

SPREAD THE WORD: INVESTIGATING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CREATING CAMPAIGNS

Raising awareness about an issue and actions people can take is often an important part of any environmental action project. Many of the activities from Hennepin County's environmental education activity guides could be used as participants investigate a particular environmental issue and create a campaign around it. Investigating an issue and creating a campaign can help participants, especially youth, gain critical-thinking skills and analyze and communicate information.

Outcomes

- Participants will investigate an environmental issue.
- Participants will create a campaign on an environmental issue.

Audience

Youth (ages 9+), adults

Time

Varies based on activity

Concepts

- Investigating an environmental issue can help participants gain critical-thinking skills.
- Creating a campaign around an environmental issue can help participants learn to analyze technical information and communicate it to an audience.

Supplies

- Internet access
- Outreach supplies of the participants' choosing to fit the campaign (posters, writing utensils, event materials, etc.)



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Preparation

Read through the background sections of Hennepin County's environmental education activity guides to decide which environmental issue participants will investigate and create a campaign for.

Procedure

- After deciding which environmental issue participants will investigate, use computers or go to a library to research the topic further. Encourage participants to explore different aspects of the issue, including the history of the issue, stakeholders in the issue and current or potential solutions to the issue. If you are working with a larger group, divide participants into groups and have each group investigate one area of the issue.
- When participants feel like they have learned enough information about the environmental issue, have a discussion about their findings. Ask participants what stood out during their research. If you split participants into groups, have each group present their findings to the rest of the group.
- Have your group brainstorm what needs to be done to solve the environmental issue. It may be overwhelming to think about the issue on a global scale, so encourage participants to think about what could be done individually, in their homes, schools or workplaces. Try to think of one to three concrete actions that participants could take to help solve the environment issue. For example, if participants are investigating water quality, actions could include picking up trash on the street so it doesn't end up in the storm drain and making sure rain gutters and downspouts are directed into grass or a garden to avoid runoff.
- After participants decide on actions to take for the environmental issues, have participants brainstorm ways they can encourage other people in their community to learn about the environmental issue and take that action. Encourage participants to be creative with their campaign and try something new to get the word out! Ideas include:
 - Creating a mural
 - Presenting the research findings to an audience and having a discussion about solutions
 - Educating the community by using all of your organization's communication channels including websites, social media, newsletters, bulletin boards, flyers and brochures
 - Using sticky notes to make a wall of commitments to taking action
 - Making posters and hanging them in an area where it will be seen
 - Hosting a neighborhood cleanup event to pick up trash while educating attendees about the environmental topic
 - Hosting a swap party where participants trade clothing, toys, movies, etc. and learn about the environmental topic

Discussion questions

- What did you learn about the environmental issue you investigated?
- What actions are you going to take on that environmental issue? Are there barriers to taking other actions? If so, what are they?
- Was the campaign successful at raising awareness or motivating action? Why or why not?
- What went well in the issue investigation? What could be improved upon next time?
- What went well in creating a campaign? What could be improved upon next time?