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Sustainable Living

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Summary

When planning for the future, we must find ways to protect the environment and also meet our needs for energy, transport, food, clean water and clean air. Through a class survey among twenty-five students (boys and girls, aged 11-12) about our daily habits, we tried to check sustainability in our lives. We focused both on our own and on our family lifestyle in relation to sustainable living and answered different questions about it. We explored the idea of a greener home and suggested ways to make our lives better.

Keywords

Survey – sustainability – greener home

Introduction

Green living for kids is just as important as it is for adults. "Children live what they learn and experience as they grow", Audet writes in an article; and Jill Vanderwood, author of *What's It Like, Living Green? Kids Teaching Kids, by the Way They Live* (2009), says that "the future of the green movement will be led by the children, who will help adults change the way they look at things." Painter concludes that if we develop a respect for the environment at an early age, making a few changes each time, we will make a difference to our future and the future of our planet.

Methodology

We needed to plan for the future, to find ways to protect the environment while still meeting our needs in terms of energy, transport, food, clean water and clean air. Thus, we focused on our own and our family's lifestyle in relation to sustainable living and completed a relevant questionnaire. We explored the concept of a greener home and suggested personal and local actions that contribute to a more sustainable living.

The present article is based on the findings of a specially designed questionnaire¹.

Sustainable Living: Home and Energy

First of all, we checked our homes, the buildings we live in. The majority (84,1%) of the students asked whether they have insulated walls in their house, because in these cases, it is not necessary to spend a lot of electric power for heating and cooling. The rooftop and the attic of our homes are mostly insulated (70,5%). Also, some people cover their roofs with living plants

¹ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSePG_ew6WH6fd0YuZ5pmSxxKEZav7KY0Hy-y7ZNkdThnJNFrQ/viewform

to stop the house warming or cooling too quickly. Trees planted around the houses shade it during high-temperature periods. Also, many homes have double-glazed windows.

Most families (97,7%) use energy- efficient light bulbs to lighten their houses, so they do not waste large amounts of electricity. 36,4% of the houses use natural gas for heating and 34,1% use petrol or oil. The rest of the students asked how they heat their homes with air conditioning or with a fireplace. Many electrical appliances (like dishwashers and washing machines) have "ECO- Friendly" settings and almost everybody applies that function.

Sustainable Living: Recycling

A lot of household waste (81,8%) is sorted and then recycled. Separate bins for plastic, cans, glass and paper are used, each of which is also decorated with its own picture to remind people of what goes where. Glass is collected in order to be recycled; some people bring it to a recycling centre or throw it away in a special bin for glass disposal. Tons of paper and plastic are collected for recycling. Waste food is collected or thrown away in special bins.

Most houses don't have a garden. But in those which do, people collect the garden waste for recycling. 37,5% of the garden waste is composted at home, 37,5% is thrown away in a bin for disposal and 18,8% is collected for recycling. People who have a garden tend to cut the grass with an electric lawn mower. Several kinds of material (like grass, food, organic waste etc.) are composted at a percentage of 86,4%.

Sustainable Living: Transport

According to our survey, 100% of the families asked whether they own a car. Most students in our class replied that they have two cars while 4,5% of them replied they have three cars. The majority of the students replied that they go to school by car and only 6% of them go on foot. Most parents go to work by car. Only 12% use public transport as a family several times a week.

About 70% think that the public transport in their area is good, 16% think it is very good and 11% think it is poor. It's easy to use the car everywhere we go, but if we don't live too far from school or work, we can use a bike when the weather is good. This can save on fuel costs and minimise air pollution, as well as help the environment.

Sustainable Living: Shopping – Waste materials

It is very encouraging to see that most people use reusable plastic bags (72,7%). Lots of products we use in our everyday life (like cartons of milk, paper bags or plastic bottles) are contained in recyclable material. Our families collect them and put them in recycling bins. Most shops produce waste materials (79,5%). There are many ways that shops can reduce their waste; for example, they can reduce the use of plastic packaging, sell recyclable products, recycle and, finally, compost products.

Sustainable Living: Food - Clean air and water

Less than half of the people asked, regularly check the food labels and buy local products that grow in their area (45,5%). It is important to buy organic and locally grown fruits and vegetables. The majority of people don't know what the carbon footprint is (72,7%) and, of course, they also don't know how to calculate it (84,1%).

Conclusion

Sustainable living is about using less water, as well as less electricity and gas. It means caring for the environment: using renewable forms of energy and recycled materials whenever we can, as well as recycling materials such as paper, glass, aluminum, metal, plastic and stone. It is about using public transport whenever we can to reduce the amount of gases from petrol-powered cars and, of course, riding our bikes. Finally, sustainable living means buying food that is

seasonal and comes from our area, reducing the need for products transported long distances and, thus, wasting more energy from fossil fuels.

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