

National Teach-In on Global Warming – 5 February, 2009

On February 5, 2009, Evergreen's Director of Sustainability took a small group of students to two local schools to discuss sustainability and what Evergreen has done to address climate change issues.

Our goals were to:

Engage and Motivate students' interest in sustainability

Inform and Educate students on local issues

Support them with connections and action steps

Our Sustainability Team:

John Pumilio, Director of Sustainability

Natalie Pyrooz, Sustainability Coordinator for Residential and Dining Services

Travis Skinner, Alternative Transportation Coordinator

Allyson Ruppenthal, Thurston County Solid Waste Outreach

Jeremy Epstein, Clean Energy Committee Chair

Scott Morgan, Office of Sustainability Coordinator

South Puget Sound Community College

Professor Michael Leigh, Environmental Science Class

We presented Mr. Leigh's class of about 21 students with an overview of the context, history and meaning of Sustainability, as well as the sustainability programs and commitments at Evergreen. Each team member discussed their particular area of emphasis. Together, we covered topical areas such as energy, waste management, food service, and alternative transportation.



Director John Pumilio opened with an historical overview of Sustainability. He defined three key elements:

- Equity; Human rights and justice
- Environment and environmental stewardship
- Economic viability

One program that attracted student interest was the late bus runs that Evergreen has negotiated with Intercity Transit at midnight on weekends. Some of the students were very interested in knowing that later bus runs were a possibility.

Rochester High School

We met in the library at Rochester High with a mixed group of about 50 Students, Faculty, and Administrators brought together by history teacher Jan Watson for their first ever Sustainability Summit.



Director John Pumilio opened with a brief history and overview of Sustainability in context, including some discussion of Global Warming issues.

Sustainability means not using up our natural resources, such as trees, food, oil, and water. It includes consideration of our natural resources and environment, the economy, and people; the three E's of sustainability – Equity, Environment, and Economy.

Global warming is being caused by greenhouse gases that hold heat inside the atmosphere, causing an effect like that of sitting in a car on a hot day with the windows rolled up. Some of the activities that create more greenhouse gases include driving and other processes of burning fossil fuels (oil/gas, coal, natural gas).

We formed four small groups of students and Sustainability Team members. Each group had a specific topic to focus their discussion on:

- Energy use & Efficiency
- Transportation and Travel
- Waste Management
- Food practices (closing the loop)





The small group discussions focused upon answering the questions:

- What have we done today and what are our current habits in terms of this topic?
- What would be better, sustainable habits?
- What would it take to change?
- What are barriers to change?
- What are opportunities created by change?
- What should be some first steps?

The small groups then reported their conclusions back to the whole group:

Energy group:

- We have all kinds of electric use at home in our appliances, our electronics, lights, and hot water heaters.
- We could use energy saving light bulbs like compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs and light emitting diodes (LEDs) instead.
- We could also develop electrical saving habits such as turning stuff off, taking shorter showers, and we can call PSE for a home energy audit.



Transportation group:

- Most of us arrived by car or bus. It's hard to walk or bike to a rural school in the winter. Most of us travel a long distance, or might be too lazy to ride a bike. There are no local sidewalks, which makes walking hazardous. (One student objected that sidewalks cover useable land with concrete.)
- We could telecommute to school instead, or ride the bus more.
- We can also car pool or ride motorcycles.
- We could set up a carpooling system, maybe even on line.
- We need a group to set the example, to help change behavior by leading by example.
- We might also use economic incentives for students to use more efficient vehicles.

Waste Management group:

- We currently recycle some at school and some at home.
- We could get compostable utensils for the school cafeteria.

- The school could use green cleaning products.
- We could also start an electronic waste collection area for the community.
- Our next step would be to talk to custodial about getting glass recycle bins and make plastic recycling more accessible to classrooms (not currently available in classrooms).



Food Practices group:

- We should get locally grown food for our food service. But we need to define whether local is state wide or limited to the county.
- We could set up a student run farm on the school grounds
- We could raise some of our own food, like lettuce.
- We want to start composting, and since the county is unable to provide compost pick at the school, we could look for a grant to start up our own composting program. We might be able to get a grant from the county.
- We'd like to have bio-ware utensils for the school food service.
- We'd like to find more fresh food sources and education on reducing food waste at the point of purchase.
- Evergreen took away food service trays, plates only, and has seen a noticeable reduction in food waste.
- A student farm will require plans and a process for continued student participation (a barrier).



We then asked the students for some feedback on what they learned that they hadn't known before. Some of their feedback is included below:

I didn't know about phantom load, when electronic devices are plugged in, even though they are turned off, they are drawing power. We can cut phantom load by using power strips and turning the strip off, or unplugging our TV and computer.

We could ride the bus more.

I never really noticed that Rochester HS doesn't have sidewalks.

I'd like to walk to work more, and enjoy the outdoors.

I hadn't thought about how much food we really use, and that we could make such a difference by carpooling.

I didn't know about bio-ware; compostable plates and utensils made from biological materials.

I learned there is incentive to do little things to make big changes. I'm carpooling to the Napavine basketball game.

LED lights blink so fast that we don't notice it, but they're actually off half the time. I think a student farm is a great idea.

I'm wasting far more energy than I thought I was, and there is a lot our school can do to be more sustainable.

We could compost at school.

Every \$1 I spend in the state gives back \$18, but every \$ spent out of state gives back eight cents.

I should talk to my parents.

My 24 hour goal is to inform others and unplug what I don't need.

We could make a slide show to administration about making our school better.

There are so many ways to change what we do in this school to help the environment. There are tons of things we can do.