

HOW TO SUPPORT AN EARTH GUARDIANS CREW IN YOUR CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL

THE WHY, WHAT, WHEN, WHO, HOW AND MORE....



EARTH  GUARDIANS

HOW TO SUPPORT AN EARTH GUARDIANS CREW IN YOUR CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL:

THE WHY, WHAT, WHEN, WHO, HOW AND MORE...

LEAD AUTHOR:

Shana Pearlmutter | Educator / Artist, Earth Guardians School Crew Leader

CONTRIBUTORS:

Dana Pauzauskie | Interim Executive Director, Earth Guardians

DESIGNER:

Emily Kryska | Graphic Designer, Earth Guardians

At Earth Guardians, we take amplifying the voice and leadership of youth seriously. While we work intergenerationally, we honor the power of peer-to-peer connection and support. For that very reason, we have created this unique line of one-of-a-kind 'How to' Guides written by young Earth Guardian solutionaries, plus an amazing Earth Guardian teacher. The guides are all passion-driven and cover a variety of topics, ranging from ridding your school campus of plastic water bottles to becoming a sustainable fashion designer and more. They have thoughtfully been crafted with the intention of supporting you as you step forward into taking actions in ways you love. From our hearts and minds to yours, we hope they enrich your journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	About Shana
5	Why What
6	When
7	How
9	Who
10	Last But Not Least, Self Care Take the Earth Guardian Principles with You
11	Additional Information
12	Earth Guradians Contact

ABOUT SHANA

Shana Pearlmutter has been an art educator at Bell School and community muralists in Chicago for the past 20 years. Her teaching passions lie in the intersections of art, storytelling, memory, belonging and social-cultural inquiry. Marginalized, Self-Taught and minority artists are highlighted in her curricula to develop awareness of equity in art genres. Students confront identity, their role in society as civically engaged artists and regularly practice sustainability while repurposing materials in their inventive responses to contemporary and historical issues. In her studio, she creates narrative, mixed media assemblages and has exhibited regularly in Chicago. Her latest creative endeavor is a cross-cultural artistic, collaborative exchange with Moroccan and American artists entitled: “Nour/Light,” to promote awareness, break down cultural stereotypes and highlight the transformative effects of collaborative art practices.



Shana Pearlmutter
Artist/Educator
Bell School
Chicago, IL

www.bellschoolart.wordpress.com

<https://salaamchicagohellomarrakech.wordpress.com/>

www.shanapearlmutter.com

The Why, What, When, Who, How and more....

WHY: *“Often while I am working with youth, I am impressed with the revelation that our children are our teachers in many ways, not just our students, and that in order to create meaningful connections to real world problems and solutions...we need to stop doing the talking and instead create, nurture and uphold supportive environments where they feel safe to make mistakes, work together and speak up!” Shana Pearlmutter*

SO WHY START AN EARTH GUARDIANS SCHOOL CREW?

Start an Earth Guardian Crew for the 7 generations to come. Better yet, start it for your students who are living and breathing on the planet now. The most defeating feeling any child can feel is that their contributions are not valued, important or even necessary. Just...start, and see what happens.

As 2018 Crew member Chelsea wisely said,

“For people who want to start a Crew, I think they should proceed with it even if they are questioning whether to start it or not. They should have a mindset of being able to help people or raise awareness for the issues they are standing up for instead of thinking it's a lot of work. Also, just knowing how it will benefit the community in the long run is a good thought to keep in my mind. My advice for the members is to not be afraid of sharing their ideas to their group. The civic agency Crew should be a safe place where people respect and support each other.”

WHAT: *“Having a strong message to relay to others can capture a greater audience and empower more people. A group, commandeered by students, creates a message in itself, realizing that we have a voice in society and are conscious of political happenings. The support of fellow students and peers fosters unity and can create a stronger group,” Cady, 2018 Crew member*

What do we do? We talk, we listen, work collaboratively and encourage outreach in the community, so we are not working towards our goals in a vacuum. The student Crew I work with is all volunteer. The work that they do is totally reliant on their shared passions, burning issues and feelings about what they would like to change in the world.



FOR EXAMPLE...

The Why, What, When, Who, How and more....

In 2018, my Kindergarten to 2nd grade students expressed concern for the health of Lake Michigan and coral reefs due to plastic pollution after my friend, JoeyFineRhyme, performed his Be The Change and Rhyme for a Reason Rap performance. In response, they asked to write a petition to express reasons why they want to protect the Earth and the Oceans. Inspired by the Earth Guardians #StopSucking #LiquidStache #ExSTRAWdinaryArt initiatives, primary students created coral reef sculptures to raise awareness and added concerns for the Earth in a collaborative “Creature Report” petition inspired by the show Octonauts.

As we move through the year, certain topics take more precedence based on current events, such as the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh on October 27, 2018. Therefore, it is very important that your goals or plans for the Crew are student-led and emergent. There needs to be a flow to the group so that the students can have the flexibility and openness to let their voices stand out versus an omnipotent leader. To the right is their interactive “Be The Light in the Darkness” memorial bringing attention to handgun violence.

WHEN: *“We have not inherited the Earth from our fathers, we are borrowing it from our children,” Lester Brown.*

Start a Crew as soon as you are inspired to do so! There is no time to wait. Schools run on either a quarterly or semester system. Starting at the beginning of a grading period will make sense to students as well. Also, the main Crew I work with is in 8th grade. They are at a maturity/developmental level and have the executive skills needed to carry through with managing their website, composing letters to our school council and responsibly leading research online. Although, I do believe younger students are more than capable of helping to run and lead a Crew.



Meet the other students in your school where they have some free time. Our crew often sets up Crew action item tables during lunch so students in other grades can interact, create and learn from the Crew such as when they made friendship pledges to fight hate and got a “Hate is Easy, Love Takes Courage button in return!

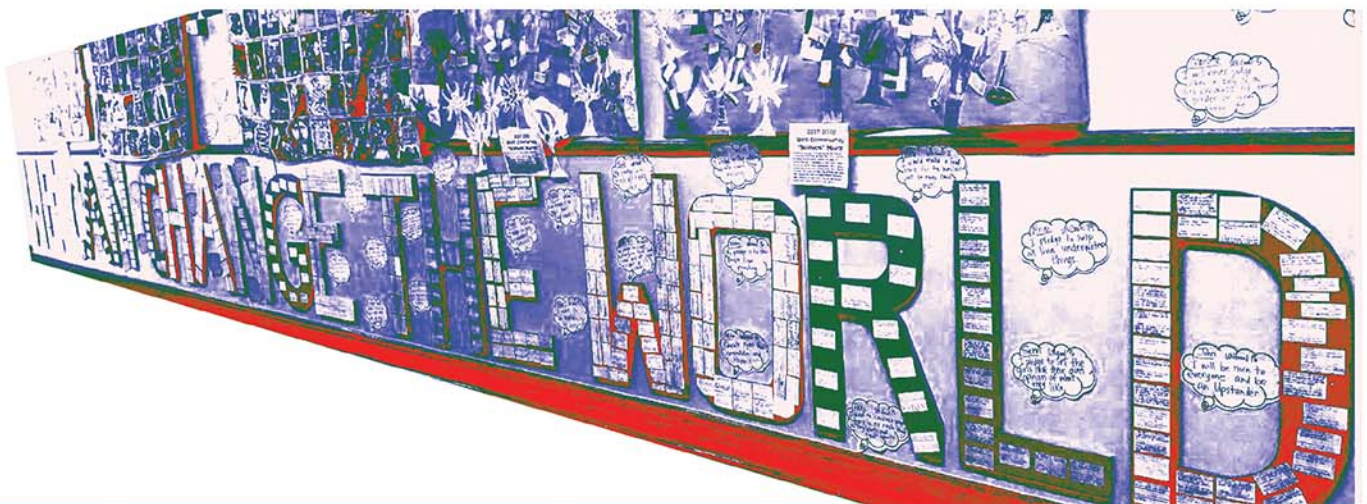
At the end of the school year, the graduating Crew invites interested 7th graders to a presentation about their community accomplishments and future goals. This creates a legacy as each year, they leave behind their wishes for helping the planet to the next engaged mentors of the school.



The Why, What, When, Who, How and more....

HOW: *"When it comes to starting up a club at your new school, the hardest part is knowing where to start. First and foremost is do your research. Ask around about how to start a new club at your school. Gather some people that share your views. After that the key part is not losing motivation, and keeping the ball rolling. Don't be afraid to be pushy to get things moving. Dream big and aim high because the sky really is the limit. Everyone is charged with a belief whether they realize it or not, the key is taking that charge and turning it into action."* Shawn, 2018 Crew member

- 1 I highly suggest bringing up Earth Guardians during a current events unit when discussing cultural stereotypes of holidays, before students travel on vacation and create pollution from their driving/air travel. I often discuss world issues found in contemporary art on PBSART21, Newsela and Scholastic News articles, Teaching Tolerance updates and Conservation International emissions calculations with my students. This all fits into an Earth Guardians vision... helping students become stewards of Earth solutions in their hopes and voices.
- 2 Next, identify the students who show the most interest in joining a Crew to take action. Starting a Crew at my school took some time. Building up momentum and excitement with the students happened more immediately once they watched Xiutezcatl speak from his heart to raise awareness of the United Nations members in an Upworthy video. Students became invested in finding ways to make a difference with their school actions.
- 3 Create and develop a safe haven for your meetings. Work with your Crew to set up Crew methods and guidelines that everyone contributes to. This helps with explaining how best to work through sharing ideas, organize the time you meet, suggest the students volunteer for various positions within any given meeting such as secretary, tech guru, follow through website manager, etc. In our Crew, the roles ebb and flow, some members drop out or come once a month. The key is to meet your Crew where they are at...to bring their voice out of the room where they are meeting to help them pronounce their issues, scaffold their message, make the right contacts with administration/parents/caregivers and then....step out of the way and support/model for them to "Speak the truth, even if their voices shake!" - Maggie Kuhn



The Why, What, When, Who, How and more....

HOW CONT...

- 5 Next, identify the students who show the most interest in joining a Crew to take action. Starting a Crew at my school took some time. Building up momentum and excitement with the students happened more immediately once they watched Xiuhtezcatl speak from his heart to raise awareness of the United Nations members in an Upworthy video. Students became invested in finding ways to make a difference with their school actions.

Moving through these deeper questions helps my Crew look beyond personal problems and develop a framework to begin to identify civic issues that they want to help solve or promote based off of who they are and what they care about.

These facilitation choices help establish the Crew as an organization filled with competent youth with inter- and intrapersonal skills needed to face the real world problems and well thought out solutions that lie ahead for them. To identify topics for organizing, we begin with a running Google document on which students type up pressing issues that help guide their Crew actions.



The Why, What, When, Who, How and more....

WHO: “Everyone is charged with a belief whether they realize it or not, the key is taking that charge and turning it into action.” Shawn, 2018 Bell Crew member

Collaborate and partner with colleagues, parents/caregivers and organizations who help support the vision of your students. Our Crew has partnered with many organizations over the years. As a facilitator, there is no way I would have achieved so much scaffolding for our Earth Guardians school Crew if it were not for my visionary principal and the teachers who listen to concerns, help problem solve and build ideas. Special thanks to my right hand, Social Studies teaching buddy, Peter. (pictured to the left).

Engaging the community then becomes very important. For example, at one point the Crew discussed the idea with me of sharing their hopes for inspiring other activists in the school. We approached the Fine Arts Committee at our school who, then, voted to host the annual Family Fine Arts Night with a theme: Find Your Voice: Be an Artist: Choose to Participate. (needs note of pictures here)

During the evening, we hosted a protest postcard letter writing campaign table and a 4th/5th grade Earth Guardians Crew “No Straw” petition table. The petition table was inspired by the Shedd Aquarium’s “Shedd the Straw” movement where they passed out reusable straws, tied together a bike-wheel mural with messages of hope for unity, typed up a collective justice poem, hosted a screen printing table, and explained the outdoor, WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD mural which 100s of students worked on. They also passed out “How to be an activist” pins and buttons and helped visitors pen their own protest signs to take home and put in their windows. Collaborating civic organizations who contributed to the event included longstanding partner-Facing History, participate, Amnesty International, Stand Up for Kids, Zero Waste Chicago, Unsilence and Bake Sale for Justice.

Search for both local and national organizations who align with the values and projects your students choose. This not only enhances the project, it also teaches your students the power of collaboration!



LAST BUT NOT LEAST, SELF CARE!

As a facilitator, also in charge of a full schedule of students to teach, it is very necessary we take time to reflect, recuperate, and do our research to best support our student Crews. Recently, introducing a talking stick into the Crew meetings, providing restorative brain breaks for positive affirmations and encouraging intention setting and stillness has helped to give students a deeper awareness of how we can weave together a constructive, empathetic classroom. To further my community response tool box, I have started to research more Restorative Practices with my colleagues. These skills have helped me to be more in the moment, more present, focus on what is within my ability to work on and what is not, for that time being, with any given student scenario.

As we unpack the many global dilemmas we continue to face in our culture and society, hopes and dreams are uplifting. Yet, also paramount is the need to continue helping our Crew and students mitigate the weight of the emotional pain that this social, cultural and environmental awareness can bring forth! I am always seeking ways to preserve a safe haven for students, filled with unconditional love, mindful breathing, forgiving compassion, time to listen, aromatherapy, peaceful music and belief in their vision.

In order to help children tap into their inner knowing, their voice and what motivates them to emulate their passions, I have found the following points helpful:

- 1 convey to them that all things are connected by multiple stories and perspectives
- 2 holistic patterns help connect the dots and
- 3 solving these issues is not a quick fix, it is a marathon, and one that is worth running

TAKE THE EARTH GUARDIAN PRINCIPLES WITH YOU! START CREWS WHERE YOU GO.

Each year, I travel to Marrakech, Morocco to visit my husband, Mohamed's, family. Three years ago, we implemented a research fellowship focused on Marrakshi artisans, storytelling, music and the new development of Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) in Marrakech. Since then, we have volunteered with Project Soar Marrakech, an NGO in a small village outside of Marrakech, Morocco, with whom we shared the principles of Earth Guardians with their female youth group. After watching videos from both Earth Guardians and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2020, and creating Facing History Universe of Obligation rings of responsibility for their village, they were eager to learn about the Earth Guardians Crew at Bell.

Next, they asked to focus on an initiative that was close to Morocco's recent ruling of banning single use plastic bags. Students decorated their own reusable bags and led a reusable shopping bag march with a petition through their village to help educate families of this environmental issue. To help bring a more local view of plastic use, re-use and misuse in Africa, we read and discussed, One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia by Miranda Paul.

ADDITIONAL INSPIRATION:

"If things don't work out perfectly, don't stress! Some ideas may not go as planned but just adapt and embrace the situation. Stay organized! This is extremely important. Try to pick one goal to work towards because having multiple plans and ideas can be difficult to juggle. Getting an adult sponsor is a necessity. Don't get discouraged! Starting a group can be a lot of work at times, but everyone is in it together and willing to help out!"
2018 Crew member, Lana.

Much has been mentioned about 21st Century learning skills. Certainly sustainability for our future livelihood on the Earth calls for our attention now. Recently, I was asked to contribute an essay, "A Letter to My Son" to Makers, Crafters, Educators, Working for Cultural Change edited by Elizabeth Garber, Lisa Hochtritt and Manisha Sharma. I highly encourage any educator/facilitator curious about the intersections of sustainability, agency and creating to purchase this book. It is filled with important work around these timely issues! My contribution was a letter to my son. Just as my original spark to begin an Earth Guardians Crew at my school came from being moved to tears by Xiuhtezcatl several years ago, so too does my essay in "Makers" focus on the strong beckoning children are asking for: to create curriculum that props them up to vocalize and advocate for the social, cultural and environmental changes they feel are desperately needed. To support these ideals, find local organizations dedicated to reuse and sustainability. If one does not exist, perhaps your students can start one!

History can move slowly, but it always catches up to us and moves in cyclical patterns. The key is to help our students become insatiably curious, eager for answers and motivated to better their world, one simple or complicated step at a time. As I explained in my letter to my son Brahim, "the art room can be a countermeasure, a prime place for young people to learn the crucial skills they need to prepare to face a future that will call for creative, sustainable problem solvers to build, craft and make necessary innovations our world desperately needs...When in doubt, amidst turmoil and change, to reinforce your DIY agency, turn to nature and to the values you want to contribute to the world, co-create community and open up to those around you with trust and candor. Remember, our strength lies in the telling and learning from our stories through art, as humans have been doing in collective groups for millennia."





EARTH GUARDIANS

reachout@earthguardians.org

720-263-2292

www.earthguardians.org

 [@earthguardianstribes](https://www.facebook.com/earthguardianstribes)

 [earthguardianz](https://twitter.com/earthguardianz)

 [earthguardians](https://www.instagram.com/earthguardians)

