

STUDENT IMPACT PROJECT IDEAS

Sustainability Ambassadors

Rapidly advancing a more sustainable future



TOP TEN CLIMATE ACTIONS

Take action at home, at school or in the community. Communicate your impact to peers, stakeholders, and policy makers to urge collective action. Post your actions [on the map](#).

TOP TEN: If you are especially proud of the impact of your project, and it meets our criteria, we invite you to submit your work to our Annual [Top Ten Impact Projects](#).

ONE: Eat less meat & more plants

A meat-centric Western diet, which is on the rise globally, accounts for one-fifth of global emissions. If cattle were their own nation, they would be the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Plant-rich diets reduce emissions and also tend to be healthier, leading to lower rates of chronic disease. \$1 trillion in annual health-care costs and lost productivity would be saved. Explore the [Family Low Carbon Diet Assessment](#) and decide how you want to shift your diet. Learn more at [Project Drawdown](#). Here is an op-ed from the NY Times which sums up [the moral challenge](#):

TWO: Waste less food

From farm to fork to landfill, 40% of food in the US today goes uneaten – a waste which has environmental, economic and social impacts. First, throwing away food also wastes the water and energy used to produce, package and transport it. Worldwide, it takes 2.5 billion acres of land just to grow the food we waste, and 25% of all freshwater in America is used to produce food that is never eaten. Second, wasted food costs the equivalent of \$165 billion per year and can increase the cost of food overtime. Third, in a time when one in six Americans lacks a secure food supply, rising food prices impact people living on low-incomes the most. See King County's [Food: Too Good To Waste](#) and the City of Seattle's [Love Food Stop Waste](#). Learn more at [Project Drawdown](#)

THREE: Get out of your car

Calculate the “walkability” of where you live. Make personal adjustments and advocate for change. Learn more about your neighborhood [Walkscore](#). Read up on [walkable cities at Project Drawdown](#). Get exercise and reduce your footprint by riding your bike everywhere, specially to school. Participate in a [Bike to School Campaign](#). Advocate for safer routes to school by researching your city's Bike Plan. See the importance of improving [bike infrastructure at Project Drawdown](#). Analyze the bike infrastructure of Denmark and produce a plan for how you would create something similar in your own city by 2050. [A Nation of Cyclists](#) | [What makes Copenhagen the world's most bike-friendly city?](#) | [VIDEO - Five Keys To The Perfect Cycling City](#). Organize your school or neighborhood using a free and secure app helping families find others to **carpool, walk, or bike** together to and from school. Investigate [SchoolPool](#) or [Pogorides](#). See the importance of [carpooling at Project Drawdown](#)

FOUR: Conserve Energy

Insulate your home to prevent wasting the air you are trying to warm. Air infiltration accounts for 25 to 60 percent of energy used to heat and cool a home, energy that is [simply wasted](#). Install [LED light bulbs](#) to increase the efficiency of your lighting. LEDs work like solar panels in reverse, converting electrons to photons instead of the other way around. They use 90 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs for the same amount of light, and half as much as compact fluorescents, without toxic mercury. Invest in a [smart thermostat](#) to program precise heating and cooling rhythms in your home. Smart thermostats detect occupancy, learn inhabitants' preferences, and nudge users toward more efficient behavior. They can also integrate demand response, reducing consumption at times of peak energy use, peak prices, and peak emissions. Learn more about [Tacoma Power's conservation programs](#). Conduct a Home Energy Audit supported by Puget Sound Energy, [Tacoma Power](#) or by Seattle City Light. Look for more energy conservation opportunities by clicking through King County's [Eco-Cool Remodel Tool](#).

FIVE: Generate Clean Energy

The Puget Sound region is blessed with abundant, low-cost and renewable hydroelectric power. Depending on your neighborhood's source of electricity you can develop a campaign to also support additional renewable energy like solar and wind by signing up families to invest in Puget Sound Energy's [Green Power Program](#), [Tacoma Power's Evergreen Options Program](#), or Seattle City Lights' [Green Up Program](#). If you have a job, spend \$10 a month on Green Power. Explore the National Renewable Energy Lab's [PV Watts](#) tool to see the solar power potential for your home. It costs quite a bit upfront, but when it's sunny the amount of solar generation can help reduce your home's energy bills. Learn about [how solar works](#) and build the technical and financial case with your family.

SIX: Plant and care for more trees

Helping to plant and care for more trees improves your community's urban forest and its tree canopy. Among many benefits that trees bring to our cities, they sequester carbon, which is the process of removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it. It's called photosynthesis: the biochemical respiration of plants that uses sunlight, water and carbon dioxide (CO₂) into sugar, cellulose, carbohydrates and oxygen. Learn more about the multiple [benefits of trees](#). Google your city name and "tree canopy" then research tree programs in your community such as [Tacoma's Tree Coupon](#) or Grit City Trees program, and consider signing up for regular tree planting volunteer work parties.

SEVEN: Buy less stuff

Think before you buy. Americans shop a lot, and as a result, we have high [carbon footprints](#) and [water footprints](#). Use the two calculators and take action to reduce your consumption footprint.

EIGHT: Reuse, repurpose, recycle

Buy quality, reusable products. Donate whatever you can. Avoid products with too much packaging. Don't add to the mountain of plastic we already have on the planet. Unless it was melted and turned into something else, every single piece of plastic ever made is still around. Use reusable shopping bags. Recycle [Styrofoam](#). Recycle [E-waste](#). Use King County's "[What do I do with?](#)" Use less paper, take advantage of your digital devices, get off junk mail lists. If you do buy paper products, look for those made from the highest % recycled content.

NINE: Vote with your money

Every time you make a purchase you are voting with your money. What kind of businesses do you want to encourage or discourage by your consumer choices? Read up on, [Green America](#), [Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute](#), [Seventh Generation](#), [Seattle Good Business Network](#), and others. Learn about the major companies all around the world that have committed to the principles of the [Circular Economy](#). A circular economy is one that is restorative and regenerative by design, and which aims to keep products, components and materials at their highest utility and value at all times, distinguishing between technical and biological cycles.

TEN: Vote with your ballot

Read about the issues. Listen to multiple points of view. Vote for a better democracy. Vote for structural changes that will lead to a more sustainable economy and much stronger climate change polices, polices that benefit all not just the wealthy. And most especially, vote for better ways to vote so participation increases across the country. Read up on [Ranked Choice Voting](#) | [Vote By Mail Legislation](#) | [Fair Fight Voter Protection Advocacy](#) | [FAQ: What Americans need to know about Vote By Mail](#). Then write to your state and federal legislators saying these ideas will empower more people to have their voice heard. Not yet 18? Start working on an **Amendment to the Constitution to Lower the Voting Age to 16** (Google the whole phrase) You can drive, which is a pretty huge responsibility. Why can't you vote?

BONUS ACTION: Advocate, advocate, advocate

Democracy doesn't work if you take it for granted. Stop complaining about "the government." You are the government. Learn about the issues that you think are important, then learn about the process of where and when decisions get made. Do the legwork of calling and meeting with your city council, county council, state and federal representatives. You can have a huge influence (especially, well-informed students). Advocate for your city council to meet and then exceed commitments they made through the [King County Cities Climate Collaborative](#). Sign up for news and initiatives with [Climate Solutions](#) | [Environment Washington](#) | [Carbon Washington](#) | [Front and Centered](#) | [Got Green](#) | [Puget Sound Sage](#)... and others. Write a series of letters to the editor or post on social media about the positive actions you are taking. Lead by example. Inspire others to join you.