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Greener Day 5

To begin, I would like to thank Project Green for making me aware of this Ted Talk. Watching it, as the challenge alluded to, was incredibly inspirational. As a world, if we take an initiative to help preserve the world that we live in, we will not only feel the environmental benefits, but also the mental and emotional benefits of being in a clean environment.

This weekend, I am going on my East-Coast college tours, as I am a junior in high school. Today, I visited Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Indeed, before even reading today's challenge, I noticed several highly noteworthy ideas to promote carbon neutrality that I hope will be adapted in other campuses around the country as well.

First, at quite a few faculty office doors, there was a little slip of paper (see picture). The paper indicated that the faculty member has signed a "Sustainability Pledge." Even before I looked up what this meant in regards to the specific campus, I thought that the piece of paper in itself was brilliant. It would remind the person who did the pledge of their pledge on a daily basis; it would advertise the pledge to others; and it would allow the person who signed the pledge to brag a little, thereby feeling good about some smaller sacrifices for the environment. Such an approach could be adopted to many schools, and the context of the pledge could, in turn be adjusted to fit the needs of many institutions. In some places, it could mean to come to school via public transportation or walking instead of cars, it could mean taking the stairs instead of an elevator, it could mean using less air conditioning or heating, or it could mean anything else that helps reduce the carbon footprint. Then, I looked up what the initiative means at Johns Hopkins, and I learned that each person writes in for themselves what this means to them in three environmental commitments. I like this, because most people like teachers and professors have the means to figure out where they could make a difference in changing their daily routine.



Next, Johns Hopkins has an intricate recycling, composting, and zero waste programs. While many schools incorporate recycling into their waste reduction, not many will compost or try to go zero waste. In the sense of recycling, the colleges on campus use "at least 50% post-consumer recycled content for bathroom products, with most using 100%" (sustainability.jhu.edu). Everything from cups, to napkins, to bowls that I was given to use for

food was compostable. This organic and biodegradable waste is collected for compost on campus and “is taken off-site to a service facility where it is processed into soil for gardening and farming in the region” (sustainability.jhu.edu). These sorts of compostable or biodegradable containers could be implemented at the highschool level as well, as most students buy their lunches every day and throw everything away. Johns Hopkins also prides themselves in the fact that many of their major campus events are zero waste through careful planning and procurement. Some of these include orientation, commencement, move-in, move-out, and SOHOP. If a major university can make major events with thousands of people zero-waste, then the idea can surely be implemented in high schools.

Finally, I noticed on the Johns Hopkins University website a long list of strategies and considerations to reduce carbon emissions. This list includes several more noteworthy ideas. However, what I would like to report is that their website and their list indicate that the school has a board that constantly monitors anything of relieve in regard to sustainability. This monitoring constitutes the third point I want to propose to be adapted elsewhere, including at my high school. Every school and institution should find a board or group of people who dig into carbon emissions, pollutants, and all energy ETC and develop ideas specific to their very institution to combat whatever they find. In some schools, this might be bad insulation, in others, it could be educating the students about environmental issues, and the like.

What would be the barriers to implement these ideas at my school? It turns out that item number one and three are not costly. They take cooperation from faculty and administrators and at least an OK from the principal of the high school. This is doable, but it does require a lasting effort and commitment by some. I find it inspiring that this is possible. The second item may be difficult to implement simply because it is a big change to they way the school manages their waste. We are affiliated with a specific recycling and waste company who do not have a composting option. However, there is a local business centered around local composting that we have been starting to work with at my school. We have a few buckets in the teacher lounges, and hope to see the program grow in our school.