



CITIZEN CLIMATE

Grades 9-12



**CLIMATE
GENERATION**
A WILL STEGER LEGACY

Dear Educator

A climate literate student understands not only the science behind the drivers of climate change, but also social, economic and political causes and implications. Additionally they should be able to meaningfully communicate about climate change to help others make informed and responsible decisions. This curriculum will help you provide your students with knowledge of the basic concepts of climate change policy and negotiation. It will allow your students to understand media coverage of climate policy negotiation, in both national and international arenas. It will also help your students develop skills needed to make their opinions heard.

This curriculum was developed with the recognition that many opinions exist about approaches society should take in response to climate change. This curriculum avoids “advocating” certain positions. Instead, it strives to provide accurate information from well-respected sources. It presents differing opinions on issues and guides students to form their own conclusions.

The curriculum is linked to National Standards and Minnesota State Standards. Most lessons can be completed in one class period. Each lesson plan provides all the information you will need to conduct the lesson. The lessons are designed for high school classes, but could be adopted for use with other age levels. The topics include:

- **Carbon cycle:** What is the global carbon “budget”?
- **Target Atmospheric Carbon Levels:** Where should society aim? What are the views of different players? What does the best science say?
- **Climate Technologies:** What role should technology play in the effort to stabilize climate?
- **Cap and Trade:** How does it work?
- **Carbon Tax:** How does it work?
- **Equity in International Negotiations:** How do the individual situations of countries influence their ideas of equity?
- **Crafting a position statement:** What makes a powerful letter? How does one craft a letter? Who are key decision makers to whom letters can be addressed?

Each lesson in this curriculum can stand on its own. Together, however, they will give your students enough knowledge to understand media coverage and to craft a well-informed position statement. If your students need a better background understanding of the basic concepts of climate change, consider using Climate Generation’s *Our Changing Climate* curriculum. They are available for free download at www.climategen.org/curricula-resources.

Thank you for your dedication to developing climate literate students,

The Climate Generation Education Team

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Citizen Climate 9-12 Lesson Organizer

Lesson/Objectives	Lesson Materials
<p>LESSON 1: THE CARBON CYCLE</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore aspects of the global carbon cycle that have implications for climate policy decisions • Present knowledge using a creative medium • Reflect on what can be done to protect and enhance natural carbon sinks 	Lesson 1 Handout
<p>LESSON 2: CLIMATE TARGETS</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider decisions about climate targets as an exercise in risk management • Weigh the potential risks and costs of each target • Decide individually what target each student thinks society should adopt 	Lesson 2 Handouts 1-5
<p>LESSON 3: NEW TECHNOLOGIES</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore differing opinions about the role new technologies should play in efforts to slow climate change • Weigh potential strengths and weaknesses of different proposals • Make recommendations about which roles for technology climate policy should encourage 	Lesson 3 Position Handouts 1-4
<p>LESSON 4: STABILIZING EMISSIONS</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research different technologies available today that are capable of significantly reducing carbon emissions • Make decisions about which strategies to include in a portfolio of strategies aimed at stabilizing emissions • Reflect on the scale of effort needed if society were to become serious about stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of carbon 	<p>1 copy of Instructions and Wedge Table per student (print single-sided to allow use of game board pieces!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Wedge worksheet and 1 game board with multi-colored wedge pieces per group, plus scissors for cutting out game pieces and glue sticks or tape to secure pieces to game board • Optional - overhead transparencies, posters, or other materials for group presentations
<p>LESSON 5: CARBON CAP AND TRADE</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a model of a cap and trade market for greenhouse gas emissions • Engage in trading of carbon permits with the goal of reducing emissions in the most cost-effective ways • Reflect on strengths and weaknesses of the cap-and-trade model 	Lesson 5 Game Handouts
<p>LESSON 6: CARBON TAX</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the basics of a carbon tax • Students will role-play a round table discussion investigating the possibilities for a carbon tax • Summarize and reflect on potential strengths and weaknesses of a carbon tax 	Role-Play Handouts 1-5

Citizen Climate Lesson Organizer, cont.

Lesson/Objectives	Lesson Materials
<p>LESSON 7: INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize the different principles of equity in climate change decision-making Predict which types of climate proposals might be most acceptable to different types of countries Reflect on challenges to international climate negotiations, posed by equity concerns 	<p>Handouts 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 Country Group Handouts</p>
<p>LESSON 8: POSITION STATEMENT</p> <p>45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on the previous lessons on climate targets, policy, and negotiations Identify personal positions on issues presented in each of the lessons Choose a decision maker to address their letters to Craft a well-supported position statement Have the option to mail their letters 	<p>Addresses of Decision Makers Handout</p>



Lesson 1: The Carbon Cycle

What are its implications for climate policy?

Question	What aspects of the carbon cycle must be considered in climate policy?
Age Level	High School
Objective	Students will explore aspects of the global carbon cycle that have implications for climate policy decisions. Students will present their knowledge using a creative medium. Students will reflect on what can be done to protect and enhance natural carbon sinks.
Time Needed	At least one 45-minute period

INTRODUCTION (5 min)

Many people are familiar with the concept of climate change. It is understood that carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases (such as methane, water vapor and nitrous oxide) act like a blanket, reradiating infrared heat back to Earth and raising the average temperature of the planet.

At the same time, we find that there is persistent confusion about the carbon cycle among people of all ages. What is it and how does it work? Why is it important? How have humans altered it? How has the planet responded to human-forced changes in the carbon cycle? What aspects of this are important to understand when making climate policy decisions?

This activity will give students the opportunity to explore these questions. This knowledge will lay the foundation for future explorations into climate policy.

EXPLAIN AND CONDUCT THE ACTIVITY (20 min)

Each student will receive a handout containing the following sections:

- What is the carbon cycle?
- The difference between short-term and long-term cycles
- The planet's carbon budget
- The "missing sinks"

STUDENTS DIVIDE INTO GROUPS OF EIGHT. WITHIN THE GROUPS:

- Students read the handout, taking turns reading aloud as the other group members follow along.
- After reading the entire handout, students divide into four pairs within each group.
 - Each pair takes responsibility for one of the four sections of the handout.
 - Pairs carefully re-read the section.
 - Each pair then discusses the reading, checking for comprehension.
 - Each pair then creates an original visual aid to explain and illustrate the concepts in the reading.
- Groups of eight reconvene. Pairs present their visual aid to the group, explaining core concepts.
- Groups of eight present their visual aids to the entire class.



Notes to Teachers:

While it is natural for the climate to fluctuate, the rate and extreme changes in temperature since the industrial revolution is far from normal. There is no debate about whether or not increased levels of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere will warm the planet. The only uncertainty lies in knowing how much and how quickly the planet will warm.

Lesson 2: Climate Targets

Where should we aim?



Question	What are the supporting arguments for different target levels for atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide?
Age-Level	High School
Objective	Students will consider decisions about climate targets as an exercise in risk management. Students will weigh the potential risks and costs of each target. Each student will decide individually what target he or she thinks society should adopt.
Time Needed	At least one 45-minute period

INTRODUCTION (5 min)

Every five to seven years, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a scientific body under the auspices of the United Nations, releases a summary report on the latest climate science. The report summarizes the most current knowledge compiled by thousands of scientists working around the world. It is generally regarded by the global scientific community as the most credible report on climate change.

The IPCC published its most recent report in 2013. Like all of their reports, it contains the results of climate data collection and projections about what impacts this data could have over the course of the next century. While the projections vary, even the most conservative projections have likely dramatic and dire consequences for Earth systems and humanity, including melting ice caps, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, changing temperature and precipitation trends and more.”

However, debates abound in the media and in political arenas about what actions (if any) should be taken to address climate change. People question, for example: What are individual countries responsible for doing in response to the climate change data of the IPCC?

- Fossil fuels are nonrenewable and will eventually deplete once all gas, oil, and coal are extracted from the Earth. Transitioning to a renewable energy future provides economic security.

New York Times science writer, Andrew Revkin, reflected in his Dot Earth blog, “Everyone I know who works in conflict resolution . . . says it’s a good example to start with points of possible accord.” He then outlines points that even “foes of emission restrictions” can agree upon. They include:

- The planet’s existing energy choices and habits will lead to an enormous buildup of greenhouse gases, particularly as large developing countries industrialize.
- A big buildup of long-lived greenhouse gases will very likely influence the climate in a host of ways that could impede the journey toward a stable, prospering human population later this century.

Source:

Revkin, A. C. "An Update on Climate and Energy Basics" Dot Earth Blog, *The New York Times*. Accessed on March 13, 2009. <<http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/13/back-to-some-basics/>>.

If the above points are widely agreed upon, even by “foes of emission reductions,” what are the points of debate?

- Climate science is quite clear on the fact that increased concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases will warm the earth. There is no uncertainty about this.
- There is uncertainty, however, when scientists try to predict precisely how quickly the earth will warm and how extreme the changes within a certain time will be.
 - To deal with this uncertainty, scientists express their projections in terms of probabilities of outcomes within certain ranges.
 - As scientific knowledge increases, and as time passes and more changes are observed, scientists update their projections. These projections are still expressed in terms of probabilities of outcomes within certain ranges.

Lesson 3: New Technologies

Do we need them to meet the climate challenge?



Question	What should be the role for new technologies in slowing climate change?
Age-Level	High School
Objective	Students will explore differing opinions about the role new technologies should play in efforts to slow climate change. Students will weigh potential strengths and weaknesses of different proposals. Students will make recommendations about which roles for technology climate policy should encourage.
Time Needed	At least one 45-minute period

PROVIDE BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR YOUR STUDENTS (5 min)

Technology is evolving rapidly - and in some ways presents new possible ways to prevent or reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow climate change. We'll touch on the following (and more) and we will also discuss to what extent we can rely on new technology as an answer:

- Renewable energy: The sun, wind, ocean currents, and others are energy sources that don't require burning fossil fuels to make electricity
- Carbon capture and storage: Trees absorb CO₂ out of the atmosphere and there are new technologies that mimic this trait
- Energy efficiency: New appliances, vehicles and more are being developed to use less energy to do the same amount of work
- Energy from biotechnology: Imagine growing gasoline or fuels from plants or bacteria—this is being studied by some scientists.

Source:

Tin, T. *Climate Change: Faster, Stronger, Sooner: An overview of the climate science published since the UN IPCC Fourth Assessment Report*. World Wildlife Fund. 2008.

INTRODUCE THE CENTRAL QUESTION (5 min)

The students will have the opportunity to examine different opinions about the role technology should play in the effort to slow climate change.

- Given the scale of action needed to slow climate change, some experts believe we need new technologies to meet the challenge. They propose massive spending in research and development as well as investment in education to train a new generation of scientists and engineers.
- Others believe we have all the technologies we need to start dramatically reducing our emissions. They argue that what we need is willpower to implement the existing technologies. They fear if we pin our hopes on new technologies that are yet to be practical, we may end up waiting too long to take action.
- Others believe that we have already waited too long. They see technology—in the form of geo-engineering—as our only hope to buy some time while we figure out how to lower our emissions.
- The question we are going to be exploring together is: “What is the role of new technology in slowing and preventing climate change?”

Lesson 4: Stabilizing Emissions

Playing the “Wedge Game”



Question	What type of effort would be required to stabilize atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide using the technologies we have available now?
Age-Level	High School
Objective	<p>Students will research different technologies available today that are capable of significantly reducing carbon emissions.</p> <p>Students will make decisions about which strategies they would include in a portfolio of strategies aimed at stabilizing emissions.</p> <p>Students will reflect on the scale of effort needed if society were to become serious about stabilizing atmospheric concentrations of carbon.</p>
Time Needed	At least two-45 minute periods

FAMILIARIZE YOUR STUDENTS WITH THE IDEA OF STABILIZATION WEDGES.
CONDUCT THE LESSON AND PLAY THE GAME AS DESCRIBED HERE:

<http://cmi.princeton.edu/wedges/>

- The game materials suggest spending two to three class periods.
- The game is based on the 2004 paper by Princeton’s Robert Socolow and Stephen Pacala.
 - At the time that paper was written, annual world emissions were 7 GtC (gigatons of carbon). Each stabilization wedge represents one GtC, so the original version of the wedge game asks students to choose 7 wedges to stabilize emissions.
 - As of 2009, annual global emissions are 8 GtC. An updated version (November 2007) of the wedge game includes 8 wedges.
- Find the Teacher’s Guide, gameboard and materials available to you at the following website: <http://cmi.princeton.edu/wedges/game.php>

After playing the wedge game, provide updated information and perspectives to your students:

- Total annual emissions have increased since this game was designed.
 - As mentioned above, the 2004 Socolow and Pacala (S&P) paper was based on then-current global emissions of 7 GtC a year. 2009 annual emission levels are 8 GtC (this is why the updated version of the game has 8 wedges rather than 7).
 - The 7 stabilization wedges in the original version of the game and the 8 stabilization wedges in the updated version stabilize emissions at current levels.
 - Thus, even if we institute the 8 wedges now, our emission level will still be higher than if we had instituted 7 wedges in 2004.



Notes to Teachers:

This lesson involves playing the “Wedge Game,” a lesson plan written by Dr. Roberta Hotinski as part of the Carbon Mitigation Initiative (a joint project of Princeton University, BP, and the Ford Motor Company).

- The wedge concept is a tool for conceptualizing the scale of action needed to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions. The term “stabilization wedge” is commonly used in climate debates and discussions in various arenas.
- This lesson provides updated information and perspectives to make the wedge game an even more relevant and effective educational tool.

Lesson 5: Carbon Cap & Trade

The Musical Chairs Game



Question	How would a cap and trade system work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
Age-Level	High School
Objectives	Students will create a model of a cap and trade market for greenhouse gas emissions. Students will engage in trading of carbon permits with the goal of reducing emissions in the most cost-effective ways. Students will reflect on strengths and weaknesses of the cap-and-trade model.
Time Needed	At least one 45-minute period
Materials	Chairs

ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO SUMMARIZE WHAT THEY ALREADY KNOW ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE. (5 min)

The following points should be reiterated:

- Heat trapping gases (greenhouse gases) released into the atmosphere as a result of human activities are driving climate change.
- 85% of U. S. energy use comes from burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas). This is the biggest driver of climate change.
- Greenhouse gases such as CO₂ are very long-lived in the atmosphere and their buildup has consequences over the course of centuries.
- Climate change impacts can disrupt the planet's crucial life-support systems.
- There is a lag between when greenhouse gases are emitted and when the climate fully responds.
- Leading scientists say we must drastically reduce our emissions to avoid the most catastrophic changes. They say we must start now to achieve these reductions.

Sources:

IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Summary for Policy Makers. 2007.

Navigating by the Numbers, World Resources Institute. 2005.

INTRODUCE YOUR STUDENTS TO THE CONCEPT OF CAP AND TRADE. (5 min)

Explain to your students that one way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is through a carbon cap and trade system. This is based on economics. Basically, it assumes:

- Increasing greenhouse gas emissions have a cost (for example, more severe droughts, floods, storms, disease, rising sea levels, collapsing ecosystems, species extinction).
- The emitters of these gases, however, currently do not have to pay the cost. Currently they can dump emissions into the atmosphere for free.
- Therefore, the prices they charge for their products do not reflect the full cost of the products.
- This results in what economists call a "market failure."
- Establishing a market price for greenhouse gas pollution can help correct the market failure.



Notes to Teachers:

- The underlying assumption is that uses of fossil fuels for which people are willing to pay the most must be the most valuable.
- To minimize climate change most uses of fossil fuels will have to move to a different game: the clean energy economy.
- For practical reasons, most cap-and-trade proposals require only fossil fuel suppliers and other large polluters to play directly. They affect the rest of the economy as they pass on their costs.

Lesson 6: Carbon Tax

A round table discussion



Question	How would a carbon tax work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
Age-Level	High School
Objective	Students will be introduced to the basics of a carbon tax. Students will role-play a round table discussion investigating the possibilities for a carbon tax. Students will summarize and reflect on potential strengths and weaknesses of a carbon tax.
Time Needed	At least one 45-minute period
Materials	Small placards and markers

ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO SUMMARIZE WHAT THEY ALREADY KNOW ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE. (2 min)

The following points should be reiterated:

- Heat trapping gases (greenhouse gases) released into the atmosphere as a result of human activities are driving climate change.
- Greenhouse gases such as CO₂ are very long-lived in the atmosphere and their build up has consequences over the course of centuries.
- 85% of U. S. energy use comes from burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas). This is the biggest driver of climate change.
- Climate change impacts can disrupt the planet's crucial life-support systems.
- There is a lag between when greenhouse gases are emitted and when the climate fully responds.
- Leading scientists say we must drastically reduce our emissions to avoid the most catastrophic changes. They say we must start now to achieve these reductions.

Sources:

IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, Summary for Policy Makers. 2007.

Navigating by the Numbers, World Resources Institute. 2005.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS TO RECALL THE LESSON ON CAP-AND-TRADE. ASK THEM TO SUMMARIZE THE MEANING OF WHAT ECONOMISTS CALL A "MARKET FAILURE" AS IT RELATES TO EMISSIONS OF GREENHOUSE GASES. THE FOLLOWING POINTS SHOULD BE REITERATED: (2 min)

- Increasing greenhouse gas emissions have a cost (for example, more severe droughts, floods, storms, disease, rising sea levels, collapsing ecosystems, species extinction).
- The emitters of these gases, however, do not have to pay the cost. Currently they can dump emissions into the atmosphere for free.
- Therefore the prices they charge for their products do not reflect their full cost.
- Economists call this a "market failure."
- Introducing a cost for carbon emissions can help correct the market failure.

Source:

The Economics of Climate Change, Stern Review Report. 2006.

Lesson 7: International Climate Negotiations

What would it take to get agreement?



Question	How do ideas of climate equity, which differ between and among developed and developing countries, influence potential approaches to international agreement?
Age-Level	High School
Objective	<p>Students will summarize the different principles of equity in climate change decision-making.</p> <p>Students will explain how, depending on countries' differing circumstances, each may have differing opinions about the equity of certain proposals.</p> <p>Students will predict which types of climate proposals might be most acceptable to different types of countries.</p> <p>Students will reflect on challenges posed by equity concerns to international climate negotiations.</p>
Time Needed	At least one 45-minute period (Depending on the needs and interests of your students, this activity might require two class sessions to complete)

INTRODUCE THE IDEA OF EQUITY IN CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS. (4 min)

- Ask your students what they know about the Kyoto Protocol, the most recent effort at international agreements to slow climate change. Specifically what were the main stumbling blocks to broad agreement? Important points to reiterate include:
 - The Kyoto Protocol was negotiated in 1997, and went into force in 2005 (once the required threshold was reached of the protocol being ratified by developed nations accounting for at least 55% of global greenhouse gas emissions).
 - The treaty aimed to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to safe levels using reduction targets that were legally binding for developed nations.
 - Developing countries like India and China were not subject to legally binding targets because their per-capita emissions were still low. They would be allowed to grow their emissions (hopefully in a relatively clean and efficient way—aided by technological and financial assistance from developed countries) to increase the standard of living of their people.
 - The United States, the largest per-capita emitter of greenhouse gases, refused to ratify the treaty because the treaty did not include binding targets and timetables for developing nations. The United States feared that it might lose competitiveness if it had legally binding reduction targets, but China (by 2007, the world's largest total [not per-capita] emitter of greenhouse gases) did not.
 - At the 18th Conference of Parties, in Doha, Qatar, the Doha Amendment instituted a new commitment period given the Kyoto Protocol's expiration in 2012. This new commitment period will extend to 2020.
- Explain that questions of equity have been some of the most contentious issues in efforts at international climate negotiations. Depending on a country's differing circumstances, each may have differing abilities to

Lesson 8: Writing a Position Statement on Climate Change

What actions should decision makers take?



Question	How can/should we as humans respond to Climate Change?
Age-Level	High School
Objective	Students will reflect on the previous lessons on climate targets, policy, and negotiations. Each student will identify personal positions on issues presented in each of the lessons. Each student will choose a decision maker to address. Each student will craft a well-supported position statement. Students will have the option to mail their letters.
Time Needed	At least one 45-minute period

PREPARATION:

Before class, find the addresses of decision makers who represent your students. You might also consider some of the following national contacts:

- The President of the United States is an exciting option, and ultimately might be the most important office to communicate with. Their address is:
The President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500
- The U.S. Department of State is responsible for international relations through US Embassies and Diplomats around the world. The address of their main headquarters is:
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520
- Consider sending letters to The Secretary of State, the nation's chief diplomat/negotiator (John Kerry, as of 06/2014) or The State Department's Special Envoy for Climate Change (Todd Stern, as of 06/2014).
- Also, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is responsible for considering all foreign treaties and would make an appropriate contact for your students. Find who the current leadership of this committee is at: <http://foreign.senate.gov/>. Their address is:
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
- Lastly, you might consider the representatives that are elected to serve your area. Find their information at: <http://beta.congress.gov/members>

FRAME THE ACTIVITY (5 min)

In a democratic society, our elected representatives have a duty to listen to their constituents' opinions. One of the most effective ways to make your opinion heard is to write a letter. A typed or hand-written letter carries the most weight with any recipient, more than an email or signing a petition.

- Students in this class have a powerful voice in the issue of climate change. This is due, in part, to the following reasons:
 - After completing the previous lesson plans on climate change science, policy, and negotiations, you know more about the issue than most people.



Notes to Teachers:

- Students participating in this activity by December 2009 will have the opportunity to send a copy of their letter to the U.S. Youth Delegation attending the international climate negotiations in Copenhagen, Denmark. Students can also follow multi-media blogs and other updates from the youth delegation. Find information at <http://www.climategen.org/blog/tag/citizenclimate912/>