



Planning A Teach-In: Simulation Activity

Introduction:

This activity was designed to place your audience in the shoes of a community facing an important environmental issue. The scenarios and worksheet will guide students through the process of identifying an environmental hazard and planning a community-based event to help educate the public and work together to take action. The scenarios are written to represent both school age community members and a general audience, but all of them can be re-written and adapted to fit your specific audience. Once your audience is comfortable with planning their simulated teach-in, they can work on planning a real one for their community!

Background:

TEACH IN n. - a series of lectures and discussions on a subject of public interest focused on taking action

In 1970, during an era of civic action and public demonstrations, concerned citizens from all walks of life deployed environmental teach-ins at the first Earth Day. Around the USA, they gathered to learn the facts about environmental degradation happening across the country. Earth Day teach-ins helped educate and mobilize citizens across America to demand that Congress act to protect the environment.

The environmental teach-in will be just as relevant and crucial to the success of Earth Day 2020 as it was to the first Earth Day in 1970. In this new era of climate change and climate activism, teach-ins are once again a meaningful way for communities to come together to address local environmental issues.

Steps:

1. Divide your audience into 6 small groups and hand out the scenarios to each group.
2. Give groups 20-60 minutes to read through their scenarios and go through the planning worksheet together.
3. Have each group present their scenario to the room and explain their decision making.
4. Discuss what environmental issues are relevant and important to your community members.
5. Use [Earth Day Network's 2020 Teach-In Toolkit](#) to plan a real teach-in event!

Contact Us: www.EarthDay.org • 202-518-0044 • education@earthday.org
Register your Teach-In at <https://www.earthday.org/take-action-now/>

Teach-In Planning Worksheet

Group Scenario: _____

Group Members: _____

1. Why is it important to gain community buy-in for your chosen scenario?
2. Set goals for the teach-in. What outcomes do you hope your audience will accomplish after the teach-in?
3. What kind of speakers would be effective to speak to your community about this topic?
4. Who are some potential partners that could help make your event successful? (Think outside the box)
5. What stakeholders/people in your community should attend the event?
6. What are some sample calls to action our audience members may suggest? What actions can they take to accomplish our goal?
7. What potential obstacles are there to accomplishing your goals? How can you overcome them?
8. How can you follow up with your audience after the event to check in on their actions?

Group Scenarios

Scenario #1 – What’s in my drinking water?

Scenario – Your local newspaper published a story that your community’s drinking water supply tested positive for levels of lead and iron well above the legal health limit. People in the community are worried about the impacts of this contaminated water but feel helpless in what to do. Some local groups have tried to bring it up to the city, but efforts have not been well organized.

Scenario #2 – How secure and sustainable is my food?

Scenario – The International Panel on Climate Change released a special report this week on the impacts of agricultural land use and food waste. Your school does not offer many vegetarian options or compost any leftovers. You have heard some of your peers wanting to reduce their impact, but they don’t know how to make a change at school.

Scenario #3 – How are insect populations changing?

Scenario – You recently found out that your school switched to using a new pesticide on school grounds that is linked with the rapid decline of pollinators. You and some classmates agree that your school grounds should be insect and pollinator friendly but aren’t sure what actions to take to encourage the school to change their practice.

Scenario #4 – What is the extent of plastic pollution?

Scenario – Your city used to collect a wide variety of recyclables. After China announced that they will no longer be accepting the world’s bulk of recycling your city has discontinued its collection service. Many of your neighbors and community members have expressed disappointment in the change but don’t know what they can do. Many of them have begun just throwing their plastics away. Since the change you have also noticed an increase of plastic litter in the roadways, parks and streams.

Scenario #5 – What are the local impacts of climate change?

Scenario – Six of the hottest years on record globally have occurred in the past decade. The impacts of Earth’s rising temperatures are particularly hard on urban communities like yours where green spaces are few. You have noticed that heat related illnesses are more common and that your community is struggling to find relief in the hottest months.

Scenario #6 – How does air quality vary locally?

Scenario – During a unit on pollution your class monitored air quality around your school throughout the day. The data showed pollutants exceeded the recommended healthy levels in the morning and afternoon when buses and cars arrived to transport students, and that the highest levels were recorded near the outdoor sports facilities where gym class takes place. You are concerned how this pollution impacts the student body and want to encourage your peers and the school to make a change.