

WaSH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) - Prevention is Better Than Cure



Introduction to WaSH

Topics related to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) are now more relevant than ever. Connection with the Health and Wellbeing theme through WaSH behaviours, building immunity, mental wellbeing, etc. are important elements that can help us provide students with important skills to prevent the spread of COVID and help them understand the situation better. In times of despair, it will give the necessary hope and agency to face the challenge.

Integrating the Eco-Schools Seven Steps to meet the Challenge of COVID 19

The steps are designed to be adapted to the circumstances different countries/regions are facing. The activities could be done either at home, online or at school. The activities are merely suggestions, so please adapt them to the needs, recommendations and guidelines in your area.

In the current scenario, with reduced attention span and time available for teaching and learning, it even more important to link it to the curriculum and focus on skills.

We estimate that going through all of the steps will take approximately 50-60 hours over the course of 9-11 weeks.

Linking the curriculum

Teachers would be able to easily find links between these steps and the existing curriculum. What subjects are covered: geography, biology, social/cultural studies etc.? Topics like personal hygiene, health and diseases, microorganisms, arts and crafts, community sanitation, etc. can be easily linked to this theme.

Skills

It is important to focus on skills that students acquire in the process – inquiry, framing questions, research, communication skills, goal setting and framing success indicators, negotiation, facilitation, team-work, active citizenship, scientific investigation, literacy, systemic thinking, critical thinking to find creative solutions, taking responsibility, agency, persuasion etc.



1 - Form a committee

Form an Eco Committee with the people around you. It is important to gather stakeholders who need to be involved in decisions to implement the actions!

- At school: in the class or groups, form a WaSH Eco Committee. It is important to keep the guidelines from local authorities in mind for gathering and meetings.
Having virtual meetings is a good idea!
- At home: form an Eco Committee with family, neighbours, friends that are nearby. Depending on the situation where you are, the committee can **meet online or use open spaces**, keeping the guidelines of social distancing at home.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” African Proverb

2- Conduct a COVID 19 audit

Research the connection between our behaviours and the spread of COVID-19. How does the virus spread and what are low, medium and high-risk behaviours? Suggestions for specific audit activities:

- a. Review the local health department’s recommendations on what actions are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19.
 - Check if systems and infrastructure (handwashing facilities – soap/water/sanitizers, cognitive reminders of the right behaviours, masks, etc.) are available.
 - Identify the barriers to accessing the necessary infrastructure and think about what can be done creatively to overcome these barriers.
 - Who could help in augmenting the resources required to create suitable infrastructure?
- b. Observe and reflect on the people around you and their behaviours in light of these recommendations. Pay attention to:
 - Do they maintain social distancing?
 - Do they wear masks?
 - Do they keep touching their face?
 - Do they forget to wash their hands when they get home?
- c. If you see anyone in your home doing high-risk behaviour(s), take a picture of their behaviour and show them what’s concerning about it.

Inform and involve friends and family about what you have learned and what you all can do better.

Guiding background questions:

- Why are we facing this pandemic now? What changes in the way we live our lives have led to this?
- Do our lifestyles put us at risk of pandemics in general?
- Why do the flu and viruses spread more in some seasons and less in others?
- How did COVID-19 become a global pandemic? What characteristics of the virus have led to this and what makes it different from other coronaviruses?

3 - Action plan

With the information that you have, reflect on what can be done to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases. What obstacles are there to performing low-risk behaviours (the cost of masks, low number of handwashing stations, limited source of hand sanitizers, lack of information, people do not care, etc.), and what can be done to overcome these obstacles? What do we need? Who needs to be involved? How do we contact relevant people? How can we spread the message?

Prepare an action plan to address the issues you have identified. You can use the following format to develop your action plan, and we have illustrated one for guidance.

Problem Statement	Actions that can address the problem	How will you implement the identified action?	What will success look like?
Guidelines for face mask use are not being followed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raising Awareness of dangers to vulnerable populations• Increasing cognitive reminders• Enforcing it as a social norm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness campaign on key messages• Public appreciation of people who follow the norms• Providing cognitive reminders at key locations	People taking responsibility and wearing masks

Tell your family, friends, neighbours what you have learned from this project, and share some of it on Social Media. Use the hashtags [#ecoschoolsstayactive](#) and [#watersanitationandhygiene](#).

4 - Monitor and evaluate

Evaluate the success of the project by looking at the behaviours of the people around you. Has it led to any changes in behaviours? Revisit your action plans and tweak them for desired messaging and impacts to bring about change!

Inform and involve people around you about what you have learned. Call relatives or friends and tell them the outcomes of the project. What worked or did not work? What changes have resulted from the project?

5 - Eco Code

The Eco Committee must decide on an Eco Code to enforce a community agreed social norm that provides participants with a strategy on what actions can be taken to enhance and secure hygiene based on the observations and research done during the project. The Eco Code should list the main objectives of the Action Plan and should be prominently displayed in the school, home or neighbourhood. Social media like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc. could be a good idea to create a wider acceptance.

Inspire others around the world - please write to us to share how you are meeting the challenge!

Eco-School Global

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