

CALL TO ACTION: CLIMATE CHANGE LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN

Getting Started

BACKGROUND

A letter-writing campaign provides students with the opportunity to voice their concerns and take action on a shared cause. Students can conduct research on selected environmental issues and formulate a persuasive letter to any person (or people) of influence with the aim of inciting change. The letters can be based on diverse issues, from commenting on a government's policy on resource management to trying to make a change to your school's recycling system. People of influence can include a school board representative, principal, mayor, community member, member of parliament, city councillor, prime minister, or federal scientist, to name a few. Through this lesson, students can learn about the relationship between environmental issues and civic action.

Materials

- Optional: computer lab
- Optional: paper, pencils, envelopes, and stamps
- Optional: chart paper or chalkboard

Curriculum

There are many ways to incorporate a letter-writing campaign into classroom lessons for a range of grades and subject matter. Consider integrating the project into one of the following subject areas: Canadian and World Studies, Language, English, Science, Science and Technology, or Social Science.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Ignite

Based on curriculum connections, a pertinent local or global issue, or student interest, have the class (or individual students) select an environmental issue that they would like to research. Student findings will form the basis of the letter-writing campaign.

- *Ask:* When you think about your community, your province, your country, and the world, what environmental issue is important to you? (You may write these down on chart paper or a chalkboard).
- *Ask:* Who is a person of influence? How and why do these people have influence? (You may write these examples down on chart paper or a chalkboard).

Explore

After the issue has been selected, have students conduct research in groups or individually. Select research questions that are pertinent to the issue, class, and grade level. Some questions may include:

- What is the environmental issue?
 - How does this issue negatively impact humans, animals, ecosystems?
 - Why is this issue important to you?
 - What do experts say about this issue?
 - What policies or laws influence this issue?
 - What is a proposed solution to the problem? What person/people of influence would be best to direct this letter to?
 - How can a person of influence help to solve this problem?
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Act

Have students draft the letter based on their research.

Tips

- Personalize the letter (tell them why this issue matters to you)
- Keep the letter short and concise (no longer than a page)
- Make sure information is accurate and up to date
- Proofread the letter to ensure there are no spelling or grammar errors
- Sign and date the letter
- Ask for a response
- Use the proper form of address and salutation for the person you are contacting
- *Did you know?* Sending letters to an MP is free, so you do not need a stamp

Reflect & Discuss

Once the letters have been completed, email or mail the letter to the person of influence. As a class, reflect on the activity:

- How did it make students feel to learn about an issue and take action by writing a letter?
- What other ways can students take action on these issues?
- What are the next steps in this campaign?
- How can the class get more people involved in learning about this issue and supporting solutions?

Extensions

Involve the broader school community in the campaign. Create a presentation, video, or newsletter to inform others about the issue. Create a petition and get as many signatures as possible.

Resources

- **Write2Know:** Write2Know is an online letter-writing campaign that gives you the opportunity to ask federal scientists and ministers questions. Sign prewritten letters or write your own using their guidance and resources. <http://write2know.ca>
 - **Government of Canada - Styles of address:** you can find a list of proper salutations for dignitaries at <http://canada.pch.gc.ca/eng/1452017684393>
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