

Panasonic Student Eco Citizenship Program



TEACHER EDITION

Environmental Equity and Sustainable Cities

To share/read with students:

DID YOU KNOW?

Environmental equity describes a country, or world, in which no single group or community faces disadvantages in dealing with environmental hazards, disasters, or pollution. Ideally, no one should need extreme wealth or political connections to protect the well-being of their families and communities.¹ In other words, every human should enjoy the same protection from major environmental impacts and health hazards.

Every day, humans are impacted by their environments. Weather, climate, pollution, community safety conditions, and community accessibility are all examples of environmental factors that impact people in their day to day lives. These impacts can be both positive and negative, but regardless of which they are, these impacts contribute to and help determine the quality of life for those community members.

For a moment, think about your community. Think about your family community, school community, neighborhood community, and your larger town or city community.

Class discussion:

You can have students share out or just think about these questions in preparation for the Let's Think About It section.

LET'S THINK ABOUT IT

Do you think right now, every human in your communities is protected from major environmental impacts? Why does it matter?

Whether you live in a small town, a large city, or something in between, every community member has the right to feel safe and protected against life changing or hazardous environmental factors.

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To share / Read with students:

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

This might feel overwhelming, but the good news is, no one is alone in this work! When a community works together to protect every member, every member benefits. Even communities with millions of people can work together to ensure a safe, healthy living environment for all. These cities are called Sustainable cities. Sustainable cities are cities that work to be inclusive, safe, and resilient, especially in the face of environmental and health hazards.²

CONNECT IT

Think about your community. Think of a time when your city was impacted by a major environmental event or health hazard. Ask students to share some examples.

Environmental event / health hazard:

List some of the challenges that occurred:

How did the city work to help during each stage that you listed? If the city did not help during a stage, write what you think the solution should have been.

Before the event:	Before:
During the event:	During:
After the event:	After:

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Student's turn:

CALL TO ACTION!

Whether you live in a small community or a large city, there are always steps to take towards reaching environmental equity and sustainability, and those steps can be taken by you! Every person has the power to make their community, safer, more inclusive, and more resilient.

Class discussion:

CALL TO ACTION!

Read the following with students. Share some ideas that are small, bite-sized steps and some that are not. Discuss and define the words: safe, inclusive, resilient. Share examples of how your community already is safe, inclusive, and resilient.

Examples:

Safe: Crosswalks at schools, streetlights around parks

Inclusive: playground equipment that children of all abilities can use, community events that are family friendly

Resilient: Programs in place to help those experiencing a need, such as food or housing insecurity

Something to consider:

Small steps can lead to big change. When everyone commits to taking bite-sized, actionable steps toward a goal, everyone benefits.

Complete this sentence by choosing one goal and offering an actionable step to meet that goal:

I can help make my community more _____ (safe / inclusive / resilient) by

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Class discussion:

Ask students to share out. Offer your own way that you plan to promote safety / inclusion / resilience in your community. Ask students to come up with ways to help and to hold each other accountable, including you. Circle back to the why- Why does this matter? Help students make the connection between a small step they take and helping their greater community be more environmentally equitable and sustainable.

AND GO!

As you move about your daily life, remember this actionable step. You might not realize it, but your commitment to making this small impact on your community is getting your city, and the world, closer to a place of environmental equity and sustainability.

Remember to celebrate student successes and highlight moments when you witness students promoting these goals. Cheering for small wins will help keep the momentum moving towards more steps and bigger steps! Remind your students that these small steps matter because they (the students!) matter!

Information in this lesson was obtained from these sources:

¹ Environmental Equity Vs. Environmental Justice: What's the Difference? Mobilize Green.

www.mobilizegreen.org/blog/2018/9/30/environmental-equity-vs-environmental-justice-whats-the-difference#:~:text=Environmental%20equity%20describes%20a%20country,of%20their%20families%20and%20communities

² Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. United Nations.

www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities

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