

Special Schools lesson plan

Whether it's cultivating the school's green spaces, running a community litter pick or simply recycling more, students and teachers across the UK are running projects and campaigns which aim to make a difference to the environment and engage students with the curriculum.

We want to support your school's efforts to make the world a better, greener place by giving you the chance to enter the Observer Ethical Awards' Young Green Champions competition and win £5,000 towards your project or idea.

An eco-club can be a great way for teachers and students to raise awareness of green issues and come up with practical ways to improve their own environment. Here's a step by step guide to starting your own eco-club at school:

The big picture

First, establish what pupils know about saving the planet? Are they aware of initiatives to reduce waste and recycle more? Do they know that they can make a massive difference to their school and their wider community by becoming global citizens?

Lesson objectives

Pupils will negotiate with staff members to set up an environmental group in school. Agreed objectives will be discussed as well as a realistic timescale to ensure long term success. Success of the group is dependant on all stakeholders buying into the vision of a sustainable school.

Engagement

Involve pupils, staff, parents/carers to ensure success of the venture. Pupils should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of environmental issues with their peers. Through positive engagement with senior management and all staff, the eco-club should establish itself at the very heart of the school's daily life.

What's the idea?

Pupils and staff will decide what form the group will take and how it should work. The group should decide on a name and also a logo/brand which will identify the group to the local and wider community. A zeal for sustainability, recycling and energy efficiency will drive the pupils to make a positive change.

Saving the planet knows no boundaries and all are welcome to join and contribute to the success of the eco-club. The entire school community will benefit from the work done by the group. Tasks should be divided equally by students of similar focus and not based on ability. All pupils are equal stakeholders in the future sustainability of their community, both in school and further afield.

Lesson keywords and numeracy

Mind-map key words linked to sustainability and recycling. A mind map is a bit like a spider diagram where one central idea spreads into branches of further ideas. Each branch represents a different idea linked to the main point. It can also be used

to show differing opinions. It merely facilitates the learners' thought processes while developing further reflection.

Can the students understand a utility bill? Can their teachers do it? Bring in an old gas or electricity bill and try to unpick it together.

Pupils should discuss possible names for their group and feedback to their teachers.

Assessment for learning

Pupils' learning should be enhanced by the freedom they experience by finding out for themselves how energy efficient their own homes are and by comparing their findings.

For example, students can research the hourly running costs of appliances at home. You will need a calculator to work out the cost.

This chart shows the approximate hourly running cost of various common electrical appliances. It is approximate because there are so many different kinds of appliances. Just think how many different TVs there are.

Appliance	Hourly running cost	How many hours is it used daily?	Weekly cost (hours X no. of days)	Cost per year (X 52)
Strip light	0.4p			
Light bulb (60w)	0.6p			
Computer	7p			
Printer	5p			
Electric heater	10p			
Vacuum cleaner	20p			
Microwave	6.5p			
Fridge freezer	1.5p			
Oven	30p			
Hair dryer	5p			
Hair straighteners	0.3p			
Phone charger	0.01p			
TV	2p			
Games console	7p			

To start with put how many hours (or fractions of hours) it is used a day in the first column. Times it by the amount of days it is used in a week. Add this to the next column. Finally, times this by 52 to get the cost for the whole year. While these hourly costs may seem small, they soon add up. The more electrical appliances you have the more the bills add up too.

Try using this to find out the running costs in your classroom

for the whole year. Again combine this with other classes to work out the cost of the whole school.

Teacher and student led activities

Discuss the following in class: What is an eco-club? Are we responsible for the health of the planet? Interested staff and pupils could meet to form a group to introduce sustainability in school. The group use mind maps to show what they know about environmental issues. How can they make a difference in their school?

Promoting the eco-club: The group discuss names and slogans to use for the eco-club. What is the main issue in their school? A competition to design the logo/brand name for the club can be held to spread the message. Pupils may link the new club to the school Twitter feed to link to other green initiatives.

What are we all about? Members of the group decide on an agreed set of objectives. Targets should be achievable. What do we want to achieve in our first term or year? Which outside agencies can we link with to achieve success? For example, the Young Greens of England and Wales, Friends of the Earth, Eco-Schools.