

Anna Sargeantson  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE  
Final Action Plan

The issue of sustainability has become extremely important to me as a result of my time at Brown's Environmental Leadership Lab in Rhode Island last summer. My two weeks there completely changed my outlook on my usage of all the natural resources we all constantly take for granted. On my way home from BELL, I vowed to do all in my power to keep up with the improvements I wished to make at my school, which I began to plan there. On a personal level, I took immediate action by becoming a vegetarian. I still remain a vegetarian and do not look back on my decision, nor see myself quitting in the future. The movie we watched, "Food Inc." clearly had a large impact on me, and opened my eyes to issues centered around the treatment of animals and the food we eat every day.

When I returned to school last fall, I immediately sought out the help of a science teacher who is heavily involved in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program at my school, Greenwich Academy. While at BELL, I thought I would create a club at my school in an attempt to involve other students, in order to use our community to make a positive change. Yet, with the hectic and ever-changing schedules of all of the extremely busy students at my school, I decided this might not be the best choice. Instead, another student and I began to meet with Mr. Alt, the teacher involved in STEM, during our free periods. The three of us all worked well together, and formed a bond through which we could share ideas and opinions. I was able to take the lead on

the initiatives, yet I luckily had the help of the other student and Mr. Alt, who both played a fairly crucial role in the success of our projects.

In this setting I was able to introduce many of the original ideas that I generated at BELL. Firstly, I proposed that we endeavor to address the problem of excessive printing at our school. I decided to ask one of the technology faculty members about how the computers and printers interact in terms of double-sided printing. We decided to encourage everyone to program his or her laptop to print double-sided both at home and at school, in order to reduce paper usage. Along with the help of a faculty member, we created easy to use, step-by-step instructions on how to set up double-sided printing, and then put it onto a PowerPoint that was shown in an all-school assembly. Within two weeks, we were able to convert nearly every single student and faculty member of my school to double-sided printing. Teachers even began to expect double-sided submissions in their classes. This was only the beginning of our efforts.

Another idea that I had originally crafted while at BELL was to expel the usage of all plastic utensils at my school. Although silverware had always been available in the lunchroom of my school, it had become a trend for all students to use plastic silverware that they could throw away. During the school year before going to BELL, I had begun to notice students and teachers rarely touching the silverware, and instead reaching for the plastic utensils on instinct. We decided to convince the kitchen staff to remove all plastic utensils from the lunchroom, and to also remove plastic serving cups. It was only a matter of a few weeks until the plastic utensils and cups were nowhere to be found,

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and students and faculty were compelled to use the re-usable silverware. By mid-November we were ready to move onto our next project.

I proposed another one of my initial ideas thought of at BELL, which addressed the issue of excessive water usage. I had thought of the "Sloan Dual-Flush Uppercut" systems. These mechanisms, which can be manually installed in any Sloan toilet, have a function that allows one to pull up for liquid and push down on the lever for solid waste. This saves about .5 gallons per flush. I first verified that our school toilets were, in fact, Sloan. The next step was to make a proposition to the administration for funding for this project. I created a PowerPoint and speech to present in front of the board with the research I collected along with another student. I have attached this PowerPoint. It discusses the way we structured our study to uncover exactly how much water would be saved in a period of a year and even further into the future. Our final, and even *conservative* number was 31,500 gallons of water a year, and a shocking 157,500 gallons of water saved over a period of 5 years. When put that way, the immense saving of water thoroughly convinced the panel and they agreed to grant the money needed to complete the project. As part of the experiment, we have already installed these systems into two of the school toilets. With wrench in hand, I manually installed the systems myself with the guidance of a maintenance worker at the school. (It was fairly simple!) I believe the new systems have made my school's students think a bit more carefully when it comes to water usage. I know for a fact that many have decided to make a conscious effort to reduce their time in the shower, or remember to turn off the

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faucet. We hope that within the next few months, the remainder of these dual-flush systems will be implemented throughout the school. What was most interesting and rewarding to me about that whole project was that we were able to take something so easily looked over, yet such a big part of daily life, like the toilet, and transform its overall sustainability.

The teacher who supported me and the other student in our work this year just recently submitted a proposal to the 2016 National Green Schools Conference to present at the conference in Pittsburgh from March 31<sup>st</sup> - April 1<sup>st</sup>. We are still awaiting the response to that proposal. With the new school year upon us, I look forward to continue my efforts to transform the sustainability of my school. As a junior, I have two years left of high school to make my mark. I am just as determined as I was a year ago, and when I reflect on the progress made in the last 12 months, I can only imagine what more can be done in the upcoming years. I cherish the skill set that I learned at BELL, which has made me become a true leader and action-taker. I think that what I take away the most from the lessons I learned at BELL is the recognition of leadership styles, and the one that I identify with the most. I know what kind of leader I am, and I now am able to identify the types of leaders others are. This makes for stronger and more productive collaboration with others. I am proud of my determination to do the things I set out to do, but I am even more proud of the progress I have made, and the change I have brought to my school. The advice that I would give to students who are developing their action plans now is to choose something that really resonates with you and commit

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yourself to it. Maybe write a note to yourself and put it somewhere so that you see it daily and keep it as a reminder. In my case, I have an email starred from Mr. Alt, the STEM teacher who has helped me this year, which reads, "Are you a doer?" This constantly serves as a reminder to me to do what it is that I set out to do. I would like to thank my instructors at BELL, and Ms. Kisa Takesue for her help with the online leadership course and for all that they have taught me!