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| Senior Project Proposal |
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| Environment and Energy  Demott 3B |

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Introduction

Being in the Environment and Energy cohort, I chose a topic that matters to me and can help save the earth, my research question is: What is recycling and what are its benefits? Many people do not recycle because they are not informed, and many who do recycle, are misinformed which make their efforts to save the earth ineffective. I want to use my research to inform everyone on the right ways to recycle and why they should do it,

Literature Reviews

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10/29/11

B3

When Recycling is Bad for the Environment

In this article, Rachel Cernansky informs us that just because you throw what we think is “recyclable” into a recycle bin, does not mean we’re saving the earth. Generally, glass metal and paper is easy to recycle, it all goes to the same place, but plastics are more complicated. Different plastics are made differently, using different materials; so naturally they are disposed of in different ways. So when we throw those different types of plastics in the same bin, it results in a costly, ineffective sorting, just to come to the conclusion that our city doesn’t recycle that particular plastic. In order to recycle effectively, we need to be educated in what our city recycling plant takes and what needs to be sent to another facility to be sorted, or if it is recyclable at all.

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Do the Benefits of Recycling outweigh the Costs?

In this article, both sides of an argument are discussed. One being that recycling costs too much for not enough result, the other: recycling has greater benefits than disposing and costs less. Although sometimes it costs more to sort out the recyclables that are not necessarily recyclable in a certain area; which is another reason to inform people on how to properly recycle. It is at times hard to tell which is more important to the world, the least costly, or the most beneficiary. In this instance there are some fine lines between the two.

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Recycling is Garbage

In this article, John Tierney concludes that recycling is a waste of time, money, and energy. He thinks that the cost of recycling outweighs its benefits. According to Tierney, the world would be better off without trying to recycle. This article states that mandatory recycling programs are unnecessary and unproductive. The reason for the sudden recycling binge in the 1980s in America was all the landfills had limited space and we needed to reduce how much waste we create each year. Tierney states that this was a false alarm, so there’s no need for recycling programs any longer.

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The Failure of Environmental Education (and How We Can Fix It)

This article states that we are not being effectively educated in environmental issues. And from this breakdown in education stems our ignorance to such problems in the world. We have not been teaching people the proper ways to conserve energy, reduce, reuse, and recycle; and the other little things you can do to do your part in saving the environment. This article suggests that having more environmental education programs in public school would be the most effective way to have more educated people at an even younger age. Another, although harder way to educate people in this matter, is to teach them not to over consume in the first place. Over consumption is the reason we have so much waste anyway, if we don’t over consume, we reduce the amount of waste. In order to teach someone something new, you must lay down a basic foundation of the subject. So, this article says that before we can fully educate people in these issues, we have to stress that environmental science is not all black and white, there are grey areas, and not everything can be like an equation: x amount of cans recycled equals y amounts of gallons of water saved. Americans generally are not familiar with environmental matters because we don’t usually “think globally and act globally,” so in order to educated successfully, we should teach Americans the problems in other countries, try to make it real for them how important the environment is for everybody on earth. Environmental education is key to saving the planet.

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Economic and environmental benefits of recycling waste from the construction and demolition of buildings

This website offers information on recycling in a different way and on a larger scale than just your run of the mill household recycling. This recycling refers to the waste from constructing new buildings and demolishing old ones. The European Union has created a committee focused on such recycling. It’s called “Reunion Internationale des Laboratories d'Essais et de Recherches sur les Materiaux et les Constructions” (Technical Committee No. 121 on Guidance for Demolition and Reuse of Concrete and Masonry).this committee is working to overcome obstacles on recycling such large amounts of waste at once. Most of the research is being done to benefit people and towns in need after a natural disaster.

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Environmental Protection Agency- Recycling

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established in the 1970s to get the environment some more publicity to the people and the government. So they would be informed on the issues at all times. On their website they have many informational articles and tools to inform and to help people know how to recycle properly, conserve their water and energy, and reduce and reuse effectively. Through the EPA we get first hand information on the environmental issues of the time and what we can do individually and as a whole to relieve the stress on the planet.

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Economic Recycling Benefits and Facts

There are many arguments whether recycling is worth its cost; this article gives bullet points on why it is. Recycling can be expensive, but the National Recycling Coalition states that the more people recycle, the less it costs. Recycling obviously helps the environment by reducing the amount of waste we send to land fills, and by doing that, we also reduce the amount of money spent on incineration of waste. Another plus is that for every one job in waste management, recycling creates four new ones in America. Recycling benefits the environment, the economy and the job market.

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Californians against Waste

On this website, facts and statistics are provided to support that recycling is good for the environment, economy, and future generations. California is one of the leading “green” states in the United Sates; its government is the most focused on the environment than any other state government. These facts would probably shock you; you don’t have to recycle a lot to get a lot out of it.

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United States Recycling Statistics

In this article, the author, Laura Williams provides nationwide statistics on recycling in America. These statistics range from paper material recyclables to yard trimmings. Towards the end of the article, Williams stated that she believes states should be in competition with each other for recycling like they are in pro sports. If states were in a “my state is better than your state” mentality for something important and meaningful, like saving the environment, then we could have even higher numbers in the recycling statistics department.

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Cutting the Cost of Recycling

This article talks about the average cost of recycling per ton compared to the average cost of waste management companies per ton. Although many companies and state legislatures will debate that recycling is less cost effective, but in the long run it is the most effective plan, especially if those legislatures would sign onto a long term recycling contract. In the end, they will benefit from recycling and so will the planet.

Research Design

I have already collected 10 articles from the literature reviews that are applicable to my research. I would also like to look deeper and have a better outline just for the proper ways of recycling. So, I will do more extensive research on that throughout this process. From the literature reviews, I have many articles on the benefits of recycling, so I won’t need to do anymore research on that. I plan to have at least five more sources, most of which will be on the steps to take to be a good recycler.

Action

For my action, I plan to go to classrooms in Tallwood and inform students and teachers about my project. I plan to tell them the benefits of recycling and how to do it properly. I hope to have the number of people who recycle in Tallwood increased by 15% by the end of this school year. I may even hold a competition during the two lunch blocks to see who can recycle the most things and the winning block could win a prize. I think having an incentive will have a positive reinforcement with recycling.

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