



January/February Green Team Activities: Environmental Justice

People impact the health of our environment and the health of our environment impacts people. Environmental problems do not affect all people or communities equally. As we begin a new year, we are focusing on how environment, human health, and social justice are connected. We recommend pairing context resources with activities your Green Team or class can carry out. Activities can be used asynchronously via email or community boards, or synchronously in virtual meetings.

Resources for building context

1. Reading recommendations for virtual book clubs or to provide context for activities

Elementary school recommendations

- [How to Help the Earth by the Lorax](#) with Tish Rabe (grades K-3)
- [We Are Water Protectors](#) by Carole Lindstrom and Michaela Goade (grades 3-5)
- [Environmental Justice...What Does That Mean?](#) by the National Institute of Environmental Health (grades 3-6)

Middle and high school recommendations

- [In Seattle's Polluted Valley, Pandemic and Particulates are Twin Threats](#) by John Ryan, KUOW, 5/15/20 (grades 6-12)
- [Science, Salmon and Environmental Justice in Uncertain Times](#) by George Thomas, Jr., UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs, 10/19/20 (grades 9-12)

2. Video recommendations

- [What is Environmental Justice](#) from Center for Earth, Energy, and Democracy (grades 3-8): This animated storyline shows environmental justice in a community.
- [Environmental Justice, Explained](#) from Grist (grades 3-12)
- [Youth & Climate: Tonyisha, Climate Justice and Air Pollution in Illinois](#) (grades 6-12): Tonyisha is a young person impacted by climate change and environmental injustice.
- [Khan Academy: Environmental justice | Social Inequality](#) (grades 6-12): Provides a short, high-level overview of connections between environmental justice and social inequality.
- [Van Jones--Environmental Justice](#) (grades 9-12): In this TEDx talk, Van Jones discusses the links between our disposable culture, environmental issues, and social justice.
- [Why COVID-19 is an Environmental Justice Issue Too](#) (grades 9-12): Mustafa Santiago-Ali, Vice President of Environmental Justice, National Wildlife Federation, describes how environmental injustice in low-income communities and communities of color leads to higher incidences of complications and deaths from COVID-19.

3. **Questions for students** – to accompany the reading or video recommendations
- When you hear environmental justice, what do you think?
 - Does everyone have the same access to clean air, water, and outdoor places?
 - What happens to people in communities where there is a lot of pollution?
 - Who is usually most affected by pollution and other environmental issues?
 - Can you think of examples in or near your community where environmental problems are affecting some groups of people more than others?
 - Are there things you heard or read today that you want to understand better?
 - What have you heard or read that inspires you to take action on environmental justice?

Activities

1. [What is Environmental Justice?](#) (grades 3-5): This lesson plan empowers students to learn how air pollution affects people of color and those living in poverty, and it uses a map to locate environmental injustice.
2. **Window art** (elementary school): After discussing context resources on environmental justice and environmental protection, students can create window art to share with their neighbors.
3. [Learning to Give: Environmental Justice Toolkit](#) (grades K-12): The toolkit provides definitions, resources, and project ideas for service, advocacy, and research. Although based in Michigan, many activities can be used anywhere.
4. [Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#) (EJSCREEN) (middle and high school): Students can use this EPA mapping tool to find demographic and environmental information about their own communities. In each region, students can select various categories to discover levels of pollution, proximity to contaminated sites, and more. Students can discuss: a) What conclusions can you draw from the data?; b) What neighborhoods are most affected by environmental hazards?; and c) Who lives in those neighborhoods?
5. **Students report** (high school): Students can research and create news stories (via art, articles, social media, or videos) on environmental justice issues important to them. Youth Media provides a [DIY toolkit for youth journalism](#).
6. **Advocacy** (middle and high school): Students can [find](#) their federal, state, and local representatives, then visit an elected official's website to find contact information for sending letters or scheduling a meeting on an environmental justice issue. The 2021 Washington State legislative session, which will operate remotely, began January 11 and will end April 25. Students can read an [overview](#) of the state's legislative process and [find bills introduced by keywords](#) to support, oppose, or recommend amendments.