Inquiry into the response of Western Australian schools to climate change

Feedback
Year 12 Student voice 2022
Presbyterian Ladies College
14 McNeil Street
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RE: What more can be done to support schools to respond to climate change.

1. **Provide incentives for walking/riding to schools – change traffic conditions to provide safer pathways**

Purpose:
Encourage students' adoption and development of healthy habits by setting a school standard for environmentally conscious transport. Eliminates the social pressure of transportation norms altogether by introducing walking and riding to school as a normalised social activity. Improves students' physical and mental health, and engagement with topical issues.

Benefits:
Encouraging the vast population of school-age children to engage with walking and riding to school would have an immensely positive impact on spirit of community, physical health, and allow students to actively participate in the campaign for emissions reduction, and provide a direct impact on a personal level.

Approach:
- Providing schools with planning package for a walk/ride to school day, including school or government-run incentives
- Organisation of a city-wide walk/ride to school day, on which one lane of the highway is closed to provide a safe, climate-conscious way to get to school.
- Changing traffic conditions to encourage a safer, carbon-neutral passage to school
- Should be marketed to students as a trendy social activity and lifestyle choice, as many are interested in productivity and overall heath.

2. **Provide support to implement technology for online classes (less need to travel between locations)**

Purpose:
Reduce the need for travel between locations for schools by supporting greater, more effective use of technology in connecting students with their teachers and providing online access to their coursework. Additionally, introducing technology education programs to the school curriculum.

Benefits:
Advances in technology have been the catalyst for much of the population growth and environmental degradation that has occurred throughout the past century, and undoubtedly current and future technological advances will be how we reduce our carbon footprint and rectify the imminent global crisis. The use of technology to directly administer educational programs to students with a neutral carbon footprint could significantly reduce environmental impact. The education provided around technology would also provide students with the increasingly important computer skills required to be successful in this digital age.

Approach:
- Propose that governments provide funding to support the use of technology in schools
- Provide online access to all classes and resources used in their schools
- Introduce an education program in schools to improve technological knowledge and skills that can be applied to remote learning situations. This is also very relevant in such a time as this when COVID-19 is forcing lockdowns and increasing our need for effective remote learning.

3. **Provide all schools with a membership and introduction package to software used to measure and track their carbon footprints. Mandate a carbon-footprint audit for all schools to conduct using this technology, as a starting point for carbon reduction. Set a goal for percentage reduction in this footprint within a set timeframe.**

Purpose:
Schools often function without concern for the size of their carbon footprint and environmental impact. Providing them with access to professional resources and mandating an emissions audit would raise their awareness of their immediate environmental impact and give them basic information to aid in their response to climate change.

Benefits:
Encourages students and staff to be conscious of how they are contributing and complicit in their school's carbon-footprint and provides a basic framework for beginning their climate action with advocacy and awareness. Use of this technology would also provide a conceivable goal for school communities to rally around in responding to the numbers their audit produces.

Approach:
- Provide all schools with a membership and introduction package to software used to measure and track carbon footprints, e.g. An organisation such as "Climate Clever".
- Mandate a carbon footprint audit for each school using this software.
- Set a state-wide goal of percentage reduction in carbon footprint in a predetermined timeframe to motivate swift action.

4. **Provide technology support for presentation of videos to showcase climate change action, and what are 'likely' scenarios. Show estimates of the community's state before climate change, now, and into the future when the children currently at school are a certain age. Can be developed locally, geographically, regionally, nationally and globally**

Purpose:
Educating students about the current state of the climate and world and working to foster a collective sense of awareness about the issue of climate change in the school community. Ensuring that the next generation of Australians are active members of the local, national and global discussion on big issues, including climate change. Promoting global-mindedness and critical thinking. Presenting videos on climate change regularly to schools about the past, present, and future would force students to consider the situation as it is and form their own judgements based on the information provided to them.

Benefits:
This initiative would draw the issue of climate change into focus on a local scale for school-age students, leading to consideration of climate change as a serious and relevant issue. Showing the latest predictions and estimates of the future would not only educate students on the environment and its immense importance, but would also be an ethical decision, because this is the generation

that will ultimately bear the burden of restoring our planet in the future, as the UN's Decade for Generation Restoration recognises.

Approach:
- Allocate grants to any schools lacking in sufficient technology to present videos to large groups of students.
- Create a range of video libraries accessible to schools as a teaching resource on climate change. Organise videos into a range of collections suitable for different age groups to focus on fostering awareness and action.
- Provide funding for schools to bring in experts on climate change's multitude of effects - e.g. psychologists, doctors, futurists, scientists, activists, etc.

5. **Develop student led advocacy packages – involvement scenarios that motivate and encourage change – provide platform for students to engage, advocate, educate and encourage each other**

Purpose:
Encourages students to consider the degree to which climate change is affecting our environment with the provision of packages which supply the information they need to make direct change. It eliminates the burden many assume to research the topic as the information is ultimately handed to them.

Benefits:
In our modern world, the best way to make change is to bring it to the forefront of discussion with a tangible approach. By implementing student led advocacy packages this will ensure students are provided with key information regarding the detrimental effect of climate change which is to an extent overlooked. Furthermore, it presents a platform for students to engage, advocate, educate and encourage each other.

Approach:
- Conduct student led research regarding areas lacking in climate action
- Propose that the Government provide funding for those in the Climate Change field to come in and contribute to what information they believe is lacking to educate students in firstly, the impact and moreover, making change
- Students create appropriate packages available to their peers which directly address the issue
- Ensuring these packages are readily available for everyone and advertised within the school curriculum to promote change

6. **Change biodiversity local landscapes (school grounds) to include native gardens – increase knowledge of indigenous culture as part of overall planning**

Purpose:
Changing the biodiversity of our local landscapes, particularly school grounds will stimulate a range of benefits, specifically the educational platform it surfaces and furthermore, the financial aspects to installing gardens in our schools that use foreign plants.

Benefits:
1. Educational platform – ulterior way of informing students about Australia's native landscape which is often overlooked as it is hardly covered in the school curriculum

2. Economically beneficial – reduces import/freight costs associated with installing gardens with foreign plants

Approach:
- Propose the Australia Government funds the installing of native gardens on school grounds
- Promote these gardens as an educational platform to inform students about Australian landscape and native plants and being water wise.
- Include learning about Australian landscape within school curriculum to overcome the fact it is currently overlooked

7. **Canteens change packaging to show what is/isn't environmental packaging/ increase costs of packaging that isn't environmentally friendly – clearly coloured**

Purpose:
Often when students purchase food from the canteen, they fail to consider the impact of the packaging it is in. Thus, by labelling products to indicate the extent to which it is environmentally aware would establish and strengthen conscious decision making from students.

Benefits:
Providing disincentives to buying products that are poorly packaged will deter students from purchasing them and thus create a lack of demand. Students are positioned to question whether it is worth purchasing the product, therefore enforcing conscious decision making and more broadly, a greater awareness.

Approach:
- Contact school's canteen supplier with a plan to how we could label products to raise this awareness
- Analyse the stock we are purchasing from the supplier and any packaging which is unnecessary and excessive.
- Charging students more for products that aren't as environmentally aware... for instance, cutlery could be an extra 10c thus encouraging students to bring their own.
- Ensuring that schools use locally produced food to minimise their carbon footprint. Local supply will limit the carbon costs of transportation that involves large freight.

8. **Provide educational resources / website information that is easily accessed for staff, students, and community**

Purpose:
Encourages the school community to be directly involved and informed of climate challenges facing both their local community and global world. The accessibility of this information will also allow more widespread discussions and ideas to engage the school community. These resources will help students, staff and the wider community to become knowledgeable on the significant environmental issues and becomes the basis of initiating change.

Benefits:
By providing educational resources directly to schools, all members of the community will be presented with accurate, fact-based information that is approved by experts. This will also provide opportunities for these resources to be utilised and embedded within the school curriculum, which encourages students to use what they learn in the classroom and apply it to the 'real world'. Hence, allowing the school community to be more involved in how they must tackle climate change issues on both a small and broader scale.

Approach:

- Gathering reliable and expert approved resources for all schools to utilise and engage with. These resources can be given to schools as a package, or having one website where schools can access these resources.
- Making sure resources are accessible for all ages e.g. including videos, visuals, hands-on activities, speeches, books
- Ensuring that these resources are utilised and included within the school curriculum to allow students/staff to consider how climate change affecting their everyday lives.
- Can include providing curriculum classes with these resources to teach and explore climate change and the initiatives we can take.

9. **Encourage/incentivise schools to work towards carbon negative in a set time frame**

Purpose:
Becoming carbon negative is a direct and impactful way in which schools can limit their carbon footprint and address climate change. Working towards this goal will ensure all actions undertaken by the school are well planned and have been made with the intent to improve our environment. By incentivising and rewarding schools that are on board with this plan, it will help to create a movement where becoming carbon negative is normalised. Our world is about to enter a tipping point in the climate crisis and working towards this goal is only going to address climate action now.

Benefit:
If schools are achieving and working towards this goal of becoming carbon negative, it will only encourage other institutions, businesses, and communities to do the same. This flow on effect will help reduce emissions from all aspects of our lives and help to protect our climate. Additionally, with schools implementing real change and working collaboratively towards this goal, the future of climate action will become more apparent and realistic.

Approach:

- Providing incentives and rewards to schools who implement change to help them reach this goal
- Government to give funding and support for schools to take action and implement initiatives to help achieve this goal
- Build an awareness of actions people can do to minimise their carbon footprint within schools and the wider community. Schools can be the leaders for advocating this.
- Provide incentives for water saving, transport options, solar panels, reduction in waste etc. to encourage schools
- Advising schools to have an annual 'carbon audit' where they measure their output as a school. This will help schools understand where most of their carbon output is coming from, therefore with this information schools are able to plan and implement change to counter this.
- Funding for school landscaping and building designs as a step in becoming carbon negative
- Ensuring that schools use locally produced food to minimise their carbon footprint. Local supply will limit the carbon costs of long-haul transportation.