

PROTECTING OUR PLANET

Our environment and the changes it's going through have become a hot topic of late. With activists such as Greta Thunberg and Autumn Peltier making it a pressing social issue, we here at the OHS Press decided to make it the subject of our first Focus page of the school year.

How to be eco-friendly as a student

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Staff Reporter

Although it is believed that one person's eco-friendly decisions will not change much about the conditions the earth is facing, the same could not be said if everyone puts their individual efforts in. Kendall Tinney, an environmental science major at MSU believes great change can happen.

"If everyone in the community all tried and made an effort, it would put a stop to the industrial production to things that create bigger pollution, which is the main cause of climate issues. If a lot of people transferred away from that and big industry, it would help significantly," Tinney said.

Here are some ways you can make the world a cleaner place as a high schooler.

1. Use a reusable bottle. Every year, the world uses 500 billion plastic bottles. Most of these bottles end up in landfills, where they will continue to build up. Hydroflasks, thermoses, whatever you have, use them. You see a lot of people in the hallway holding their sticker-covered bottles and going "sksksksksk" every three seconds. Don't judge,

they are saving the planet.

2. Try to recycle whenever you can. That paper in the bottom of the stationary abyss you call a backpack? Yeeet it into the recycle bin. One billion trees worth of paper is thrown away every year in the U.S. according to the University of Southern Indiana. You can risk a few minutes to clean out any paper you don't need and recycle it.

3. Next time you go grocery shopping with your family, look for the most eco-friendly packaging. Saran wrap? I don't know her. Wax paper or Tupperware is an easy replacement. Ditch the plastic packaging. Many companies are starting to use new forms of packaging that can easily be recycled or reused.

4. Avoid plastic bags. It's only a dollar or less to get a reusable grocery bag at most major grocery stores. Instead of using that logo-covered plastic bag which can rip if you hold it wrong, get the eco-friendly canvas bag. Shop for good deals and save the world while flexing on everyone with that cool bag.

5. Make some changes to your diet. Eating less meat can actually help the environment since 30 percent of Earth's land is used to support livestock. Livestock contributes heavily to carbon dioxide production. Switching from animal

protein to plant protein once in a while can really help in the long run. Whilst some people go vegan or vegetarian, you could probably have a plant-based meal once in a while to also contribute.

6. Donate, don't throw away. With all these Marie Kondo organization videos floating around the internet that you can't help but binge-watch and follow, you probably have a pile of old clothes or belongings you don't want anymore. Donate them or sell at a thrift store if you want to make a profit. One man's trash is another man's thrift store find.

7. Stop littering. Just stop.

8. Walk or bike more often. Cars are no good for the environment.

9. Support eco-friendly brands. Brands like Patagonia, Imperfect Produce, and Beyond Meat are all brands that are eco-friendly.

10. Meal prep. Not only do you save money, but you also prevent too much food waste.

11. Donate to eco-conservation charities. It doesn't have to be a huge sum; you could literally throw a few coins into the conservation charity box at a local grocery store and you'd still be charitable. Just make sure you're donating to a dependable fundraiser.

Although it seems daunting, the

fight for a more eco-friendly Earth needs to be fought. In fact, many people have made changes to their lives to help out Mother Nature. Laura Bell (Science), a fellow teacher at OHS does most of the things on the list.

"I drive a small, fuel-efficient car, and my husband usually uses the bus or rides his bike to get to work. We chose a home that allowed us to be close to where we work, and it is close enough for our children to walk to their school. We could be more eco-friendly by being vegetarian or vegan, but we're not quite there. That said, we do try to incorporate many meatless meals into our meal rotations. I hang dry our laundry and we try to set our thermostat so that we rarely run our air conditioner and only turn on heat once it gets quite cold," Bell said.

Little things add up easily whether it be negative or positive. Little pieces of plastic that you hardly notice you throw out can sum up to giant mountains of trash in landfills. In comparison, the little efforts you make to your lifestyle can influence others and continue passing the torch to make the earth a cleaner, better and prettier place to be.

"High schoolers can easily help make a difference when it comes to being more eco-friendly," Bell said.



Sophia Timm-Blow

Staff Reporter

Have you ever been stuck inside at school on a beautiful day when all you want to do is go outside?

Studies show that going outside not only improves your physical and emotional well being, but it can also improve academic performance. Teachers, administrators, and students should make an effort to incorporate the outdoors into their everyday lives.

School can cause intense emotional and mental strain on students. With heavy homework loads, extracurriculars, and other responsibilities, students may be overworked and overtired.

One easy way to alleviate stress and anxiety is to go outside. According to the National Wildlife Federation, being in nature lowers blood pressure and cortisol levels, a stress hormone in the body. It also supports cognitive function, boosts endorphin levels and provides essential vitamin D that regulates sleep patterns.

Early studies have also proven that being in nature improves the ability to focus, especially in people with ADHD. Outdoor learning has been implemented in some European countries such as Finland, but the United States has been hesitant to follow suit because of concerns that being outside will lower student concentration and productivity.

A study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has proven that the opposite is true. Lead researcher Ming Kuo sought to assess student engagement in the classroom after a short lesson outside compared to the same lesson inside. The engagement was measured by teacher evaluations, the number of redirects—how many times the teacher needed to remind the students of the task at hand—and ratings of classroom photos during instruction by a person not familiar with the study.

Results of the experiment consistently proved that students were more engaged after a lesson outside. This is significant because it shows that students and teachers can benefit from changing the location of a lesson or class activity. Outdoor exposure can be built into the curriculum with relative ease.

Carina Gordon (12) loves nature and thinks that it's important for high schoolers to get outside as much as they can.

"I've definitely had class periods where it would make sense to go outside where it wouldn't inhibit the lesson or the learning at all. I think that's the easiest way to spend more time outside," Gordon said.

On a nice day and with the right

lesson plan, it would be fairly easy for any class to do individual work, have reading time or participate in hands-on learning outside.

"I think [the success of learning outside] really depends on the students, and it depends on the lesson. [They might] be engaged, or they might be messing around, so I think it has the potential of being a really good thing if the lesson is good and the students take it seriously," Diane Dockus (English) said.

Dockus takes her American Literature students on a transcendental nature walk every spring to learn about the Transcendentalist movement. This is a prime example of how to incorporate an experience in nature into the curriculum.

"As much fun as it is and as much as people goof around, I still think it has an impact on [the students]. They remember it," Dockus said.

In addition to the benefits to students' mental and physical health, this would promote a genuine enjoyment for learning and school.

"We spend a lot of time in class or in our house doing homework, on our phones, but getting outside, seeing the world, feeling the nature... it feels really great and it calms me personally. It gets me out of the stress of busy life... I try to prioritize it," Gordon said.

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—Carina Gordon (12)

Although the health benefits of going outside are undeniable, the practicality of it could be an issue. Living in the beautiful Midwest where the weather could change six times in one day may make lessons unpredictable for teachers. There is also the fact that winter can last for five straight months.

Even though it may seem frustrating to try to deal with the various challenges of the outdoors, the benefits outweigh the struggle. The feeling of being out in the fresh air, listening to the wind gusting through the trees and feeling the warmth of the sun is unbeatable. Also, since Michigan has a limited number of warm days, teachers and students should try to take advantage of them as much as possible.

Nature can help alleviate the stress and anxiety of everyday life. Students spend too much time cooped up inside worrying about the next test or assignment. Going outside more often will make learning more enjoyable while also providing numerous health benefits.

Recapping Dorian's destruction

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Hurricane Dorian caused destruction and damages from the Bahamas to Nova Scotia in late August and early September. It was the most powerful hurricane by wind speed in the Atlantic since Hurricane Wilma in 2005 and was tied for the second most powerful ever recorded.

On Aug. 28th, Dorian became a hurricane and made landfall in the Virgin Islands, causing further power outages and damages there. Dorian then made landfall in the Bahamas, causing devastation on the Abaco Islands and Grand Bahama Island in the northern Bahamas in particular. Dorian was the strongest hurricane to make landfall in the

Bahamas in 80 years.

According to statistics from the American Red Cross, over half of the homes on the two islands were destroyed by Dorian's wind, storm surge and rain. The death toll in the Bahamas alone was 50 at the time of writing but is expected to rise, and over 70,000 were left without a home. A week after Dorian's landfall, 15,000 Bahamians were still without shelter.

Bahamian officials stated that over 2,500 people were still missing over a week after the hurricane, but this number was later revised to 1,300. Several thousand have taken refuge in the United States.

Dorian hovered over the Bahamas for close to two days, traveling at a mere one mile an hour, making its impact over the island chain even

greater. At the hardest hit locations, Dorian had wind gusts of over 220 miles per hour and storm surges exceeding 20 feet.

On Sept. 1, North Carolina declared a state of emergency in preparation for Dorian and issued mandatory evacuations for vulnerable areas near the coast. In total, two million people in Florida and the Carolinas were advised to evacuate as Dorian approached.

Both North Carolina and South Carolina experienced tornadoes and flooding as an aftereffect of Dorian. Two deaths in the U.S. were directly linked to Dorian, and over 100,000 people lost power. Some locations in the Carolinas received up to 15 inches of rain.

The economic impact of Dorian in southeastern states which were

affected by the hurricane is expected to be over \$1.5 billion. In the Caribbean, Dorian caused between \$1.5 and \$3 billion in damages.

On Sept. 7, Dorian made landfall in Nova Scotia, Canada with 100 miles per hour winds, causing power outages and heavy rain across the Atlantic coast of Canada. Dorian was the first hurricane to make landfall in Canada since 2010.

Dorian was one of the most destructive hurricanes in recent memory and caused damage, especially in the Bahamas, that will take years to reverse. As our climate continues to change, hurricanes like Dorian will become more frequent and organizations like the United Nations have pointed to climate change as a major factor in the severity of storms like Hurricane Dorian.

Greenhouse's future uncertain in post-Chapman era

Pavan Kannan

Staff Reporter

Okemos High School is home to various clubs, organizations, and interest groups, but one that many people aren't aware of is our OHS greenhouse. According to a random student survey conducted by the OHS Press, only 64% of OHS students know about the existence of the greenhouse and only 28% know where it is.

The greenhouse has been a part of OHS for many years, and it is located at the very end of C-hall. It can be accessed through Room 120, and was originally used as a resource by many biology teachers for their classes, but it is now also used by students as a calming class-

room break, a place to eat lunch, and even as an independent study.

The greenhouse was run almost entirely by Mr. Chapman, and his retirement has caused quite a bit of turmoil regarding its wellbeing. It features many different types of plant life, almost all of which require a certain degree of expertise to properly take care of. The greenhouse is now being run in conjunction between the science teachers and invested students such as Annie Rollins (11) and one of our associate editors: Christen Chappelle (11).

"It has been very difficult to properly manage the greenhouse ever since Chapman left," Rollins said.

"He really was the one person that ran everything, and now that he's gone, a lot of things are beginning to fall through the cracks. The greenhouse is actually very complicated.

Each plant has its own watering schedule and type of water."

Many other students are also deeply invested in the greenhouse, one of whom being Matt McMahon (11), who has an independent study hour there.

"It's been difficult managing the greenhouse ever since Chapman left because there are a lot of things that he took care of that we used to take for granted. The greenhouse is pretty extensive, so maintaining all of the plants is kind of a challenge," McMahon said.

In addition to these issues, the greenhouse has also faced some difficulties from external sources.

"We receive no funding from the school, so it's really tough to get stuff for the greenhouse to keep it functioning well," Rollins said. "It's also difficult finding more people

who would be interested in helping because our club application was denied."

However, despite the difficulty of taking care of it, many students still had positive things to say.

"I really enjoy spending time in the greenhouse. I have an independent study period there, and I also eat lunch there. I think it can be really calming to spend time around all of those plants," McMahon said.

"I think the greenhouse is great for students who are into biology or botany and are looking for a hands-on experience," Rollins said.

While the departure of Chapman has certainly made things difficult in the greenhouse, many students are still fighting to keep it going. Hopefully the greenhouse looks forward to a long and prosperous future.

