



# The 2011-2012 Fairchild Challenge for Elementary Schools Challenge 4: Environmental Action How-to Guide

## I. Overview

The Environmental Action challenge is designed to get students involved in making a difference at home, school, and in the community. This challenge allows great potential for creativity as students are encouraged to come up with their own initiatives that will promote environmental awareness and conservation. By applying lessons from the classroom to real world scenarios, students become civic minded thinkers and actively engaged citizens, while experiencing first-hand how they can make a difference in the world around them.

## II. Approaching the Challenge

For this challenge, group collaboration and multiple projects done throughout the school year are strongly encouraged. Ultimately, this challenge should become an all-school effort, engaging as much of the student body as possible. Remember that you are being asked to undertake projects that raise environmental awareness in the **home, school and community**. Not all of these target areas must be addressed in every single environmental action project, but each of them must be represented by at least one of the projects summarized in the booklet, or points will be deducted.

As students plan for potential projects, keep in mind that the most successful projects are **solution-oriented** with clearly defined outcomes and/or measurable results. It is also important for students to display an understanding of the context and big picture of both the problem and potential solutions, so that the project takes on more relevance and real-world meaning for them, rather than being just an isolated classroom assignment.

As students prepare the booklet to be turned into Fairchild summarizing their projects, please remember that we want to see the **students' work and input**; this is best accomplished through a mixture of their words, images, and examples of student work and data. Make sure that the booklet fully represents all efforts, as judges base their evaluations entirely on the booklet.

Please remember to read the **requirements** for this challenge carefully, and note the **evaluation criteria** listed for this and all challenges. Environmental action projects will be judged on breadth and depth of student involvement, scope of work, concept and knowledge of relevant issues and possible solutions, clarity and presentation.

### **III. Sample Environmental Action Projects**

While creative and original ideas for projects are welcomed, some optional examples are provided below. Please know that you are not required to complete the following suggested projects; in fact creativity is encouraged and opportunities are endless.

*The following examples are provided as suggestions but are not mandatory.*

#### **Home**

- Set a recycling goal for your household
- Create a Florida-friendly habitat in your backyard that invites wildlife and minimizes environmental impact
- Educate and encourage your family to become responsible purchasers and consumers
- Encourage your family to have one sustainable (i.e., meat-free, locally grown, organic) meal each week
- Perform an energy or water audit at home with family members, and implement solutions based on findings

#### **School**

- Host an educational Earth Day event at school
- Host an environmental documentary at school and donate proceeds to an environmental organization
- Have a school grounds clean up, being sure to recycle and/or dispose of materials properly
- Devise a plan to reduce waste at your school, involving recycling as appropriate
- Post environmental tips and reminders on posters in visible locations throughout your school
- Encourage kitchen and maintenance staff to use eco- friendly products
- Conduct a biodiversity inventory of your school grounds, including plants, birds, butterflies, insects and other wildlife

#### **Community**

- Volunteer with a local environmental organization
- Assist with environmental education or initiatives at a local community center
- Host a fundraiser and donate money to an environmental cause
- Write letters about your environmental concerns to local politicians
- Participate in a citizen science project

#### **YouthCaN**

YouthCaN is a global, youth-run organization that uses technology to inspire, connect and educate people worldwide about environmental issues. Through a network of conferences, activities and events, YouthCaN unites environmentally active youth to exchange ideas about the environment and empower others to make a difference in their own communities.

This year, Fairchild will hold its own YouthCaN conference at the Garden on Saturday, March 31. All Fairchild Challenge Elementary schools are invited to participate by

preparing student presentations that will be presented to an audience of the students' peers.

Students are encouraged to present in groups. Presentations should demonstrate hands-on activities and projects that engage the audience members. Presenters are discouraged from using AV equipment in their presentations, but may do so to show images if necessary.

Students should start planning their projects early so they will have plenty of time to implement and experiment with their projects before presenting at YouthCaN.

For more information on YouthCaN, visit [www.youthcanworld.org](http://www.youthcanworld.org). For additional project ideas, see Section III: Sample Environmental Action Projects.

### **III. Environmental Action Resources**

**Books:** (\* indicates Preschool focused text)

\*Chalufour, Ingrid and Worth, Karen. (2003). *Discovering Nature with Young Children*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press

Drake, Jane & Love, Ann. (1993). *Take Action, An environmental book for kids*. New York: World Wildlife Fund Canada.

Drutman, Ava D. & Zuckerman, Susan K. (1991). *Protecting Our Planet. Activities to motivate students to a better understanding of our environmental problems*. Carthage, IL: Good Apple.

Grafton, Allison & Levine, Shar. (1992). *Projects for a Healthy Planet. Simple environmental experiments for kids*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Grant, Tim & Littlejohn, Gail. (Eds.). (2001). *Teaching About Climate Change. Cool schools tackle global warming*. Canada: New Society Publishers.

Lingelbach, Jenepher and Purcell, Lisa. (2002). *Hands-On Nature: Information and Activities for Exploring the Environment with Children*, Revised and Expanded Edition. Woodstock, VT: Vermont Institute of Natural Science.

#### **Websites:**

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden [www.fairchildgarden.org](http://www.fairchildgarden.org)

YouthCaN [www.youthcanworld.org](http://www.youthcanworld.org)

NRDC Green Squad <http://www.nrdc.org/greensquad/default.htm>

Project Learning Tree Green Works! <http://www.plt.org/>

Green Schools Initiative [www.greenschools.net](http://www.greenschools.net)

Green Education Foundation <http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/>

Earth Force <http://www.earthforce.org/>

Environmental Protection Agency Student Center <http://www.epa.gov/students/>

Kids for Saving Earth [http://www.kidsforsavingearth.org/index\\_low.html](http://www.kidsforsavingearth.org/index_low.html)

School Energy Survey Questionnaire  
<http://www.eia.doe.gov/kids/classactivities/SchoolBuildingSurveyIntermediate.pdf>

Children and Nature Network <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

National Environmental Education Foundation <http://www.neefusa.org/>

Action for Nature [www.actionfornature.org](http://www.actionfornature.org)

Alliance to Save Energy <http://www.ase.org/>

Dream in Green <http://dreamingreen.org/>

Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management  
[www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/derm](http://www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/derm)