

letter writing campaign

overview:

In this activity, students will write letters to individuals or groups who have influence over stream health and local water quality. Students will communicate and share their stream study results, as well as make a request to someone who can encourage change or find a solution to a pressing problem.

time it takes:

- 1.5 hrs for idea development and writing, and some extra time to print and mail the letters.

planning:

- Consider discussing this activity with your school administration, in order to set parameters and get their approval.
- If appropriate, organize computer access for students to draft and write letters. If you are using 'snail-mail', you will need to get both stamps and envelopes, unless sending to MPs.
- Coordinate how you will use the letter-writing template – handout CRGB01 (handouts or projector).

teaching and learning strategies:

In-Class Preparation

1. Review the results from your Changing Currents workshop. What conclusions did you make from the data you found?
2. Discuss some of the causes of the results you found. Why is the stream healthy/impaired? What are some of the main things that contribute to its current state? Consider looking at a map of your area.
3. Discuss why it might be important to share your results with others. Which parts of the results would you share, and with who?
4. Explain to students that as a class you will be writing letters to various individuals and groups to share the results of the stream study. These letters will have three parts:
 - a) Who you are, and what you found out
 - b) What you think are the causes of the stream's condition
 - c) What the recipient of the letter could do about it



5. Draw a t-chart on the board with two headings: *who* and *what should we ask them to do?* Ask students to fill in these two categories – who are the people we could share results with and what could we ask them to do?

6. Students can divide into groups to brainstorm further, developing more specifically what requests they have for certain groups or individuals.

7. Ask students to locate the email or postal address of the recipient they choose. They can locate this themselves as a homework assignment.

Drafting and Writing

1. Display or distribute handout CRGB01 to students.

2. Ask students to draft letters (in small groups or individually).

3. Have students review each other's letters. Students should ensure the three parts discussed previously are included. Each letter should also have a recipient's address and a return address (consider using the school's email and postal address).

4. Collect and review the letters.

After Writing

1. Letters can be printed and signed, and then students can address and stamp envelopes – or – students can coordinate how to formally email their recipients.

2. Send your letters as a group!

3. Make sure to follow up with students after the activity. Lead a small group or large group discussion. At a later date, share any letter responses you've received.



EcoSpark organizes a letter writing campaign!

Follow up discussion:

Do you think your letters will have an impact?

Do you expect to receive responses, why or why not?

Do you expect to see changes, why or why not?

What do you think about letter writing as a tool for change?



Action Plan

Communicating Results to Government and Business



letter writing template

Your Name
Your School's Name
School Address
City, Province
Postal Code

Today's Date

Salutation (Mayor, Mr., Mrs., Ms.) Name of Recipient
Recipient's Office, Government or Business Name
Recipient's Address
City, Province, Postal Code

Dear *(Mayor, Mr., Mrs., Ms.) (Name of Recipient)*,

I am writing this letter to you to express my concern about the health of our local stream and watershed. My class participated in a stream study program, and we discovered ... *list the results, comment on the diversity of the bugs you found, discuss chemical testing if you did it, and comment on the general state/appearance of the stream.*

There are many reasons why the stream's health may have been jeopardized. I think it is because ... *list why you think your stream is impaired – what are the causes? (over development, damaged riparian zone, pollution from storm drains, golf courses, farm land, pesticide and fertilizer use, city management that doesn't take stream health into account).*

We would really appreciate your response and call to action for the health of *(city name)*'s watersheds and streams - which support our local ecosystems and provide the source for our drinking water. We would like you to ... *here you can list what action you want this person to take to address the situation in the stream, depending on and specific to their role.*

Thank you for your response and your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name
Your Class, Your School