

Activity 9: Communicate!

What You Will Do: Create a unique message about climate change



Big Idea

A climate-literate person communicates about climate and climate change in a meaningful way.

What You Will Need

Depends upon how you decide to communicate your message.

During the last 100 years, Earth's average surface temperature has increased more rapidly than at any other time in the last 10,000 years. Global average temperature is expected to continue to increase over the 21st century, probably more than it did during the 20th century. Human activities are the primary cause of most of the ongoing increase in Earth's average surface temperature. Specifically, human activities that increase greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are causing rapid changes to Earth's climate. Heat waves, droughts, and floods are becoming more intense and happen more often. Global sea level is rising as a result of warmer temperatures. These changes will affect global economies, human and environmental health, and national security.

Humans are at least partially responsible for the global climate change that is happening now (http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/syr/en/spm.html), but humans also are able to take actions to reduce climate change and its impacts. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the key. Burning fossil fuels for energy is a major source of increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Since everyone uses energy, everyone can

be part of the solution. Most people use electricity almost constantly (even when they are asleep!) for heating, cooling, transportation, cooking, working, entertainment, and many other activities. Practically everything we touch required energy for manufacturing and distribution. Most of the energy for all these things comes from burning fossil fuels.

Unfortunately, many people are not climate literate, do not understand how human activities have caused climate change, and do not know what they can do to reduce climate change and its impacts. This is why communication is an essential part of climate literacy.

How It Works

At this point, you know a lot about Earth's climate, how it is changing, and how human activities are involved with these changes. In fact, you probably know a lot more about these subjects than many people! A very important part of Climate Literacy is communicating accurate information so more people will understand what is happening and how they can personally respond to Earth's changing climate.

Signs of Climate Change

Source: <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/kids/impacts/signs/index.html>



Effects of Climate Change

Source: <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/kids/impacts/effects/index.html>



Believe it or not, students who communicate about serious subjects often receive more attention than adults. One reason for this is that students think of creative ways to communicate. In school, written papers, oral reports, and posters are common methods for communication. All of these communication techniques are also used by professional scientists to share their ideas and information, because communication is an essential part of science. There are many other ways to communicate, and unusual methods can help get people's attention and lead them to think about the information in the message. This Web page describes several different kinds of communication projects: <http://games.noaa.gov/seaturtle/digitalprojects.html>. Table 1 lists some additional ideas.

These ideas are only a starting point; you can probably think of even better ways to communicate information about Climate Literacy to your own audiences!

How to Do It

1. Choose your message. Select one or two ideas about Earth's climate from the other activities in this book. Be sure to include a few things that people can do personally about climate change. For some ideas, check out the Student's Guide to Global Climate Change (<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/students/solutions/index.html>).
2. Choose your audience. Ask yourself, "Who is supposed to receive this message?" It may seem that the answer should be "Everybody," but the problem with that answer is that different people communicate in different ways. Focusing your message toward a particular audience makes it more likely that your message will be understood.
3. Choose your communication technique. This is where you can be really creative! Think about things that are likely to attract the attention of the audience you identified in Step 2. Then think about unusual ways to present those things, because humans are much more likely to notice

unusual events and objects than things that are familiar. Sometimes "unusual" just means that familiar things appear in unusual places. Look over the list of Communication Ideas, think about whether these give you some ideas of your own, then select the technique that you think is most likely to get the attention of your audience. Remember to consider your personal talents and interests as well. Perhaps you can sing, act, dance, play a musical instrument, paint, sculpt, enjoy making things, or have other skills. Think about ways to use these to help deliver your message. Your interest and enthusiasm are powerful tools for communication, because they are likely to attract the attention and interest of your audience.

4. Plan a strategy to deliver your message, including a brief statement of what your message is, who your audience is expected to be, which communication techniques you will use, when you will present your message, and who will be involved with the presentation.

