

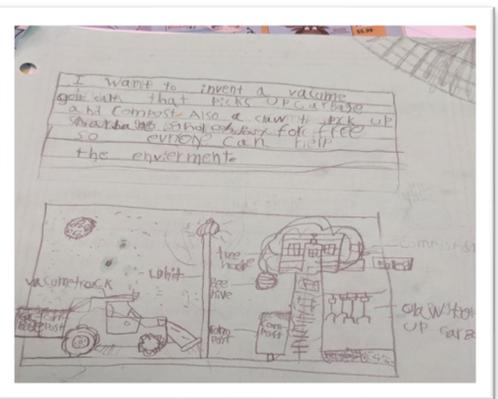
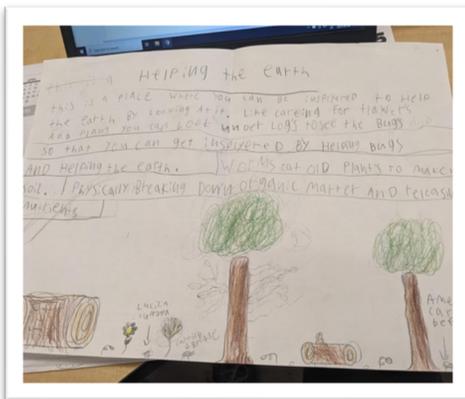


## Stories of Climate Change Education

Toronto District School Board - Climate Literacy & Leadership Program

# Caring for Where We Live: Climate Action in Our School Community

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Grades 2 & 3



### Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Learn how they can help make their community a greener and healthier place now and for the future.
- Investigate how weather and climate affect how plants grow
- Learn the meaning of the words protect and preserve and talk about how they can care for nature.
- Spend time outside to notice, enjoy, and learn from nature.
- Take simple actions to help protect plants and nature in their school or community.

### Climate Concepts:

- **Community & Place:** We are connected to and interact with the human, animals and plant communities that live here. Our choices have multiple impacts on the human and natural communities of which we are a part.
- **Ability to make a difference:** Everyone has the ability to make a difference to themselves, their community and their place. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

### Learning Activities:

**Collaborative Inquiry Question:** *How can I engage my students to reconnect with being outside and learning how to help protect/preserve nature?*

We began this learning journey by inviting students into a shared question: *How can we protect and preserve nature?* Together, we co-constructed meanings for the words protect and preserve and discussed what they looked like in the students' own lives and community. This collective dialogue sparked deeper curiosity and led to further student-generated questions, including: *How do plants help our community? What can we do to keep our water clean? How can we create change to make our community a better place?*

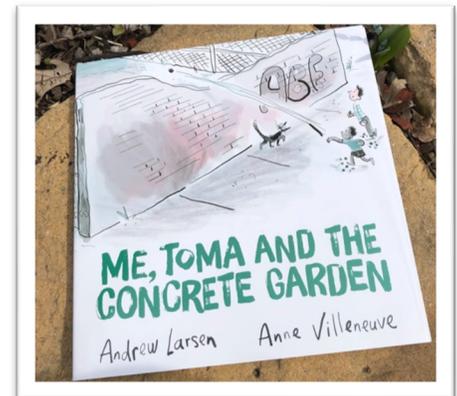
Building from this inquiry, students brainstormed concrete ways they could take action. Their ideas demonstrated a growing understanding of sustainability and collective responsibility including designing machines to manage garbage, keeping waterways clean, reusing materials, choosing meatless meals, creating natural play spaces, leaving nature undisturbed, composting, and developing green spaces.

Students then worked in small groups to develop action plans. They drew, designed, and expanded on their thinking through research, transforming their ideas into a poster. Together we identified actions that could realistically be implemented within our school community.

As a result, the class decided to create a **Decomposing Garden with Native Plants**. With donated plants and logs from a parent, students began preparing a space where they could observe natural decomposition and learn how organisms break down wood to enrich soil and support plant growth. As the weather warms, students will plant the garden and continue caring for it. In preparation, they have already repotted some of the plants.

To deepen understanding, we explored children’s literature focused on the importance of plants in urban spaces, including *The Last Tree*, *Toma and the Concrete Garden* by Andrew Larsen and Anne Villeneuve, *The Grand Old Tree*, and *Sidewalk Flowers*. *Toma and the Concrete Garden* in particular inspired students to generate new ideas about transforming grey, barren spaces into vibrant green areas that support butterflies, bees, and other pollinators, provide food, and bring beauty and joy to the community.

Older students further extended this work by attending a [Climate Action Youth Conference](#). They returned inspired and planned an afternoon of outdoor climate games and learning experiences to share with each class during an Eco Action Day. This peer-led learning culminated in a school-wide poster contest aimed at educating others about how to care for our planet.



Through this project, students engaged in multiple climate actions, including creating a decomposing garden, planting and sustaining native plants, vermicomposting, papermaking to reduce waste, button-making to raise awareness about water and climate change, learning about endangered animals, exploring hydroponic food systems, researching environmental issues, and reflecting on what matters most to them and their community. Together, these experiences empowered students to see themselves as capable changemakers who can take meaningful steps—both small and large—to care for the places they live.

### Lessons Learned:

- Make climate change impacts relevant to your students' lives and where they live
- Help students of all ages take the lead on climate actions and educating others
- Start with doable, small actions; they make a difference
- Active games are great for engaging learners with complex topics such as climate change

### Key Resources:

- Stories ([Green Earth Book Awards](#) for more ideas)
- [Climate Change Games](#)