



# Let's “Greenify” our Communities

## Created by

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## Grade and Subject Areas

Grade 3

Science and Visual Arts

## Duration

Three 45-minute periods

## Hope Statement

Our hope for students participating in this lesson is that they ...

- are excited about and want to make environmental change
- can identify sustainable practices they can do individually, with their families, and in their communities
- understand the importance of using natural and recycled materials and can identify examples
- feel like they can make environmental change

# Acknowledgements



This lesson was created by **teacher candidates in the Environmental Education concentration** of the Faculty of Education, Queen's University (2024-25), instructed by **Dr. Heather McGregor**. The lesson belongs to a set of lessons created by the class to demonstrate how teachers can be inspired in their climate teaching by youth-created art or stories. **The art and stories created by youth (grades 7-12)** and these lessons aim to help students imagine a positive future in the face of climate change—a future without the use of fossil fuels, where biodiversity is restored, and where humans live in caring communities. The art and stories in these lessons were created for the [Youth Imagine the Future](#) festival in Kingston, Ontario.

Thanks to **Jerri Jerreat and the Youth Imagine the Future team** for supporting this lesson plan initiative, and securing permission to use these art works and stories.

Thanks to **April McInnes** for designing the lesson plan template.

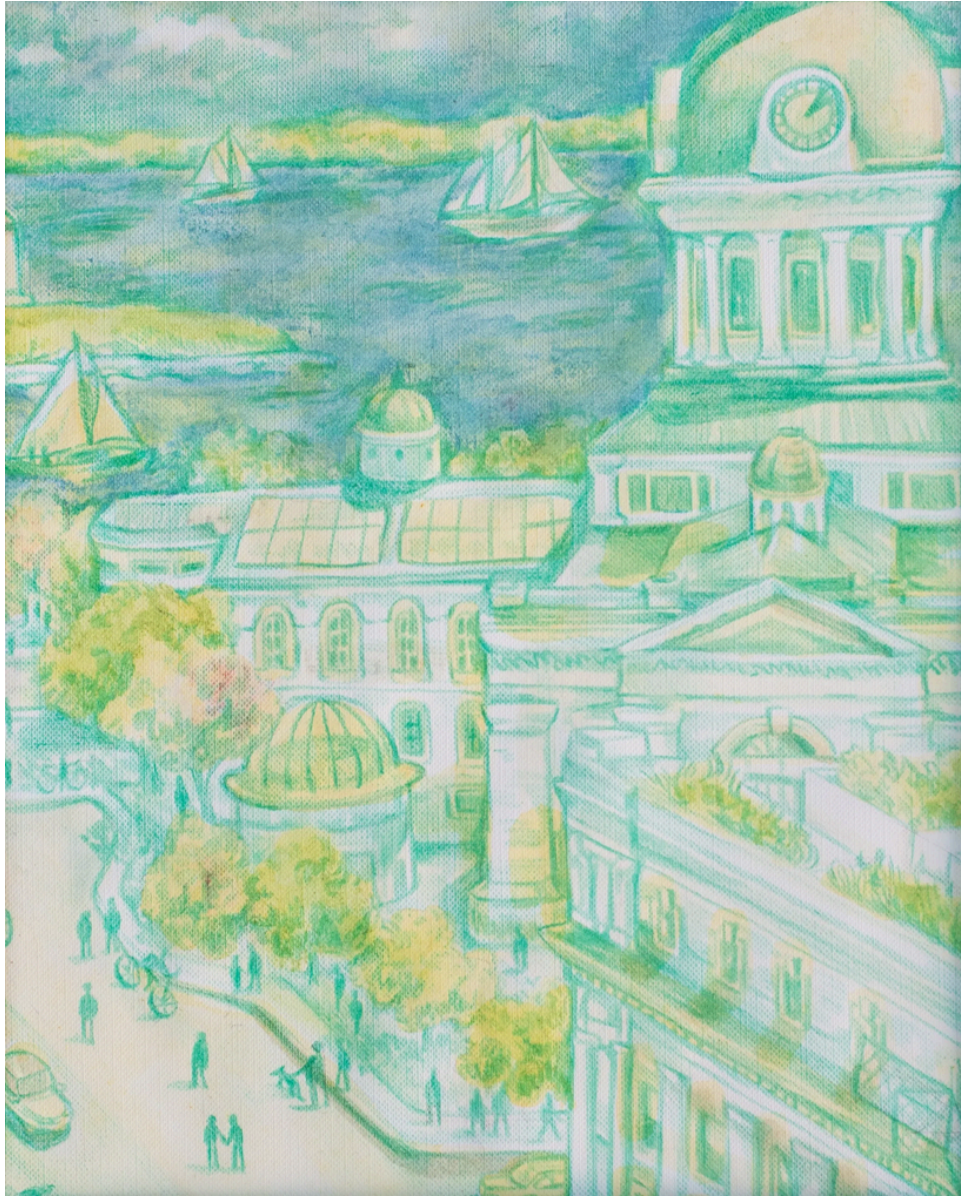
Thanks to the **Environmental Sustainability Committee of the Faculty of Education** for their support.

We hope teachers will be as inspired by young people's visions of the future as we are!



# Our Inspiration

*A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION* by Charlie McGowan



## Artist Statement

By: Charlie McGowan

Note: Note the roof garden, trees and solar panels around or on Kingston City Hall. Except for the help of one green pencil crayon, the red and blue tones came from old eyeliner pencils, and the yellow tones from dyes the artist made from marigold, turmeric, cornstarch and paprika.

# Lesson Context

## Guiding Questions

**Teacher-focused:** How can we inspire young learners to create positive environmental change in their own community spaces? How can we assist them in making these changes feel feasible?

**Student-focused:** What positive environmental changes would you like to see in common places in your community?

## Curriculum Objectives

**Science** (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2022)

- **B1.1:** Assess ways in which plants are important to humans and other living things, taking different perspectives into consideration, and identify ways in which humans can protect native plant species and their habitats
- **B1.2:** Assess ways in which human activities have an impact on plants and plant habitats, and identify personal actions that they could take to minimize harmful effects and enhance positive ones
- **D1.2:** Assess the environmental impact of structures built by various animals, including structures built by humans

**Visual Arts** (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009)

- **D1.1:** Create two- and three-dimensional works of art that express personal feelings and ideas inspired by the environment or that have the community as their subject.

## Our Environmental/Climate-focused Learning Outcome

Students will understand environmentally friendly ways to “greenify” their communities and be able to (theoretically) apply them to their lives.

## Preamble or Lesson Overview

In this lesson, we will consider our own communities and how they can be made more environmentally friendly. We will also explore sustainable ways of living that we can implement in our own lives to make positive contributions to environmental change. Finally, we will learn about the importance of using natural and recyclable materials, and have a hands-on opportunity to apply what we learned in our final project.

Lesson #2 includes a discussion of recycled materials that can be used to make paint colours. **Optional Preparation for Teacher:** prepare some paint colours made from recycled materials as an example for the students during the discussion.



# Lesson #1

## (45 mins)

### Materials Required

- Chart paper and markers
- [Slide deck on “Green Practices”](#)
- Projector for Charlie’s artwork
- Class set of exit tickets (see [Appendix A](#))

### Hook: Chart Paper Brainstorm (15 mins)

On chart paper, print “Our Community” in the centre and prompt the class by asking, “What sorts of things do you see in our/your community?” Conduct a brainstorming session.

Anticipate that students may have answers like; schools, houses, grocery stores, the mall, movie theatre, park, etc. While there may be some references to green spaces, be prepared for majority of answers to surround the idea of human-made structures. Taking a green marker, circle any of their answers that relate to a natural space in any way. Transition to this block’s “lesson content” by asking “Wouldn’t it be nice if we could have more green circles on here? Let’s explore how we can make that happen.”

### Explain: Exploring Sustainable Practices (20 mins)

Using a slide deck, present the following sustainable practices that would be suitable for Grade 3 learners:

- walking or biking to school
- always recycle!
- rooftop gardens

Consider using this resource to generate ideas: <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/go-green.html>

You can also gauge the class’s level of background knowledge by inviting them to also provide their own ideas (maybe some of them grow vegetables in their backyard, take recycling seriously, have solar panels on their house, etc.)

### Engage: Time to Begin Planning (10 mins)

Encourage student interest/engagement by briefly introducing their culminating task. Excite them by sharing how they will have the opportunity to “greenify” a space of their choice, leading to a more sustainable community overall. At this point, project Charlie’s artwork to aid in student understanding of the assignment’s objective.

To avoid overwhelming students, present the class with one specific task before class ends: pick the specific space you would like to redesign/greenify, as well as your 3 “greening” strategies which can be chosen directly from the slide deck examples. This will be completed using the exit ticket (see [Appendix A](#)). By having the exit ticket, you can approve students’ ideas to ensure that no one’s scope is too large or unfeasible. Emphasize that this is simply a brainstorming phase, helping to pinpoint the ideas that will guide their actual artwork. The exit slip is meant for jot notes (or perhaps a basic sketch), but this is not a true work period for the final piece yet.

# Lesson #2

## (45 mins)

### Materials Required

- Natural paint materials (to be collected on walk)
  - dandelions, leaves, dirt/soil, etc.

### Hook: Examples (5 mins)

Show students paint colours you made from natural or recycled materials (optional and mentioned in lesson overview section). Have students think about what natural materials could be used to make each colour (e.g., dandelions for yellow, fallen leaves for green or other colours in the Fall, etc).

### Explain: Preparing for Walk (5 mins)

Inform students that the class is going on a nature walk to collect natural materials that can be used to make their art. Make sure students know they are just picking one natural material to add to their picture or to make a colour (e.g., a leaf or stick, or using a dandelion to smear colour on their art).

### Engage: Effective Selection Practices (10 mins)

Take students for a walk either to a nearby park, forest, or around the school yard if that is most accessible. Gather everyone in a circle for a discussion.

- “What materials do you think the artist used to create the painting we looked at yesterday?”

Give students 3 minutes to do a ‘sit spot’ and think about at least one thing around them that could be used to make a paint colour. Optional: ask students to share their ideas with the class.

### Engage: Selecting Items (20 mins)

Gather everyone back from sit spots for a discussion:

- “Why do you think using natural materials is important?”
- “Should we use fallen materials? Why?”

Tell students to only use fallen materials, and explain importance of respecting and not harming nature.

Give students time to collect fallen materials they can use in their art.

Give students time to have another 3-5-min ‘sit spot’ to reflect on using natural and reusable materials, and they will think about what they want to get out of their artwork.

- What message would you like to convey, thinking about a key focus or change.
- What can your art accomplish?

### Conclusion: Consolidation (5 mins)

Students will have time to complete their change in their community checklists (see [Appendix A](#)).

# Lesson #3

## (45 mins)

### Materials Required

- Natural materials for art (e.g., wood, pebbles, dry seed pods, feathers)
- Art supplies (paint, markers, paper, scissors, glue)
- Paper to make pictures
- Projector for showing Charlie's example

### Hook: Reflection (5 min)

Ask students to recall the locations they selected in Lesson #1 and ask:

- "What changes or improvements did you imagine for your chosen location?"
- "How could these changes help the environment or make the space more sustainable?"

Afterward, tell students:

- "Today, you'll turn the ideas you had about creating positive change in the environment into artwork. Now it's time to express those ideas through art. What will your vision for a better world look like?"

### Explain: The Creative Process (5 mins)

Explain the creative process you expect students to follow. Encourage them to think about the change they want to see and how to visually represent that change. Charlie's artwork should also be projected on the board so the students can use it as an example. Their artwork should reflect an optimistic vision for a future that prioritizes the environment, like using recyclable materials, restoring habitats, or encouraging eco-friendly behaviours.

### Engage: Applying their Knowledge through Art (30 mins)

Students will work independently to create their artwork. The teacher can walk around the room, providing support, asking guiding questions, and encouraging creativity.

Allow the students access to the materials they can use: natural materials (leaves, sticks, pebbles, seed pods) and art supplies (markers, coloured pencils, scissors, glue). If desired, the class can also search the recycling for recyclable items (cardboard, plastic bottles). Be sure students wash materials from the recycling before using them.

Consider playing soft background music to create a calm, focused atmosphere during the work period.

### Conclusion: Complete Reflection Worksheet (10 mins)

Use the remaining time to let the students complete the reflection worksheet called "Creating Change in our Community." This will be used for assessment along with their actual artwork.

- Read the questions aloud and see if students have any questions.
- Circulate the room if the students need help.
- End the lesson by reinforcing that through their artwork, students have taken a step toward imagining and promoting a sustainable future.
- Hang the students artwork so they can appreciate and feel inspired by each others artwork.



# Assessment and Accommodation

## Assessment Description

**Assignment Overview/General Goal:** This assignment has been created to allow students to explore their community spaces and brainstorm and engage in ways where they can make these spaces more “green.” Building from the lessons provided, this assignment encompasses these ideas and allows students to apply what they have learned and connect their knowledge to a familiar space, encouraging them to think about how they can create or hope for change in their community. This assignment may be used as a way of gauging student understanding of environmental change and concepts relating to sustainability, so it can be done at the beginning of the year.

### Student Assignment Description:

We have been discussing the structures and environment that help to make up our community and have also learned about the ways we can make these spaces “greener!” Now, it is your turn to pick a place and “greenify” it.

1. Pick a community space that you want to make more eco-friendly or green! This can be the classroom, a house, your favourite park, or a community centre. Feel free to pick any space that you are most interested in. Check in with your teacher for final approval before you begin the next step.
2. Brainstorm a list of ways you can change this space or use this space in a way that is more environmentally friendly. Think of some of the ideas we discussed in class: turning off the lights, gardening, recycling, walking or biking, or other ways we can demonstrate caring for the environment! Pick at least 3 ways you can change or alter your space.
3. Draw your new and improved space on a piece of paper. Use one natural or recycled element that you gathered or created during our nature walk while drawing your space.
4. Complete the [attached worksheet](#). This worksheet will be your submission guide for marking, and ultimately help capture your big ideas. Include the name of your chosen space, why you chose it, explain the natural material used in your piece and list the 3+ environmental changes you have made to the space.

## Accommodation Suggestions

Accommodations may include:

- fewer than 3 environmental changes to the space
- an alternative way of presenting their space (orally)
- verbally completing their worksheet

# Appendix A

## Link to Lesson 1 Slide deck on “Greening Practices”

[https://www.canva.com/design/DAGc8tLi3Bs/szITgBqcS4vj42fCBLWCag/edit?utm\\_content=DAGc8tLi3Bs&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link2&utm\\_source=sharebutton](https://www.canva.com/design/DAGc8tLi3Bs/szITgBqcS4vj42fCBLWCag/edit?utm_content=DAGc8tLi3Bs&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton)

## Lesson 1 Exit Ticket Template

The image shows a template for an exit ticket. It features a light gray rounded rectangle on a white background. The title "Exit Ticket" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font at the top center. Below the title, there is a small, empty rectangular box with a dashed border. The first question, "Which community space will you imagine 'greenifying' in your artwork?", is written in a black, handwritten-style font. Below this question, there is a large, empty rectangular area for writing. The second question, "What are your 3 'greening' strategies?", is also written in the same handwritten-style font. Below this question, there are three bullet points, each represented by a small black dot. The template is decorated with stylized black line art: a circular shape with three dots on the top left, a leafy branch on the top right, and a vertical line with three loops on the bottom left. There are also decorative diagonal lines in the top right and bottom left corners of the overall image.

# Exit Ticket

Which community space will you imagine "greenifying" in your artwork?

What are your 3 "greening" strategies?

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- 
-

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Creating Change in our Community

The space I have chosen is \_\_\_\_\_

I have picked this space because...

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Explain the natural material used in your art piece.

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Describe the 3+ changes you imagined making to your space that has resulted in it being more environmentally friendly.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Creating Change in our Community- Checklist

### My Project Checklist

- ☐ I have chosen a space in my community that I am imagining making environmentally-focused improvements to.
- ☐ I have received approval from my teacher about my chosen space.
- ☐ I have brainstormed 3+ changes I can make to my space to make it more environmentally friendly.
- ☐ I have gathered a natural material to use in my drawing.
- ☐ I have completed my drawing on paper, making sure my environmental changes to the space are clear, my natural material has been used, and my picture is coloured!

### Teacher's Marking Checklist

- ☐ Student has picked a defined space and has clearly made 3 or more environmental changes to that space.
- ☐ The 3+ environmental changes are realistic and relate to class discussions regarding sustainability (Lesson 1)
- ☐ Student has completed a reflection using the "Creating Change in the Community" worksheet.
- ☐ At least one natural material has been used within the drawing.
- ☐ Drawing is complete, clear, and coloured.

# References

Be a Green Kid. *KidsHealth*. Retrieved from <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/go-green.html>

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2022). Grade 3, Science and Technology, <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum/science-technology/grades/grade-3>

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009). Grade 3, The Arts, <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum/elementary-arts/grades/grade-3>

## Recommended Resources

Protecting Our Planet Starts With You. National Ocean Service. Retrieved from <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/ocean/earthday.html>

Recycling for Kids: Recycling Plastic, Glass and Paper: Recycle Symbol: Kids Academy. (2018). Kids Academy. Retrieved from [https://youtu.be/6jQ7y\\_qQYUA?si=FinmN5JQQUNImR-C](https://youtu.be/6jQ7y_qQYUA?si=FinmN5JQQUNImR-C)

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What Gardens Can Do for Social and Environmental Sustainability. (2017). Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness. Retrieved from <https://www.socialconnectedness.org/what-gardens-can-do-for-social-and-environmental-sustainability/#:~:text=Like%20green%20spaces%2C%20gardens%20participate,b,y%20enabling%20reverberation%20and%20evapotranspiration.>

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