



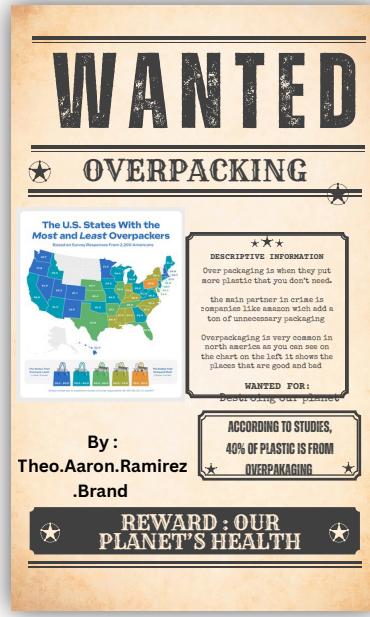
Stories of Climate Change Education

Toronto District School Board - Climate Literacy & Leadership Program 2025

Exploring how buying stuff contributes to climate change

Maria Bettas-Protopapas, Teacher, Adam Beck Junior Public School

Grade 6 French Immersion



Learning Outcomes:

Students will...

- Make discoveries through inquiry and research, expanding their understanding of how consumer habits contribute to climate change and other (physical, social, ethical, environmental and financial) issues.
- Contribute solutions to complex problems, developing self-efficacy and identity as changemakers
- Voice informed opinions through the creation of infographics and posters to advocate for shifts in consumer behaviour and share their learning with their peers and the wider school community

Climate Concepts:

- **Human impact:** The climate is changing, and humans are the leading cause. The production, transportation, and use of household goods and services generate climate-changing greenhouse gas emissions. Goods and services including their associated external costs have both an immediate and long-term effect on us, our community, the environment, and the economy.
- **Ability to make a difference:** Our choices impact ourselves, our communities and our world. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.
- **Long-term effects:** Human behavior can have long-term effects on natural systems and the health of all living beings that can be irreversible. I can make choices to consume less, choose products with lower environmental impacts, and ensure my choices improve the well-being of current and future generations.

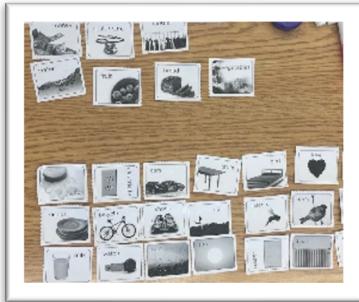
Learning Activities:

Collaborative Inquiry Question: How do I develop my students' awareness of how our society's consumer habits are contributing to climate change?

1. Exploring and categorizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

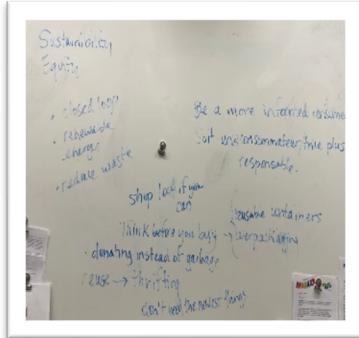
Students were introduced to the purpose and scope of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) followed by an exploration of all 17 goals. Once familiar with the goals, students collaboratively created different groupings, compared perspectives and reasoning for their chosen categories, and reflected on the connections and overlap among the goals.

les nécessités pour la vie : 1,2,3,4,6
(le must have)
l'envie : 7,12,13,4,15
les désirs : 5,8,10,16
l'organisation : 9,11,17

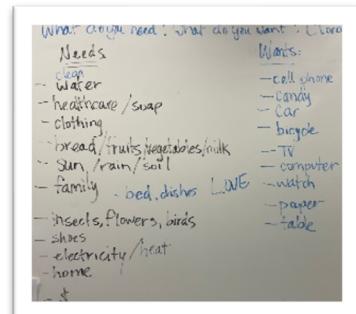


2. Needs and Wants Activity: Using picture cards of common items, students first sorted the cards into groups, and then created a collaborative version, differentiating between needs and wants. This sorting activity resulted in a rich classroom discussion (which also could be easily linked to financial literacy). As a follow-up, students were asked to individually answer the following questions "What do you need? What do you want? (using the same cards from this activity), reflecting on personal choices, but also external consumer culture and other factors that influences their needs and desires.

3. Viewing: *The Story of Stuff*: As a class, we watched the Story of Stuff video, and students were asked to document key takeaways, surprises, and questions that emerged from the film. Follow-up discussions encouraged students to make connections to the earlier activities on sustainability and consumption.



4. Creating Change: Infographic/Poster Project: As a class, we brainstormed topics inspired by *The Story of Stuff* and the SDGs that students could use to create an infographic or poster that informs and inspires others. Using **Canva** or **Google Slides**, students designed a visual message showing that they are **change makers**—capable of raising awareness and taking action for a more sustainable world.



5. Product Life Cycle: A follow-up activity to this would be to have students trace the life cycle of a favourite item e.g., [cellphone](#), shoe, etc. to determine its environmental impact, from the raw materials to the disposal of the product.

Lessons Learned:

- Students already know a lot about consumerism and its effects. They just need help understanding their impact and how it relates to climate change
- This work takes much longer than I expected.
- Students have a lot of emotions about climate change and how it will affect their futures.

Key Resources:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals: [Student and Teacher resources](#)
- [Needs and Wants Activity](#) (Center for Ecological Literacy)
- Book: *Get Real: What Kind of World are YOU Buying* by Mara Rockliff
- Green Teacher Article: *Living within the Earth's Means* by B. Duncan
- [The Story of Stuff Project](#)