Climate is an Environmental Justice Issue Monthly Planning Guide for LINKS Chapters

November 2022

Overview

Monthly Theme	Environmental Awareness Days	Cultural and Identity Awareness Days
Climate is an Environmental Justice Issue	America Recycles Day (15)	Indigenous Peoples Heritage Month LINKS, INC Founder's Day (9) Campus Race to Zero Waste (Colleges/Universities competition)
Elementary	1. Activity 1: Examine the links between environmental justice and climate change. 2. Activity 2: Explore the EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool 3. Community Activity: Take the Clean Earth Challenge	
Middle and High School	1. Activity 1: Examine the links between environmental justice and climate change. 2. Activity 2: Explore the EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool 3. Activity 3: Why Does Voting Matter? 4. Community Activity: Take the Clean Earth Challenge	

Mentoring Moment Suggestions

Seek out passionate volunteers, activists, elders, and Indigenous members of the community, consider accessing the expertise of community organizers, historians, scholars, environmental lawyers, policy experts, and social justice advocates.

Climate is an Environmental Justice Issue

ELEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

SUMMARY

Youth will explore resources and tools that will help them better understand the links between climate change and environmental justice. They will also use the EPA Environmental Justice Screen mapping tool to examine environmental and climate justice issues occur in their community and understand which communities are most vulnerable to their impacts. Finally, groups can also take the **Clean Earth Challenge** together or use it at home or school to clean up pollution in their community.

MATERIALS

- Internet connection and computer or tablets
- Video: Racial Justice is Climate Justice [Action for Climate Emergency]
- Video: Energy Justice Now! [Action for Climate Emergency]
- Video: Words Have Power
- Video: Climate Change: Environmental Racism [Good Morning America]
- Tool: EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool
- At Home Activities: Climate Commitment Bingo
- Clean Earth Challenge Litter Collection Form

BACKGROUND

Climate change is the most critical and urgent issue facing our world, yet it is not just an issue of the "natural" environment. It has massive implications for social justice and human rights. Climate change will have an unequal impact on communities of color because it is a threat multiplier, meaning it will layer upon existing public health, economic, and racial injustices in the United States and around the world[1].

Environmental and climate justice is a civil rights issue. We all depend on the physical environment and its bounty.

Toxic facilities, like coal-fired power plants and incinerators, emit mercury, arsenic, lead, and other contaminants into the water, food, and lungs of communities. Many of these same facilities also emit carbon dioxide and methane — the No. 1 and No. 2 drivers of climate change. But not all people are equally impacted. Race — even more than class — is the number one indicator for the placement of toxic facilities in this country hit by climate change.[2]

[1] https://www.weact.org/whatwedo/areasofwork/climate/
[2] https://naacp.org/know-issues/environmental-climate-justice

Climate justice addresses the fact that the impacts of climate change are disproportionately felt by the very people who are least responsible for contributing to climate change, including those who are low-income, people of color, people in developing countries, Indigenous people, women, lgbtq+ people, and youth. Understanding who is most impacted by climate change, how and why they're most impacted, allows us to create the most effective solutions to addressing the climate crisis. Learning about climate justice also uncovers the important and empowering fact that communities on the frontlines of climate change impacts are also on the forefront of climate change solutions and are uniquely equipped to lead.[3]

WHAT TO DO

Activity 1: Explore climate and environmental justice resources [flexible timing depending on how many resources the class explores]

1. Use the following resources to help students understand the connections between environmental justice and climate justice.

- Video: Racial Justice is Climate Justice [Action for Climate Emergency]
- Video: Energy Justice Now! [Action for Climate Emergency]
- Video: Words Have Power
  Ten-year-old Jaysa, from Bridgeport, Connecticut, helps shut down Connecticut's last coal-powered plant.
- Video: Climate Change: Environmental Racism [Good Morning America]
- At Home Activities: Climate Commitment Bingo
- Additional videos and lesson plans: https://ourclimateourfuture.org/

4. **Discussion:** Encourage students to reflect on the environmental and climate justice resources they just viewed or read. Ask students to summarize or share any reflections about the resources. Use the following questions to guide a discussion:

- What are some ways that communities of color, frontline communities, and low-income communities are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?
- Where do fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas come from? How is our dependence on fossil fuels for energy production related to environmental justice?
- People who are the least responsible for climate change are often the ones who suffer the most from it. Why is this true? How does this make you feel?
- How did viewing these videos or reading these resources make you feel? What do you want to know more about?

[3] https://ourclimateourfuture.org/

Pass out or view the Climate Commitment Bingo sheet and discuss some the actions we can take to help the Earth. Students can take these home and work on some of the actions with their families or in their community.

Activity 2: Explore the EPA Environmental Justice Screen (EJ Screen) [flexible timing]

The EJ SCREEN is an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that combines environmental and demographic indicators to provide interesting and important regional data related to public health and environmental quality. By clicking anywhere on the map, users can view an area's ozone levels, traffic concentrations, lead paint indicators, and more. EJSCREEN can assist in the identification of rural, urban, and suburban areas that are the most at-risk and it allows users to find correlations between the socioeconomic background of the region and the prevalence of environmental hazards. Use the map with students to look closely at their community or cities around the U.S.

1. Launch the EJ Screen.

2. Type in an address or the name of your town or county in the search bar.

3. Click on the indexes on the left side of the map to view environmental justice, climate change, health risks, and socioeconomic data for your community.

4. Try clicking on more than one layer to see how socioeconomic or demographic date overlap with environmental justice issues. For example, click the *Low Income* key (under Socioeconomic Indicators) and the *Flood Risk* key (under the Climate Change indicator.

5. Students can complete the EPA EJ Screen worksheet if time allows.

Find additional instructions for using the EJ Screen HERE.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Take the Clean Earth Challenge

https://cleanearthchallenge.com/

The goal of the Clean Earth Challenge is to collect one million pieces of trash and debris that litter our beautiful land, oceans and waterways. This pollution has a devastating effect on the health of our ecosystems, wildlife and the planet. By taking the Clean Earth Challenge, you can help improve the health of our environment.

1. Sign up to take the challenge: https://cleanearthchallenge.com/take-the-challenge/

2. Gather friends and family and pick a location. You can pick up trash while walking your dog, hanging out at the beach, fishing at your favorite spot or hiking on your local trail. Or you can **organize larger-scale cleanups.** Every action helps and when you work together, the impact is big!

3. Keep track of your cleanup efforts and measure your personal impact by downloading the easy-to-use Litterati app in the Apple Store and Google Play Store. **Use Join Code: CLEANEARTH.** You can also keep track of your cleanup efforts by filling out our **Clean Earth Challenge Collection Form** (download, print, fill out and scan/create a PDF or take a photo) and email it to us at cleanearthchallenge@nwf.org.

Climate is an Environmental Justice Issue

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

SUMMARY

Youth will explore resources and tools that will help them better understand the links between climate justice and environmental justice. They will also use the EPA Environmental Justice Screen mapping tool to examine environmental and climate justice issues occur in their community and understand which communities are most vulnerable to their impacts.

Students will also kick off a voter education series by looking up their local elected officials and discussing why voting is important to their lives, their community, and to the health of the planet. Finally, groups can also take the **Clean Earth Challenge** together or use it at home or school to clean up pollution in their community.

MATERIALS

- Reading: Climate and Environmental Justice [Climate Reality Project]
- Resource: NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Advocacy
- Video: This is just how unfair climate change is
- Video: Frontline Youth Fighting for Climate Justice
- Video: Oil, Gas, and the Effects of Environmental Racism
- Video: Climate Change: Environmental Racism [Good Morning America]
- Activity: Explore the EPA Environmental Justice Screen
- Activity: Explore the EPA Environmental Justice Screen Worksheet [PLT]
- Activity: Voting Matters! (also attached)
- Activity: Clean Earth Challenge Litter Collection Form (also attached)

BACKGROUND

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WHAT TO DO

Activity 1: Explore climate and environmental justice resources [flexible timing depending on how many resources the class explores]

1. Use one or more of the following resources to help students understand the connections between environmental justice and climate justice. (Please note, learning about and seeing the communities that are impacted by environmental injustices and climate change is heavy and may be especially difficult for children. Preview the videos to ensure they are appropriate for your group and allow space and time for them to process their emotions after viewing).

- Reading: Climate and Environmental Justice [Climate Reality Project]
- Resource: NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Advocacy
- Video: This is just how unfair climate change is
- Video: Frontline Youth Fighting for Climate Justice
- Video: Oil, Gas, and the Effects of Environmental Racism
- Video: Climate Change: Environmental Racism [Good Morning America]
- Video: The Intersectional History of Environmentalism

2. Discussion: Encourage students to reflect on the environmental and climate justice resources they just viewed or read. Ask students to summarize or share any reflections about the resources. Use the following questions to guide a discussion:

- What are some ways that communities of color, frontline communities, and low-income communities are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?
- Where do fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas come from? How is our dependence on fossil fuels for energy production related to environmental justice?
- People who are the least responsible for climate change are often the ones who suffer the most from it. Why is this true? How does this make you feel?

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- How did viewing these videos or reading these resources make you feel? What do you want to know more about?

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5. Students can complete the EPA EJ Screen worksheet if time allows.

Find additional instructions for using the EJ Screen HERE.

VOTER EDUCATION

The ability to vote is the foundation of any democratic system and is one of the most celebrated rights as a United States citizen. Voting allows individuals to have a voice in choosing elected officials who represent the people and the change they want to see in their country.

Over the next several months, we will be exploring issues about democracy, voting and voter engagement. Talk to students about voting and any upcoming elections if they are relevant. Let students know that even though they may not be old enough to vote yet, they can still play a valuable role in the election process.

1. Explore the resources for voting in your state or city. Find your local elected officials HERE. Find more resources here: Rock the Vote: https://www.rockthevote.org/

2. Follow the **Voting Matters! Activity** (also attached) to guide students in beginning to understand why voting is important to their lives, their community, and to the health of the planet.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Take the Clean Earth Challenge

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CLIMATE ACTIVITY 10

climate kids bingo

CLIMATE COMMITMENT: Start an earth-friendly project with your friends and family

With Climate Kids Bingo, challenge yourself—and your friends or family—with different ways you can help the Earth. Whether it's new to you or something you're already doing, mark the squares as you go and see who can be the first to get BINGO!

Turn water off while brushing your teeth	Make a feeder for pollinators	Recycle	Choose to walk instead of drive	Pick up trash around your house
Tell your family about the environment where you live	Use fewer paper towels	Research where your food comes from	Choose not to use plastic straws	Use a reusable water bottle
Learn about composting	Plant or identify a native plant in your yard		Learn something new about climate change	Go outside and play
Make a recycled art project	Take a shorter shower	Reduce food waste	Draw an animal or plant you would like to protect	Use a reusable grocery bag
Unplug electronics not in use	Save a spider	Turn off lights in empty rooms	Donate old books, clothes, and toys	Make a home for wildlife

STUDENT PAGE

Seeking Environmental Justice

NAME _____ DATE _____

Use the EJSCREEN tool or other online tools to collect data for your assigned county. Create a visual display with the following information.

To find information about your assigned county with EJSCREEN:

- **Under "Select Location" enter in the name of the county and state (such as Washington County, OR) and hit "Go."**
- **A pop-up window titled "Chart or Report" will appear.**
- **Select "CDC Report" to find population data, environmental indicators, and health statistics for your county.**
- **Go to "Add Maps" and then "EJSCREEN Maps" to add and explore other variables with the mapping tool.**

County: _____

1. Average Income: _____
2. Percentage of residents living below the poverty line: _____
3. Races of residents (by percentage): _____
4. Concentration of particulate matter in the air: _____
5. Percentage of residents living within one-half mile of a park: _____
6. Percentage of residents living close to a major highway: _____
7. Another variable of your choice, including its description and value: _____
8. Did you find an environmental justice issue in this county? Explain your answer using the evidence you found. _____

   _____

   _____
9. If you found an environmental justice issue, how would you propose addressing it? _____

   _____

   _____
10. If you did not find an environmental justice issue, what additional data would you recommend collecting to be sure there isn't an issue? _____

    _____

    _____

I LOVE MY GREEN JOB!

CAREER CORNER

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGERS build relationships with groups of people to identify and address issues affecting their well-being. The work often involves partnerships that help mobilize resources and drive changes in policies, programs, and practices.

Teacher's Guide

Voting Matters!

Your students may be too young to register to vote, but it's never too early to learn about what it takes to get to the ballot! This activity is a great way to kick off the election season and promote voter registration in the larger community. Students will learn about how registration and voting works in their state and create a flyer to share with someone in their life. National Voter Registration Day is September 24, 2019 and has a mission of registering voters across the country.

The Basics

Time Needed: 20-40 minutes depending on class discussion and access to internet

Materials Needed:

Brainstorm Transparency

Student handouts

Art materials for flyer (optional)

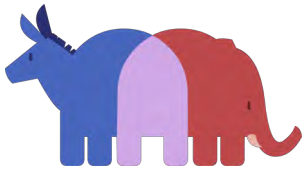
Internet access for state specific voting information

Copy Instructions:

Starter Activity *(class set)*

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Describe the typical process of registering to vote in their state
- Explain the importance of voting in local, state and national elections



Step By Step

Anticipate	by projecting the Voting Mind Map for the class. Challenge the students to help you fill it out and discuss each topic. (You may also print and distribute.)
Distribute	one reading and activity sheet to each student.
Read	the material on the top half of the page, pausing to discuss as appropriate.
Display	the webpage http://www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state/ for the class, or send students to the page if they are using individual computers.
Find	your state and click on it to see specific information about voting.
Tell	students to note the answers on the bottom half of their hand out.
Review	the answers to check for understanding.
Ask	the students to think of at least 3-5 reasons why voting is important and have them add them to the area of the hand out that says, "Voting is important because…"
Close	by asking students to share their information with an adult that they'd like to make sure registers to vote. (If there is extra time, you can have them make posters or more involved flyers with this information.)

For more detailed description of the voting process, check out our lesson *Got Ballot?*

This is part of the *Politics and Public Policy* series by iCivics, Inc. a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing civic education. For more resources, please visit www.icivics.org/teachers, where you can access the state standards aligned to this lesson plan. Provide feedback to feedback@icivics.org.

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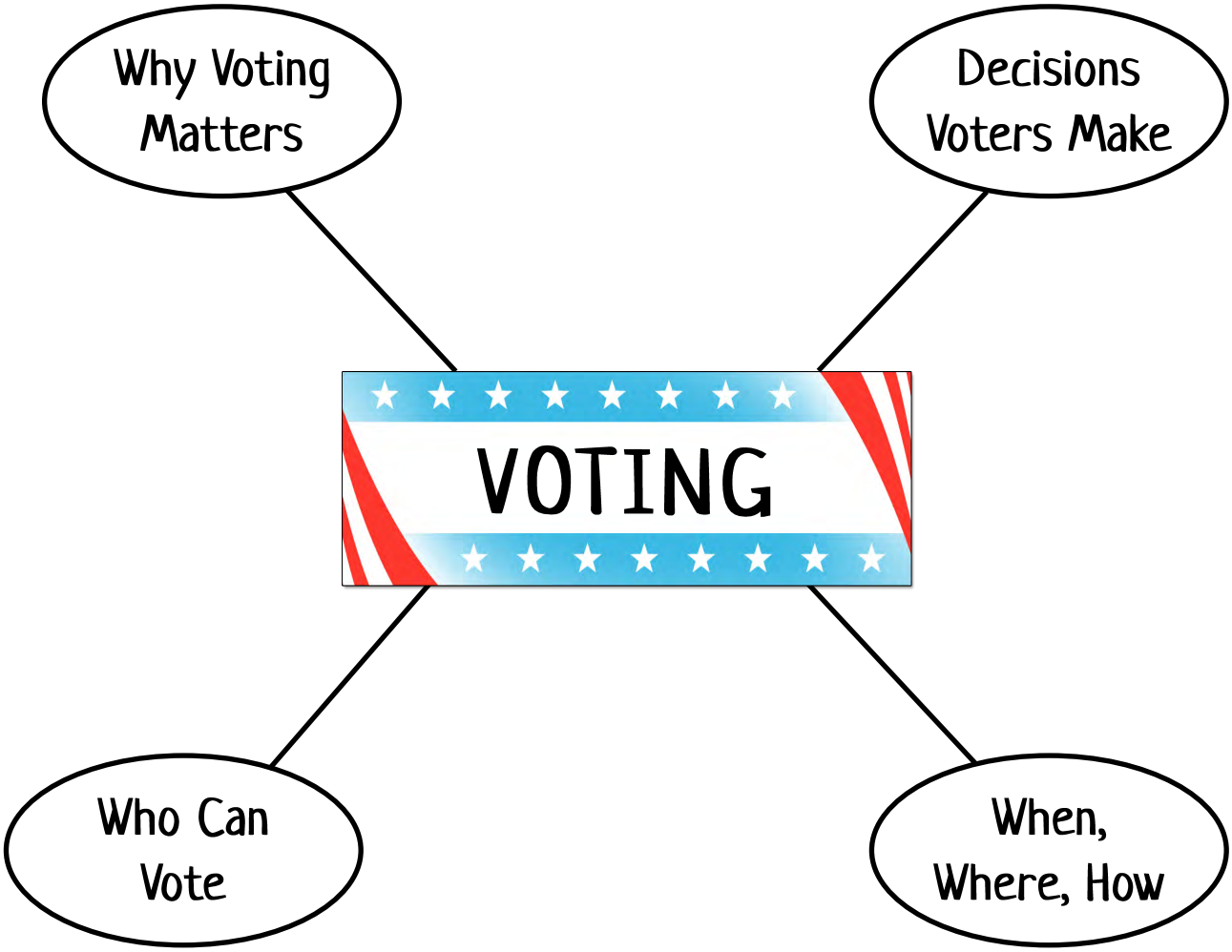
Voting Mind Map



Voting Matters!

Name:

Democracies Need Voters

Ask anyone what it means to live in a democracy, and you're likely to hear something about voting. While there's more to a democracy than voting, the citizens' right to determine their own government is a basic democratic concept. But here's the thing: It's not really "the citizens" who choose our leaders. It's the people who show up at the polls on election day. So yes, your vote may be just one in millions—but if you don't use it, you're letting all those other people decide how you're going to be governed. You may not be old enough to vote yet, but it probably won't be long. When that day comes, will you know what to do?

Get Registered

You don't magically become a voter. You have to register first. Each state has its own set of requirements, but all require at least three things: you must be a citizen of the United States, you must be 18 years old by election day, and you must live in the state where you will be voting. Most states offer easy ways to register, like online registration or the option to register when you renew your driver's license. And here's some even better news: In many states, you don't have to wait 'til you're 18 to register to vote! In these states, you can preregister before you're 18 so that when you do turn 18, you won't even have to think about registering because it will already be done. (Unless you move out of state before the next election. In that case, you'll have to register in your new state.) Ready, set, vote!

Fill out the space below to create a flyer you can give someone. Use the information provided by your teacher, or go to *www.nonprofitvote.org/voting-in-your-state/* for the details.

Our State

_____

Voter Registration Deadline

_____

General Election Date

_____

Polls are Open

_____

_____

Voting is important because...

LITTER COLLECTION FORM

Let's Do This!

Clean-Up Steps:

1. Check Out How to Safely Collect Trash at www.cleanearthchallenge.com
2. Keep Track of What You Collect
3. Tally the Items You Pick Up
4. Weigh Trash (Optional)
5. Recycle What You Can
6. Submit Your Form to cleanearthchallenge@nwf.org

Thank you for participating – every piece you collect counts!

Team Name (If Applicable): _____

Clean-Up Location (Beach, Park, Other...) _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Email Address: _____

Litter Collected:

ITEM	TALLY	TOTAL
COMMON ITEMS		
Bottle		
Beverage Can		
Bottle Cap		
Cigarette Butts		

Food Wrappers		
Masks		
Paper Products		
Plastic Bags		
Straws/Stirrers		
OTHER ITEMS		
GRAND TOTAL ITEMS		
GRAND TOTAL WEIGHT IN LBS. (Optional)		

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Please print out additional sheet(s) if needed.

ITEM	TALLY	TOTAL
OTHER ITEMS		
GRAND TOTAL ITEMS		
GRAND TOTAL WEIGHT IN LBS. (Optional)		

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