

# ***Going Green***

## ***The Green Book Shows How To Save the Planet, One Simple Step at a Time***

By Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas M. Kostigen

**T**he environment and global warming are on people's minds like never before. Students especially are thinking more and more about the effects of climate change. And they are worried, very worried. In fact, according to a survey by BrainPOP, an education and information provider, school kids worry more about global warming than terrorism, the war in Iraq, or cancer. Yet, many students may not know that they themselves have the power to help fight global warming. It doesn't take much—just a few simple steps that can add up to big change.

In our book, *The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet, One Simple Step at a Time*, we provide hundreds of easy solutions for students (and teachers) to undertake. Celebrities weigh in too, explaining what they do to be more environmentally friendly.

"There are two activities in my personal life that give me limitless amounts of joy. They are, quite simply, driving my electric car and making a trip to the hazardous waste facility," says Will Ferrell in *The Green Book*. Sure it's funny. But his point of being environmentally conscious is dead serious: "It's funny how these small things, these actions, add up to be big things," Will says.

For example, one simple solution to global warming is walking. Only 31 percent of school kids who live less than one mile from school walk there. In fact, half of all students go to school by car. If just 6 percent of those students who go by car walked, it would save 1.5 million drop-offs and pickups—and sixty thousand gallons of gasoline—a day.

Another small thing that adds up to a big thing is using both sides of plain paper and recycling it. Paper is the biggest form of waste that comes from schools. Every ton, or 220,000 sheets, of paper that is recycled saves approximately seventeen trees. The average school tosses thirty-eight tons of paper per year, or more than 8 million sheets!

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Excerpted from ***RHI: Promoting Active Citizenship***, a publication of Random House, Inc. To request a complimentary copy of RHI, email [highschool@randomhouse.com](mailto:highschool@randomhouse.com), subject: "RHI: Citizenship"

Trees, of course, are important to global warming because trees absorb carbon and produce the oxygen we breathe from it. Too much carbon in the air is a bad thing. Here's why: One of the main elements that traps more heat within the earth's atmosphere is carbon—specifically in the form of carbon dioxide. Global warming occurs when the sun's rays hit the earth and don't bounce back into space as they are supposed to; those rays get trapped in our atmosphere by things like carbon.

Pop star Justin Timberlake is so concerned about carbon emissions from his tour that he is looking for ways to offset his energy use. "I hadn't really thought about how much you emit on tour, how much all those trucks emit. In your mind, you simply don't think about all that pollution. So here I am goin' on tour, and I'm thinking carbon offsetting is going to make a huge dent in my footprint," says Justin.

Teachers can do their part, too, to stem energy consumption, and therefore carbon emissions, by recycling. Schools use more than \$6 billion annually in energy, with 25 percent, or about \$1.5 billion, wasted because of energy inefficiency. This equates to enough money to hire about thirty thousand new middle school teachers. By recycling 90 percent of the waste that would otherwise go to a landfill, a single elementary school could save \$6,000 per year in landfill disposal costs.

Recycling also helps save carbon from being released into the atmosphere. Carbon is released as energy is used. Therefore, because it takes less energy to produce new products from recycled materials, less carbon is released into the air. Every 10 aluminum or steel cans recycled saves 4 pounds of carbon, and every 10 glass bottles recycled saves 3 pounds of carbon. But paper recycling can create the biggest savings. Almost half of all school waste comes from paper: writing paper, drawing paper, copy paper, tests, exams—paper and more paper. A lot of it is recycled, but a lot of it isn't. More than half of it, in fact, is just thrown out with the garbage.

Keeping classroom temperatures moderate is another way to help conserve energy and emissions. There's an added benefit too: Temperatures between sixty-nine and seventy-three degrees improve the learning environment.

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In classrooms kept at controlled temperatures, students have scored higher on tests and exams than they did at much colder or warmer temperatures, according to various research studies. Every degree of temperature saved also means a cost savings per schoolroom of 2 percent on utility bills.

Working together, students and teachers can connect the dots from their school. For instance, they can seek out a food donation program. Even if just every chartered school (there are 3,600 of them) participated in a donation program for an entire school year, the savings could feed one meal to more than two million starving people. This keeps all that food waste out of landfills, which are also major causes of pollution.

*The Green Book* provides hundreds of other accessible and easy-to-understand choices like these that can lead to a healthier and more environmentally friendly life. At the same time these choices can help stop global warming.

More education and awareness combined with simple shifts in habits may just help take some of the worry out of students' minds and replace it with positive change they can act upon to make a difference in the world. And you, as teachers, can help to lead this change.

A mind may be a terrible thing to waste, but waste is a terrific thing to mind.

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### About the Writers

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**The Green Book** *The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time*

by Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas M. Kostigen

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## Some Tips from *The Green Book*

### Paper Napkins

Try to use fewer paper napkins. Each American consumes an average of 2,200 two-ply napkins per year, or just over 6 napkins per day. If each person used just 1 fewer napkin per day, it would save about 150 million of them from the trash—enough to provide a napkin to every person who eats a hot dog on July 4.

### Paper

Try to buy recycled paper and avoid paper that contains chlorine. Post-consumer recycled paper (which is paper that is used and then tossed, as opposed to pre-consumer recycled paper, which is made out of scraps and trimmings) requires 44 percent less energy to produce, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 37 percent and producing 48 percent less solid waste. If we reduced paper use of all kinds by half, we'd clear space currently occupied by more than one thousand landfills.

### Notebooks

Try using wire-bound notebooks with 20 percent post-consumer fiber. They're cheap and help reduce landfill waste. A paper mill uses 20 percent less energy to make paper from recycled material than it does to make paper from fresh lumber. For every one hundred pounds of trash we throw away, thirty-nine pounds is paper.

### Pens

Use refillable pens. Pen refills cost as little as \$1 each, priced almost the same as disposable ones. Pens are often tossed into the garbage and not recycled or reused. Their components and packaging are made from nonrenewable resources and can contain environmentally damaging chemicals. Every year, Americans discard 1.6 billion pens. Placed end to end, they would stretch more than 150,000 miles—equivalent to crossing the Pacific Ocean from Los Angeles to Tokyo more than twenty-five times!

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