

## **Green Team**

### **Grace Hilbert**

My original action plan was to make a movie about public transportation in Minneapolis and interview users about pros and cons to the system. When school started I found out that the film festival, where I was planning to show my movie, was not scheduled for this year because the film studies class is not being offered this year and if I wanted to use school filming equipment it would have to be part of an assigned class assignment. I decided to start on a new action plan.

I have been on the Green Team, my school's environmental club for three years. I decided that for my action plan I would improve and expand on one of the activities we do each year. In the spring we go to local grade schools and do environmental presentations in the classrooms. It is my favorite part of Green Team but it has always been a bit of a side thought and the presentations get thrown together last minute or we do the same presentations year after year. I wanted to make the grade school presentation more of a focus, organize the planning process, cover a wider variety of environmental topics, and engage the kids with more than just lectures and power points.

I did most of the work planning the presentations with my friend and co-president of the Green Team. Together we made the materials and ran the meetings of how to make a grade school presentation. All the members of Green Team got into pairs and did their own project presentations. This year we did presentations in eight schools, grades ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade. There are about 60 people on Green Team every member had to go to 2 schools to present. At each school we presented to 3-6 class rooms.

To start with we had a teacher from a local elementary school come in and talk to the Green Team about how to present to elementary school kids and how to hold their attention. From what the teacher said to us we wanted to put an emphasis on making the presentations engaging and interactive so they would be fun and memorable for the kids.

Next we made a list and had people sign up for topics, which ensured that every pair had a unique topic. I made a handout about what the expectations for the presentations are (pg 4) as well as a worksheet for planning the presentations (pg 5). We had a meeting with Green Team to explain the hand out and worksheet and answer questions as people began to plan their presentations.

I was very impressed with the topics people chose and creative activities they came up with. The group presenting on landfills made a game where they put 15 items in a plastic bucket (the landfill) and had the kids find and take out the 5 items that didn't belong, hazardous waste and recyclables. Another group that presented about pesticides passed an apple covered in glitter (pesticides) around the room to demonstrate how the pesticides affect all the people along the way from farmers to consumers.

My presentation was about Styrofoam, which I used to show the difference between recycling and downcycling. I printed out pictures of a used pop can, a new pop can, a recycling symbol, trash can, litter, a landfill, Styrofoam cups, packing peanuts, then I laminated them and attached tape to the backs. When I was presenting I stuck all the pictures on the white board and had kids move them around and draw arrows between them to show what happens to a pop can and a Styrofoam cup when they are done being used. Moving the pictures, erasing and changing where the arrows point illustrates how every individual decision effects the cycle of what happens to a product and ultimately where it ends up. Pictures of downcycling and recycling (pg 6-9) white board activity. My lesson plan notes (pg 10-11) I wrote a letter to the parents (pg 11) for the kids to bring home and show to their parents and hopefully start up a discussion about what they did/ learned in class about the environment. The teacher who presented to the Green Team said that it is important to have a review or something to make the kids reflect on what they learned so we made a simple activity to leave with the kids (pg 12), we told the kids to color in the earth and write one thing they learned and then put them up on their class room wall so other people could see and learn from them. One of the Green Team members who enjoys doing graphic design made book marks that we gave to the kids when we were done presenting.

We are almost done with presentations for the year, we have two schools left, and I am so proud of how well they went this year. I felt that they were very organized; people knew what was expected of them and went above and beyond this. We have gotten great responses from teachers. I was walking by school and a woman outside of her house stopped to talk to me and asked if I was on Green Team, I said yes, and it turns out she was one of the teachers of the classrooms that we presented to and told me that she thought that the presentations were exceptionally good this year and that the kids put up a display of their earths and environmental information in the hall way. It was very exciting for me to receive such positive feedback.

Presenting at the grade schools means a lot to me because I think that the earlier kids begin to learn about the environment and the impact their choices have on the health of our planet the better. The kids were all very excited to see us and had an abundance of questions to ask us when we were done presenting. This showed me what a powerful tool educating myself and other people can be.

Through this project I saw what difference small steps can make in the overall efficiency of achieving a goal. Making a simple worksheet about how to plan a presentation eliminated a lot of questions people had about the presentations and guided people to make through well thought through presentations. Giving the kids the earth coloring sheet allowed what we taught to stick with them. This was a good project for me because I am a very organized person and I like to have things planned out ahead of time. I didn't feel overwhelmed by it because it was a lot of small tasks spread out. I tried to stay organized and present my ideas clearly and concisely to the other Green Team member as well as be mindful of the different ways people plan and put together a project and include ideas that members wanted to incorporate into the grade school presentations. I tried hard to establish a structure so people knew

what they were doing but at the same leave room for creativity and for each group to interpret the task in a unique manner.

I stayed motivated to work on this project because I knew that the goals I had set were reasonable and attainable and that there was nothing to stop me from doing the project except myself. For my senior year in high school I wanted a project that would be a challenge but that I would be able to see through to the end and not have to go through a long process of getting district approval. I can see that this project has made a difference from all the bright curious faces and little hands of the kids that go up in the air with questions and comments concerning what they learned about the environment.