killed or poisoned by the plastic litter |

\* = I wrote their responses since they did not know how to write those certain sentences

Highlight = book examples

At the bottom of the table is the responses from the older child who used the examples from the book, however, he used his knowledge to add more meaning to the answers, such as using terminology like carbon dioxide and pollinate.

Appendix A

Protecting Our Earth worksheet, the kids had to color and write down responses



*Appendix B*

*Powerpoint on early environmental protection*



**What We Save, Saves Us**  
Enhancing Youth Awareness of Protecting The  
Environment

By: Alexa Hanson



## **Needs Statement**

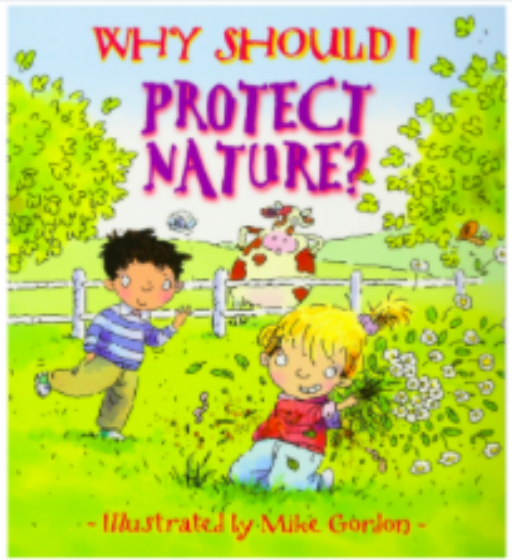
**Early environmental education can be incorporated into daily routines.**

- Understanding each household contributes to the Earth differently
- Good habits to help form awareness to personality
- How daily choices can make an impact on environment protection

## The Child's Development

- **Multiple Intelligences Theory** was developed in 1983 by Howard Gardner. He theorized that people could have at least eight different intelligences.
- **Naturalistic Intelligence**, someone who is skilled in understanding nature and its processes.
- **Social skills and self-regulation will be more apparent.**

# The Three W's (who, what ,where)



**Porter Youth Center**

- Second and Third graders
- Protecting the Earth
- Impacting the environments around us



## Learning Outcomes

**#1 Distinguish how each household protects the Earth differently.**

**#2 Demonstrate that daily activities can make an impact in our future.**

**#3 Identify healthy behaviors to help protect our plants longevity.**

## Evidence : Learning Outcomes Through Educational Interactions



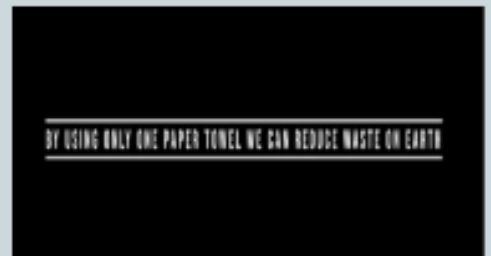
Story Time!  
LO#1



# Evidence

## Paper Towel Activity LO#2

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_N00uiku8Cg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_N00uiku8Cg)



## Evidence: LO#3



Responses from participants about protecting the environment.



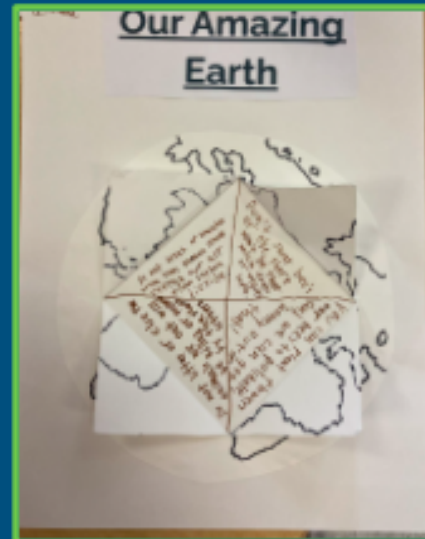
## Results



The Oceans



Visual/Spatial Intelligence



Older child



## Table of responses from participants

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do not leave litter!  | Recycle   | Throw away litter!*   | Don't break branches  |
| Recycle   | Help plants   | Help others   | Keep water  |
| Save water  | Be kind to Earth  | Save Plastic  | Save land   |
| Use metal straws*   | Clean up my messes*   | Turn off lights when not home*  | Recycle*  |
| Be kind to animals*   | Unplug*   | Reuse*  | Clean up*   |
| Do not break off branches from trees because leaves refresh our air from carbon dioxide | Don't swat bee's or else there won't be that much fruits or veggies left. | You can plant flowers for bee's to pollinate, and we can get honey out of that! | Do not litter or else the animals we eat will be killed or poisoned by the plastic litter |

\* = I wrote their responses since they did not know how to write those certain sentences

Highlight = book examples

## Did it work?

- Increased their awareness in daily routines and good choices
- Porter Youth Center does a good job at recycling
- Children do not how quickly it adds up
- The planned two-day lesson turned to be one day

## What would I do differently?

- Try to execute project to more of the kids.
- Include the older children, since they can provide more examples
- While reading the book, I should have paused and asked them questions
- Provided more examples

**Thank you and any questions?**