

# BUILDING CLIMATE READY SCHOOLS



Climate change poses a major threat to humanity and the environment. It is a pressing issue because climate change affects where people can live, grow food, and be healthy.

In 2016, UNESCO began the “Getting Climate Ready” pilot project in 25 countries to help ASPnet schools engage in climate actions to reduce the effects of climate change. **As part of the Getting Climate Ready project, 10 ASPnet schools are currently working to incorporate climate action into every aspect of school life using what’s the “Whole School Approach”:**

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Schools engage and partner with the community on climate action projects.

- Collaborate with other schools, neighbourhood associations, local businesses, local organizations, and networks on climate action
- Partner with the broader community to take learning outside the classroom (e.g., student action projects based on a real-life need of an environmental group, field trips to measure biodiversity, host community events)

## SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The entire school and its leadership have an overall focus on climate action and a culture of sustainability.

- Conduct a self-assessment of current climate action at your school
- Establish a climate action team
- Create a climate action plan and/or include climate action in your school’s strategic plan
- Include climate action in your school’s mission, vision, and values statements

## FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

Schools become a model of climate action through changes to physical buildings and school campuses.

- Plant native flowers, trees, fruits, and vegetables
- Turn off lights and electronics when not in use
- Buy products that are local and/or made ethically
- Encourage students and staff to use more sustainable transportation, bring litterless lunches, and conserve water

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Climate action is included in all academic courses, inside and outside of the classroom.

- Incorporate climate change into all subjects
- Teach critical, creative, and futures thinking skills
- Provide opportunities to learn about, through, and from climate action

## WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH



## SCHOOL CULTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY

*THE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS WHAT FOUR CANADIAN ASPNET SCHOOLS ARE DOING TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE.*



The Sustainability and Education Policy Network (SEPN) is an international network of researchers and organizations advancing sustainability in education policy and practice. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO contracted SEPN to conduct an evaluation of climate action in the Canadian UNESCO Associated Schools Network in 2018. **Visit [www.sepn.ca](http://www.sepn.ca) to learn more.**



To cite this report: Hargis, K., Chopin, N., & McKenzie, M. (2018). Building Climate Ready Schools. Technical report published by the Sustainability and Education Policy Network.

# SIMPLY LIVING SIMPLY

## Bruce Peninsula District School

Are you wondering how your school can implement a whole-school approach to climate action? Bruce Peninsula District School's "Simply Living Simply" program has made it very 'simple' to understand.



The "Simply Living Simply" program drives climate actions across all four whole-school domains within the elementary school. One of the project's outcomes has been the creation of two ambitious websites. The Simply Living Simply website describes what a whole-school approach to climate action looks like at Bruce Peninsula District school. You can scan the QR code or visit [goo.gl/WPPBTJ](https://goo.gl/WPPBTJ) to check out the website.

As part of the Simply Living Simply program, students also learn about a climate action challenge for a month (e.g., Go Local) and research online resources, which they share with the website coordinator to upload on a website specifically devoted to the challenge. You can check out the website, which includes the climate action challenges as well as ideas for how to tackle them at <https://www.bpdslivessimply.org>.



Because the school is located within a rural area with little school-provided technology and a spotty internet connection, maintaining two websites is sometimes difficult. As a result of these technology challenges, students are not able to use the websites during class time even though the website's content is based on what is done in the classroom.

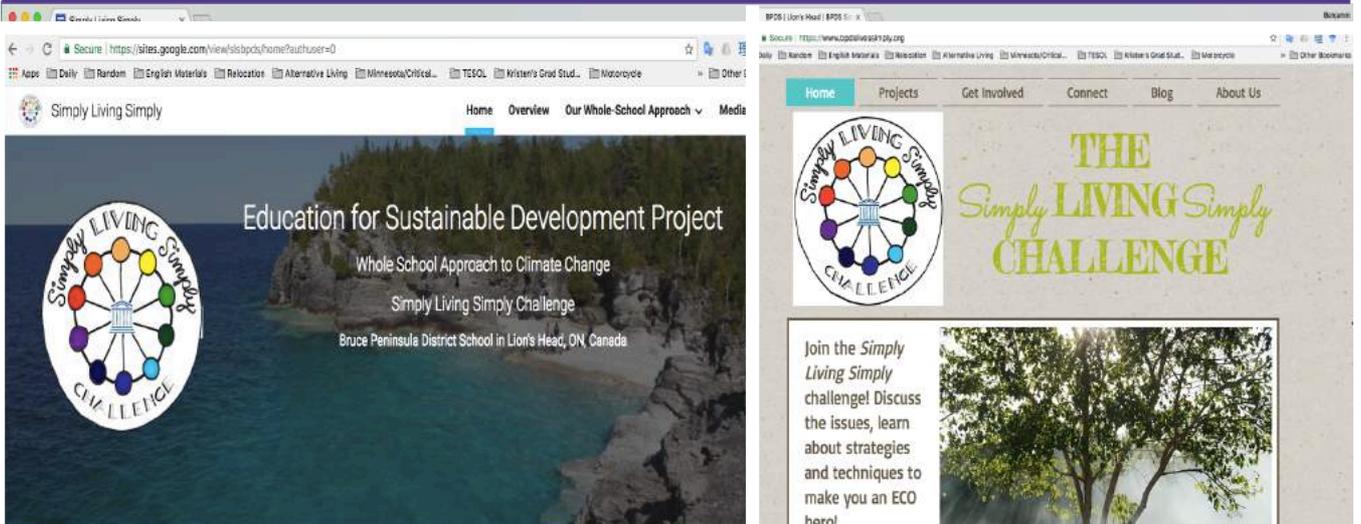
Bruce Peninsula District School is well connected to the surrounding community through the Simply Living Simply program. For example, students participating in Simply Living Simply Challenges share their knowledge with the school and local community through the school's assemblies, Facebook page, and newsletter, as well as the community newspaper.

Local and community experts are also invited into classrooms as guest speakers at part of the project and community members visit the school to work with students to solve school problems related to climate change. For example, community experts joined students at two problem-solving sessions that identified ways to involve school and community members in summer garden maintenance as well as ways to encourage students to use compost buckets properly. Students also learn outside the classroom through cooperative learning experiences and action projects, such as garbage cleanups and tree planting days with local environmental groups and parks.

While Bruce Peninsula District School believes they have connected well with community members and organizations who are already environmentally-minded, their work is not yet done. Their next step is to engage more with the broader community to encourage climate action.

Through their websites as well as their relationships inside and outside of the classroom, Bruce Peninsula District School is engaging both school and public communities in climate action.

# BRUCE PENINSULA DISTRICT SCHOOL



## The Bruce Peninsula Press

DELIVERING LOCAL NEWS TO THE NORTHERN BRUCE PENINSULA FOR 30 YEARS

2018 Number Four March



Photo: Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association student director, Brooklyn Hewton, takes stock of the ingredients for the delicious "Laura Secord" style Easter Eggs being hand-crafted for the annual fundraiser.

# MINI-UNESCO CONFERENCE

## École Francophone d'Airdrie

**For the past three years, students at École Francophone d'Airdrie have become international conference delegates when their school is transformed into a micro-planet playing host to a mini-UNESCO conference. This initiative is just one example of many driven by École Francophone d'Airdrie's three-year plan to meet the priorities of the UNESCO Associated Schools.**

The conference's themes are always inspired by global problems targeted by CCUNESCO. This year, the conference took place on March 22-23 in conjunction with World Water Day and focused on the theme of "Global Warming." In the weeks leading up to the conference, students learned about global warming and the school also created a bulletin board to generate questions and interest about the topic.

During the last conference, students learned from each other and community experts. For example, Science students in Grades 7 and 8 prepared expo projects to teach students in Grades 4-6 about global warming. Students in Grades 9 and 10 as well as interested parents judged the projects and presentations.

Guest speakers from the community also presented to students in Grades 4-6 also about water scarcity and green energy. These students made t-shirts into reusable bags, art out of plastic cups, and wrote poems on strips of paper, which they hung on a tree in the school's library.

The Grade 3 students presented to Grade 4-8 students about a project to dig 7 wells in Kenya that the school has supported for the past three years.

Finally, students in Grades 4-6 researched the interdependence of all countries in the UNESCO family, including the multi-generational effects of global warming. Their findings were presented to the entire elementary school community to inspire all to take action to stop global warming.

Although it has been a challenge to find francophone presenters, overall the event is a huge success each year.

Through this project, École Francophone d'Airdrie has found that when students have the opportunity to be directly involved in action, they are more likely to voluntarily act as citizens of the world who respect their environment.

École Francophone d'Airdrie is an exciting example of how incorporating climate action in school planning can lead to a vibrant school community working together to reduce climate change.

# ÉCOLE FRANCOPHONE D'AIRDTRE



"Children can help adults grow! Hope is the source of our motivation."

"It is through future generations and education that we will change the world."



STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE UNESCO MINI-CONFERENCE

# CARBON NEUTRAL DAY

## Collège Sainte-Anne & Collège Regina Assumpta

**Imagine arriving at school to find all the parking lots, hallways, and classrooms empty. You may have to check your calendar to make sure it's not the weekend!**

This very thing happens at Collège Sainte-Anne and Collège Regina Assumpta as part of Carbon Neutral Day, when about 2,000 students and 100-200 teachers at each school work from home instead of coming to school. At Collège Regina Assumpta over 100 parents, school staff's families, and the Board of Directors also worked electronically for Carbon Neutral Day.

Collège Sainte-Anne has held Carbon Neutral Day twice per year for the last three years. Collège Regina Assumpta held their Carbon Neutral Day for the first time this year after being inspired by Collège Sainte-Anne.

As part of Carbon Neutral Day, both schools collected information to help them figure out how to reduce their schools' greenhouse gas emissions. For example, Collège Regina Assumpta looked at the types of transportation used most often by members of their school community and found out that teaching staff often drive to school by themselves. The school plans to use this information to encourage carpooling and public transit.

At Collège Sainte-Anne, everyone takes a survey to measure their ecological footprint, which has allowed them to track reductions in their carbon dioxide emissions of 11,132 kg in 2014, 11,050 kg in 2015, and 13,561 kg in 2016. Students participating in Carbon Neutral Day at Collège Sainte-Anne are also given challenges to complete. This year's challenge was to create a video about reducing greenhouse gas emissions and taking care of the environment. Some students made videos showing themselves reducing electricity use in their house, picking up trash, saving water, and eating vegetarian meals.

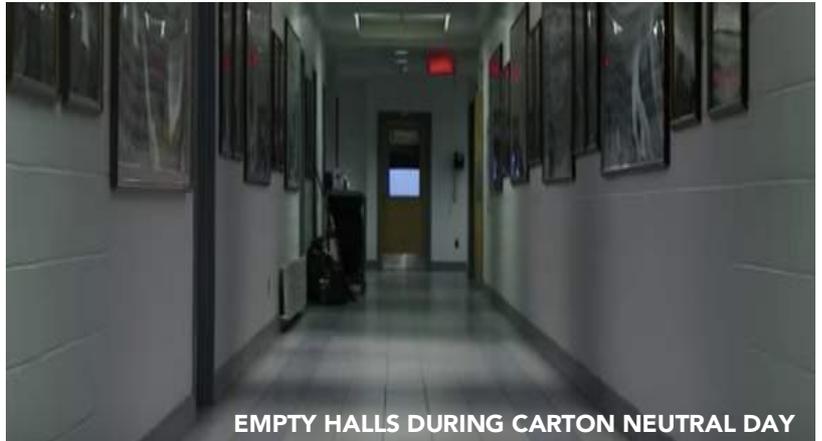
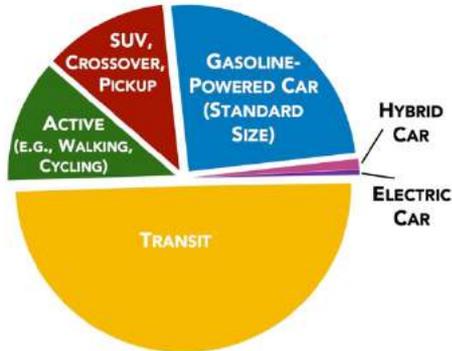
Achieving such a monumental task of relocating an entire school for a day has not come without a few challenges along the way. Major obstacles at Collège Regina Assumpta were related to the logistical management of staff and loss of income for the cafeteria. For example, they had to decide which staff would come in and who would be paid. Most staff were able to work from home, except for the maintenance workers.

Collège Sainte-Anne had technical challenges because they needed to adapt their network and web platforms to allow everyone to work at home. On Collège Sainte-Anne's first Carbon Neutral Day, they also gave students too much work to finish in one day. Since then, students have slept over at friends' houses the night before and worked in teams.

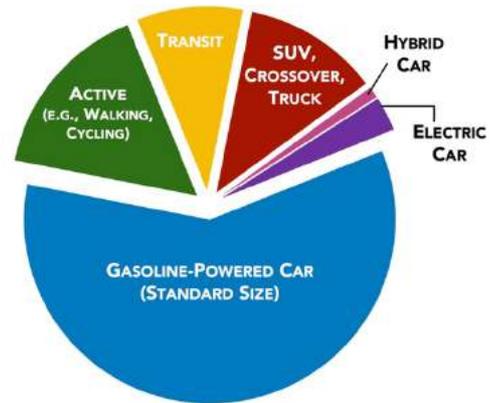
At both Collège Sainte-Anne and Collège Regina Assumpta, Carbon Neutral Day has provided the opportunity to illustrate how people's transportation choices directly translate into emissions reductions and helped figure out ways to reduce the school's emissions. Overall, Carbon Neutral Day encouraged school communities to reflect on how they can reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon Neutral Day was a success at both schools and a beautiful example of how schools can collaborate together in the spirit of climate action!

# COLLÈGE REGINA ASSUMPTA

## STUDENT TRANSPORTATION METHODS

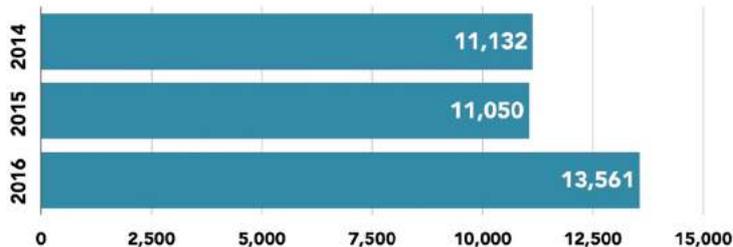


## TEACHER TRANSPORTATION METHODS



# COLLÈGE SAINTE-ANNE

## CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS REDUCED (KG)



# ESD IN ALL SCHOOL SUBJECTS

## Queen Elizabeth High School

**No matter which class you take at Queen Elizabeth High School, you will learn about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and climate action. Throughout the school, ESD has been designated a key theme of study, which means all subjects must focus on ESD at some point in the year. This integration of ESD into the curriculum provides students with a variety of opportunities to learn about climate change inside and outside the school.**

At Queen Elizabeth High School, ESD is included in the formal curriculum within Science and Social Studies classes in various ways. For example, beginning this year, all Grade 10 Science students will complete a research project on climate issues based on their own interests. In addition, ESD is reinforced across all other subjects. While teachers must incorporate ESD themes in their classes at some point during the year, they are given the flexibility to decide how ESD is included. For instance, within English classes, students may be shown a visual stimulus about a climate disaster as a prompt about which to write. Within art classes, students often make 'Resistance Art' around climate change themes.

While ESD is incorporated across subjects, a lack of easy to understand resources for teachers without a science background as well as a lack of expansion beyond a scientific lens has presented somewhat of a challenge when integrating ESD within all subjects. Allowing teachers to explore ESD themes creatively and within their own disciplines, however, has led to richer understandings for students. Not only do students intellectually understand climate change, but they are also taught how to respond ethically and emotionally. This initiative is driven by open-minded staff who are willing to work across disciplines and is supported by their community partnerships.

Students who are particularly passionate about climate action also have the opportunity to work closely with the school's community partners. Interested students can participate in policy development, dialogue, and promotion related to climate action through their Global Citizenship programming. The Centre for Global Education operates out of Queen Elizabeth High School and facilitates national and international video conferencing and partnerships with organizations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP23), and Oceanwise. These partnerships allow students to present policy papers at COP23 and IPCC Climate Change Conferences.

In addition, the Innovate program focuses on sustainability education, green technology, and partnerships with industry leaders to support innovative sustainable solutions. Students participating in this program pursue green action projects through an extracurricular course and club where they get credits for participating in projects, including individual climate action projects. Students interested in green careers also have the opportunity to collaborate with green industry leaders as part of this programming.

The extensive integration of ESD into curriculum at Queen Elizabeth High School provides students with multiple opportunities to learn about climate action within their courses as well as through climate action within the community.

# QUEEN ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL



## Resisting through Art



# HOW CAN YOUR SCHOOL GET CLIMATE READY?

The initiatives highlighted in this report are examples of how schools in the UNESCO Associated Schools Network are working to become models of climate action. To date a total of 26 Canadian ASPnet schools have participated in SEPN’s evaluation and we have collected rich data about exciting initiatives happening across Canada. In addition to the initiatives highlighted above, we have found a wide variety of other initiatives across all four whole school domains:

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Doing climate action projects with local organizations
- Going on field trips to waste management plants
- Interviewing local farmers about how climate change affects them
- Inviting community members to join school projects and events

## FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

- Taking care of the school garden
- Learning how to cook with local products
- Creating habitats for bees and birds
- Planting trees and native flowers
- Installing solar panels
- Composting and proper waste sorting
- Encouraging sustainable transportation

## GOVERNANCE

- Assessing current climate initiatives & emissions
- Starting a climate action team
- Developing a climate action plan and policy
- Incorporating climate action into strategic plans and mission statements
- Planning projects to raise awareness about climate change

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Raising awareness of climate change through art
- Writing stories or poems after seeing a climate change picture or video
- Researching climate issues
- Participating in challenges to reduce emissions and/or live waste free

## DRIVERS & BARRIERS OF CLIMATE ACTION

The evaluation is also helping us understand common kinds of drivers and barriers schools encounter when implementing climate action in their schools. The most common barriers encountered by schools in the evaluation were time and money. The evaluation has also provided insight into factors that help create successful climate action initiatives. The schools in the evaluation reported partnering with the broader community, having the support of students, teachers, staff, and administrators; and the presence of supportive sustainability values within the school and surrounding community were most helpful for creating climate action initiatives. This information can be used to develop strategies to overcome potential roadblocks when planning climate action initiatives.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

The initiatives highlighted in this report are just some possible forms of climate action in schools. Many of the current initiatives are focused on individual-level behavior change. In the future, schools could be adopting climate action approaches that help address feelings of powerlessness associated with climate change and implementing initiatives aimed at broader systemic social structures supporting climate inaction. For example, schools could be engaging with the community to raise awareness about climate action. Students could also be engaging with representatives in municipal, provincial, and federal government to advocate for broader governmental and policy change. These recommendations and others will be explored in more detail in the final evaluation reports, which will be posted on SEPN’s and CCUNESCO’s websites in summer 2018.