



## CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP, GRADE 10 OPEN

### How to change the World? - Interview with an Environmental Activist

#### Overview

This learning activity invites students to interview a local environmental activist. Working individually or in pairs, students select an environmental activist in their community from a teacher-prepared list. Students create a series of interview questions and have the opportunity to practice their interview skills. On their own time, students interview their selected environmental activist by phone, Skype, or in person. Students will then share the results of their interviews with the class.

#### Curriculum Links

- Overall Expectations – A1, B1, C1
- Specific Expectations – A1.6, A1.7, A1.9, B1.3, C1.1, C1.3

*Concept of Political Thinking – Political Significance, Objectives and Results*  
*Citizenship Education – Identity, Active Participation*

#### Planning Notes

##### Prior Learning

Students should be familiar with the concepts of civic action, activism, and common good. Students should be aware of environmental issues, such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion. Students should be familiar with how to write an email and how to conduct a phone or Skype conversation. Students should be comfortable working in pairs and small groups.

##### Materials

- Copies of completed *List of Local Environmental Activists and Organizations Template* (Appendix 1)
- Copies of *Interview with an Environmental Activist Worksheet* (Appendix 2)
- Copies of *Interview with an Environmental Activist Rubric* (Appendix 3)
- Access to a computer/laptop or other device and internet connection
- Access to a computer lab during lunch and/or immediately after school

## Recommended Class Time: 4-5 periods

- Interview – 3-4 periods
  - 1 period – discuss activism, explain activity, form pairs, choose interviewee, and create series of questions.
  - 2-3 periods – assess interview questions, generate email, send email requesting date and time of interview, conduct mock interviews, establish date and time of interview, conduct and record the interview, and prepare for debrief of the activity.
- Debrief – 1 period
  - 1 period – debrief interview activity and share interview experiences.

## Student Tasks

1. Facilitate a discussion with your students regarding civic action and activism. Please note: The term activist used in this learning activity includes anyone who engages in any action that seeks to bring about positive environmental change. This could be a local librarian who organizes a book swap program, or an avid gardener who grows vegetables organically. Consider asking students the following questions:
  - What is civic action?
  - What is activism?
  - What does it mean to be an activist?
  - Why are some individuals and groups engaged in civic action?
  - Why might it be important for individuals and groups to engage in civic action?
  - What might be the most important reason to engage in civic action?
  - Why might you engage in civic action?
2. Distribute the prepared *List of Local Environmental Activists and Organizations Template* (Appendix 1). Read through the list with your students. Draw out in discussion that the list contains the names of local environmental activists and organizations. Consider asking students the following questions:
  - Are you familiar with any of the names on the list? If so, how do you know them?
  - What do these community members have in common? What are some differences?
  - What is a non-governmental organization (NGO)?
  - How might you be connected to the community members on this list?
3. Share with students that they will be asked to contact and interview an activist or organization from the prepared list (Appendix 1). Distribute copies of the *Interview with an Environmental Activist Worksheet* (Appendix 2) and the *Interview with an Environmental Activist Rubric* (Appendix 3). Read through the worksheet with students and answer any questions related to the activity.

4. Ask that students, working in pairs, select a community member from the prepared list (Appendix 1). Inform students that out of consideration for the individual or organization's time only one student team may work with a particular community member from the prepared list. Ask that students communicate who they have selected from the prepared list to avoid duplication.  
**Variation:** Students may interview a community member not on the prepared list so long as their choice of candidate is appropriate. Encourage students to “think local”, such as a member of the local conservation authority, the school's EcoTeam lead, a relative or family member that is involved in environmental change, or the environmental representative on the student council.
5. Model how to craft interview questions. Discuss open-ended and follow-up questions. As a class, generate several potential interview questions. Ask that students use the *Interview with an Environmental Activist Worksheet* (Appendix 2) to record a series of interview questions they would like to pose their selected community member.
6. Encourage students to gather some information prior to the interview about their interviewee or organization. Remind students that they must think of some method of recording the interview (video-recorded, audio-recorded, etc.) and that they should not be discouraged if their selected environmental activist is uncomfortable with video or audio recording. In these cases, invite students to capture the content of the interview by taking descriptive written notes.
7. Once students have completed their worksheet, ask that they submit their questions for teacher assessment (Assessment For Learning).
8. Discuss with students how they might contact their selected environmental activist or organization. As a class, generate a generic email requesting an interview. Post the email template where it might be easily accessed by students (chalkboard, class website, etc.). Ask that students keep a record of all their communication with their selected environmental activist or organization.
9. Using the class created email as a template, have students send an email to their selected community member. Remind students they are to conduct their interview on their own time, meaning during their lunch or immediately after school. If possible, book the computer lab a few times during the week after school or during the lunch hour for phone or Skype interviews. Share the dates and times that the computer lab is available with students before they contact their community member for an interview.
10. With your students, generate several questions you might ask during the class debrief. Record the questions on the board. Ask students to record the questions in the appropriate section on their Worksheet (Appendix 2).

11. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to practice asking and answering questions. Circulate and visit groups to assess student readiness to perform interviews (Assessment For Learning).
12. Once students have completed their interviews with their selected environmental activist or organization ask that they return the completed *Interview with an Environmental Activist Worksheet* (Appendix 2), their recorded interview answers, and the record of their communication with their selected environmental activist or organization for assessment (Assessment Of Learning).
13. Organize student desks in a manner conducive to class discussion. Have students share who they interviewed and what major learning took place (Assessment Of Learning). Consider asking students the following questions to facilitate the round-table discussion:
  - How is your individual or organization engaged in civic action?
  - What actions do they engage in to generate environmental change? How do they know their actions are successful in generating the change they would like to see?
  - How do their actions contribute to the common good at the local level?
  - Has your view of activism changed over the course of this activity?
  - Why might it be important for individuals and groups to engage in civic action?

### **Extension**

- Have students prepare a 5-10 minute presentation to be shared with the class. Outline key information that should be included, such as background information, interview highlights, etc.
- As a class, craft a Thank You email to be sent out to the interview participants.
- Have students prepare an Activist Bulletin Board featuring the activist or community organization they interviewed. See Ontario EcoSchools Learning Activity: *Who Cares? - Creating an Environmental Activist Bulletin Board* for more details.

### **Acknowledgement/Source**

This learning activity has been adapted from 'Interview an Activist' developed by EcoSpark (ecospark.ca).

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – *List of Local Environmental Activists and Organizations Template*

Appendix 2 – *Interview with an Environmental Activist Worksheet*

Appendix 3 – *Interview with an Environmental Activist Rubric*

## List of Local Environmental Activists and Organizations Template

NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	OVERVIEW	WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
<i>Example: Greta Greengrass, volunteer at Local Food Plus</i>	<i>Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx Skype: gretagreengrass Email: greta.greengrass @localfoodplus.ca</i>	<i>Local Food Plus is a charitable non-profit organization committed to growing local sustainable food systems. Greta has been involved with Local Food Plus for over 3 years.</i>	<i>www.localfoodplus.ca/about www.localfoodplus.ca/get- involved/students</i>

NAME

PARTNER

## Interview with an Environmental Activist Worksheet

Your goal is to interview an environmental activist or environmental organization in order to learn more about activism and civic action, who engages in activism and why, and why activism and civic action matter.

### Activist or organization contact information

Name of environmental activist or organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Skype contact information \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information

Source(s) \_\_\_\_\_

### Interview details

Interview date and time \_\_\_\_\_

How will you record your interview? \_\_\_\_\_

Dates and times the computer lab is available (your teacher will have these dates ready)

### How to Conduct an Interview

#### EMAIL TO REQUEST AN INTERVIEW

- Introduce yourself and your partner.
- State the reason for the interview.
- Demonstrate some knowledge of the activist or organization.
- Be specific about how long the interview will take.
- Suggest some potential dates and times when the interview might take place.
- Ask if you can record the interview.
- Give your contact information.



#### DEVELOP QUESTIONS

- Have a variety of relevant, open-ended questions ready for the interview.
- Be sure the questions avoid personal bias.



#### DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Thank the interviewee for agreeing to the interview.
- Explain the purpose of the interview.
- Ask each question and don't be afraid to go off script! When possible, extend interview answers with follow-up questions.
- If you are unsure of an answer, or if you missed something, ask for clarification.

## Appendix 2 - Continued

Open-ended question: a question that cannot be answered by a 'YES' or 'NO' answer.

Bias: a prejudgement for or against something or someone.

Follow-up question: a question that encourages the speaker to provide a more in-depth answer.

### Interview questions

With your partner generate 5-6 open-ended interview questions. Consider creating several follow-up questions for each of your interview questions in the event you need more detail from the interviewee.

TEACHER  
SIGNATURE

### Questions to consider for the class debrief

Submit this completed worksheet, the record of your interview, and the record of your communication with your selected environmental activist/organization to your teacher!

## Interview with an Environmental Activist Rubric

CRITERIA	LEVEL 4 (80-100%)	LEVEL 3 (70-79%)	LEVEL 2 (60-69%)	LEVEL 1 (50-59%)
<b>KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of clear, appropriate language in worksheet, interview, and communication with environmental activist/organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always, or almost always, uses clear, appropriate language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually uses clear, appropriate language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes uses clear, appropriate language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rarely uses clear, appropriate language</li> </ul>
<b>THINKING/INQUIRY</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of research process to collect additional information on environmental activist/organization</li> <li>Planning and execution of interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses an effective research process to collect additional information on activist or organization</li> <li>Expertly plans and conducts interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a somewhat effective research process to collect additional information on activist or organization</li> <li>Thoroughly plans and conducts interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a mildly effective research process to collect additional information on activist or organization</li> <li>Adequately plans and conducts interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses an ineffective research process to collect additional information on activist or organization</li> <li>Inadequately plans and conducts interview</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of organized, open-ended interview questions</li> <li>Completion of worksheet, record of interview, and record of communication history with environmental activist/organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates thoughtful, relevant, open-ended interview questions</li> <li>Thoroughly completes all written parts of the assignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates relevant, open-ended interview questions</li> <li>Completes all written parts of the assignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates somewhat relevant, open-ended interview questions</li> <li>Completes most written parts of the assignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates irrelevant, open-ended interview questions</li> <li>Completes some written parts of the assignment</li> </ul>
<b>APPLICATION</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thoughtful, active participation in class debrief</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively participates in class debrief and makes thoughtful contributions to class discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participates in class debrief and contributes to class discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participates in class debrief and occasionally contributes to class discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is present at class debrief and infrequently contributes to class discussion</li> </ul>