

Connect your child with the Environment

For parents of students in all grades

Here are some practical tips for making your child environmentally aware

Let your child explore the outdoors

When children play outdoors from the earliest age, they are learning to make connections. Opportunities for regular play in the outdoors — especially in gardens, woods, and creeks -- are especially beneficial. In nature, kids can touch, see, feel and hear things all at the same time—stimulating the mind far more than watching television or playing electronic games does. Allowing children to interact with nature contributes to their overall development,

Unplug, relax and explore, together –

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder.....he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in". (excerpt from *A Sense of Wonder* by Rachel Carson.

- Walk with your child. Finding natural pathways and parks in your neighbourhood can be an easy way to encourage your child to appreciate and love our earth. This walk can include informative discussions about animals, trees and more. Also, check Peel Region's *Walk and Roll* website for interactive maps and a list of walking/cycling trails and pathways: www.walkandrollpeel.ca.
- Just in time for spring, plant a tree as a family!
- Have some fun in your own backyard - kick the soccer ball around, buy some bubble solution and blow bubbles, go on

a scavenger or bug hunt, set up a tent and have a campout.

- Plan an afternoon of bike riding, fishing or kite flying.
- Take out your binoculars and go bird watching around the neighbourhood.
- Visit the green spaces in your community and take some nature pictures.

Eat healthy, eat local ...

Help your child make healthy food choices and learn about reducing their "ecological footprint" or personal impact on the environment at the same time. Buy fresh and in season fruits and vegetables by visiting your local farmers market (check www.growninpeel.ca for the location nearest you). You will be teaching that buying products close to home is good for the environment because it reduces pollution from extra packaging and transportation.

Encourage your child to read books about the environment.

Visit your local library or see the Magic Suitcase's environmental book list: www.magicsuitcase.ca. You can find a great eco-book list for primary to intermediate grades on Earth Day Canada's website for kids: www.ecokids.ca >> Homework Help >> Books & Links. Here's some recommended reading for your high school level child:

- Canada's national environmental magazine – *Alternatives Journal* : www.alternativesjournal.ca.
- *Everything Under the Sun: Toward a Brighter Future on a Small Blue Planet* (Greystone Books Ltd, 2012) by David Suzuki, Ian Hanington

More on reverse.....

- *The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude* (Greystone Books, 2012) by Andrew Nikiforuk.
- *Silent Spring* (Houghton Mifflin Company, Anniversary edition 2002) by Rachel Carson.

Practice the 3 R's – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

- Pack eco-friendly lunches for your child. Reusable water bottles and containers can help reduce the waste in our schools and landfills.
- Encourage your child to use both sides of a sheet of paper when completing homework and practicing school work.
- Use scrap paper for note-taking and shopping lists. This will provide your child with a good example of conserving household waste. Also, have a bin with scrap paper available for your child at all times.
- Practice composting with your child. Teach your child how to use composting materials like newspaper and food waste to do some gardening. These items can be easily disposed of in household gardens and it can also eliminate your waste.
- Create fun and exciting craft projects using household materials that would normally go to waste. Making pencil holders, decorations and more can help encourage your child to recycle products like plastic bottles and egg cartons.
- Visit www.peelregion.ca/waste - take the *Waste Quiz* and find out which items can be recycled at wheredoesitgo.ca

Make conservation part of your family routine

- Turn it off! Ensure your car is turned off in school *Kiss and Ride* zones. Some Peel schools have created idle-free zones to help eliminate harmful gases in our atmosphere.
- Reduce energy consumption at home- visit <https://saveonenergy.ca/> for lots of energy saving ideas

Support the EcoSchools program at your child's school by:

- Volunteering as a parent member of the EcoTeam.
- Establish an Environment Sub-Committee as part of School Council
- Update the EcoSchools bulletin board on a monthly basis.
- Create and maintain an EcoTeam and school community distribution list.
- Participate in Environmental Stewardship and School Yard greening projects.

This tip sheet was originally prepared by Tracy Appleton,, EcoSchools Program Leader.