

La Pura Vida

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The Loomis Chaffee School

For this challenge, take some time to research campuses around the world that are making strides in sustainability.

- Once you have done some research, pick one of the colleges and list 3 innovations they have adopted to reduce their consumption of fossil fuels.
 - Out of these 3, are there any that could be implemented on your campus?
 - What idea might be a plausible option for your school?
 - What do you think are the barriers to its implementation?

I remember accompanying my sister on several of her college visits. When entering Hampshire college, I couldn't help but notice the beautiful forest atmosphere, heightened by the fact that the college supplies 100% of its own energy. For whatever reason, I also remember the composting toilet as well. Funny how the most random things leave an impression. The college actually is one of the few institutions which has been awarded a STARS Gold rating for sustainability. They've succeeded so much in this respect by relying fully on solar energy, a big but worthy investment. So in addition, they use no fossil fuels! In addition, the campus is home to higher education's largest certified Living Building. They have also reduced fees and emissions by no longer mowing their lawns, instead keeping them as natural valleys. They also work to not only grow produce in their gardens, but incorporate them into the campus food selection.

My school, Loomis Chaffee already has the beginnings of becoming a school with great sustainability programs similar to Hampshire's. For example, we are constructing solar panels at the present, have a greenhouse, and faculty gardens, as well as include both students and faculty in work of promoting sustainability. I remember one change that Loomis was proud of several years ago was the implementation of the water bottle refill stations. Currently, our Environmental Proctors (a volunteer student position) have taken actions to remove all (if not, most) sales of plastic bottles from our bookstore as well. Our changes haven't stopped there! However, of course, there are options which could push our school to the next level of sustainability. We could possibly implement a composting toilet, or start using the produce we grow for an actual food source (rather than just selling it to faculty, as we usually do), or decreasing our lawn care. To me, all of these options sound perfectly reasonable. Yes, the campus-grown produce is only available in the spring and summer months, but we should utilize it when we can. As for the lawn care, yes, sports fields need to be mowed; however, it wouldn't

do harm (in my opinion) to let our grass grow longer around campus and look more natural. We have beautiful facilities, we do not need to worry about the precision of our lawns as well, that it what lawn chairs are for. However, pleasing high schoolers isn't always so easy. Teachers and students alike may dislike the look of a grown out lawn, and complain. It may not uphold the prestigious New England prep school look that we may want to have going for us. But again, these are minor issues. The composting toilet may be avoided by students, but with enough encouragement, we can invest our students in the belief that a) it isn't all that gross, and b) it's contributing to a greener, more sustainable world, and therefore worth it. I have excitement and hope for the bettering of our sustainability program here at LC!