

TAKING THE LEAD

Adapted from the Pembina Foundation and GreenLearning.ca

Overview: Students take the lead as Presidents of their own Board of Directors charged with identifying and communicating energy saving strategies to their family members.

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Clarify and articulate personal opinions about energy use and waste
- Understand ways to influence opinions through awareness and promotion
- Reflect on their potential to change others' behavior and attitudes about energy use
- Use effective communications

Students will understand:

- How energy is used in their homes, and who in their family uses the energy
- Barriers to changing behaviors and attitudes

Time:

- 45 minutes for introduction and lead-in
- 90 minutes for the main activity
- 45 minutes for wrap up
- Homework assignments outside of class

Subjects: Social Studies, Language Arts

Suggested Grade Level: 4 – 8

Materials:

- Copies of the handout "Energy Related Rules and Responsibilities of the President of the Board of Directors"
- Copies of the handout "Board of Directors Change Chart"

Precautions:

It is advisable to notify parents in advance that students will be participating in an activity in which they pose as Presidents of their family Board of Directors, examine home energy use, develop home energy conservation presentations, and encourage family members to change their energy use behavior.

PREPARATION & BACKGROUND

Lead in:

1. Discuss student's views on energy use and conservation. Ask them to describe the ways that their families use energy, and then ask them how they think their families could reduce their energy use. Record a list of ways to conserve energy on the board.

2. Explain that now is the time for students to take leadership! You are designating them the President of their families' Board of Directors. Ask them for their definitions of a Board of Directors. Explain to them that it is a *group of people, led by a President, who are chosen to govern the affairs of an organization*. In this activity, their entire family is the organization, and the students will lead it. They will be responsible for governing the affairs of the family as they relate to energy use and conservation.
3. Give students a few minutes to list their ideas about what they see as their roles and responsibilities now that they are President of their families' Board of Directors:
 - To develop rules for turning off lights?
 - To teach family members about energy conservation?
 - To limit the number of hours that each family member can watch TV, use the computer, or other appliances?
4. Ask volunteers to share their lists. Put their answers on the board, and when you have a good number of energy-saving ideas, ask students to identify the five ideas that they consider to be the most important and the most relevant to their family. Give students a copy of the *Energy-Related Rules and Responsibilities* handout. Ask them to record those 5 ideas and sign the paper.
5. Encourage students to think about their responsibilities and how they intend to influence their Board to use energy more wisely. Hand out the Board of Directors Change Chart. Students put their own names in the first blank space and then write down what they do to waste energy. Write these categories on the board to help them:
 - Entertainment: How much TV do you watch? Do you leave the TV on when you are not in the room? Do you leave your radio or stereo playing when you're not there?
 - Water Use: Do you leave the tap running when you brush your teeth? Do you take long showers?
 - Lighting and Appliances: Do you use efficient light bulbs and appliances? Are there lights and appliances that could be turned off or unplugged?
 - Heating: Do you put a sweater on when you are cold, or do you turn the heat up? Is your house colder than it could be in the summer?
 - Transportation: Do you always travel by car even if walking or biking is an option? Do you carpool?
6. After they have entered information about themselves, ask them to write the names of other family members and use the same categories to identify ways for each of them to improve their energy savings. Give students 10 minutes to complete the chart and share their results.
 - *You may want to communicate the importance of gently approaching these changes with family members because everyone uses energy differently, and you want to teach people, not TELL people how and why to change.

PROCEDURE

1. Ask students to think about their favorite TV commercials and what makes them effective. Make a list of the strategies used by these companies to make you want to buy their products:
 - a. They use catchy music
 - b. There is a testimony by someone popular, famous, or deemed to be an “expert”
 - c. They use humor
 - d. They use facts or data to make their product look best
 - e. They use polls or research studies
 - f. Claims of superiority and effectiveness
 - g. Targeting their commercials to different audiences

2. After reviewing a number of strategies, challenge each student to plan a presentation to promote energy conservation to their own Board of Directors. The presentation can consist of a brief video, a poster, PowerPoint, or some other medium. Presidents can rely on the information recorded on their Change Chart to help them target their presentation. You could hold a discussion about some of the challenges that students might face:
 - a. Is there someone in your family who might not want to change their behavior to conserve energy? Why?
 - b. How will your presentation reach a family member who is resistant to change? What information will you need to present to help them learn and change their mind?
 - c. Can you describe this activity to your family members soon so that they are aware of their involvement?

3. Select a day for the students to preview their presentations with a classmate. Put students in pairs to make their presentations and provide feedback to each other. After previewing their work with their partner, they can also troubleshoot any problems they have had in developing their presentations.

4. Give students a range of dates within which to deliver their presentation to their Board of Directors.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. After all students have presented to their Board of Directors, have a class discussion to talk about the results.
 - a. Did you prepare your family for the presentation?
 - b. How did your family members respond to your presentation?
 - c. Did they ask you any questions about energy use and conservation? Were you able to answer their questions?
 - d. Do you think your family members will change come of their behavior and begin using energy more wisely? If yes, what do you think they will do? If no, why do you think they are resistant to change?
 - e. What do you believe would be the easiest energy conservation change to make in your home? Why?

2. Record the predicted behavior changes on the board. Ask students to identify five commitments their family can make toward becoming more energy efficient.
3. Tell students to create a document that lists the five commitments and provides space for each family member to sign. By signing, family members are committing to do their part in helping conserve energy. When all family members have signed the documents, they can be displayed throughout the classroom or at home to remind students and their families about the impact of their presentations and their commitments towards saving energy.

EXTENSIONS

- Preview all student presentations to choose one that will be presented to the class as a whole, another classroom, the PTA, or the whole school. Students can work together to adapt the chosen presentation to present as a culmination of their energy unit.
- Appeal to school administrators as well. Make students the President of another Board of Directors – this one consisting of the Principal, Vice Principal, teachers, and/or maintenance staff. Students can work to make presentations asking the Board to make their school more energy efficient.

ENERGY-RELATED RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As President of the _____ (family name) Board of Directors, I am responsible for bringing the value of energy conservation to the Board's attention and for encouraging the Board to act on the many benefits that conservation will bring. I commit to using my knowledge to the best of my ability to help this Board learn more about energy, move towards a more energy efficient household, and celebrate our achievements.

I will help do this in the following ways:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

By increasing the _____ (family name) Board's understanding of energy use and conservation and by encouraging them to become more energy efficient, I am helping my Board support a strong and healthy economy and environment.

(President's Signature)

ENERGY CHANGES CHART

Family Members	Energy Use Activities	Energy Saving Changes
You, for example	Entertainment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch a lot of TV Lighting & Appliances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave lights on after leaving the room • Leave computer on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch no more than 1 hour of TV per day • Turn lights off when I leave the room • Turn off the computer when I am done using it
Additional Changes that the Board of Directors can consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change to CFLs throughout the house • Install a programmable thermostat to adjust the temperature at night and when no one's home • • • 		