

Lights Out Canada Challenge

Lights Out Canada is a national event during which schools across the country turn off their lights and spend the day learning about climate change and what youth can do to take action. We provide comprehensive lesson plans, step-by-step participation guides, and visual aids in order to make Lights Out Canada a success in participating schools.

Over **100 000** students in over **250** schools in **4** countries participated in our fourth annual event, held in partnership with Earth Day Canada on April 22, 2009. It is great that so many schools have raised awareness about climate change and participated in the Lights Out energy-saving experiment. Now we need to step-it-up a level both in terms of the number of schools involved and the level of energy savings achieved. Schools can become models within their communities of, initially, energy saving practices and, in due course, clean energy technologies.

Today’s students will be coping with the consequences of a vastly different climate. They need to be made aware early on of the problems, the issues and choices we must make and equipped with the knowledge and skills to adapt and innovate in a new climatic context. Schools and educators play a key role in preparing youth to participate meaningfully and confidently in the climate change discussions and mediation processes.

Lights Out Canada wants to help. Schools are amongst the biggest energy users that young people are associated with during their formative years. If we want to educate and empower youth about what can be done to reduce their communities’ climate change footprint, then the school itself is the best and most convenient laboratory. The desired outcome is a student population which is better informed, and empowered to moderate their energy use and to migrate to renewable technologies not just at school but also in their homes and within their communities.

Building on past success, Lights Out Canada is challenging Canada’s schools and school boards to join the Light Out Challenge. The challenge is twofold: to reduce measurably and significantly school electricity use during the 2010-11 academic year without compromising either educational or extracurricular activities and to help schools shift to more environmentally friendly “green” electricity which has virtually no CO₂ footprint. Here’s how we expect the Challenge to work:

1. Schools wishing to participate in the Lights Out Challenge will send us a short application signed by the principal indicating the school’s type (elementary, middle or high school), postal address, the number of full time students registered in the school during the 2009-10 academic year along with the name, phone number and e-mail address of the person who has volunteered to champion the project in the school during the next year. We will enter the information in the Challenge database and the school’s name and city or town on the Lights Out website.
2. Before October 30, 2010 the school contact will provide information on the total school’s electricity usage in kilowatt hours during the period from September 2009 to June 2010. This information may be obtained either from the local power distribution authority or the facilities management office of your school board or ministry of education. Using the information

provided we will calculate a base kilowatt per student for each participating school and post it on the web site.

3. Before the Challenge begins, Lights Out will provide (online) an array of energy savings learning materials and action ideas about how schools can reduce their electricity usage in ways that won't negatively impact their educational or extracurricular activities but which will lessen their environmental footprint and possibly save the school or school board money. We will also provide links to websites of “green” electrical energy providers indicating their rates per kilowatt hour. This material will be assembled from non-profit environmental groups and other schools and organizations that are involved in similar conservation programs, recognized electrical power authorities and energy companies, and from governments.
4. During the Challenge schools can strive to reduce their CO2 footprint in two complementary ways: (a) implement electric energy saving measures such as turning out lights or shutting off computers and other equipment when not in use and (b) fundraising to help your school pay for the price premium that usually exists on rates for “green” electrical energy which is in the range of \$0.02 per kilowatt hour. Relying on either method is fine although we think most schools will do some of each.
5. At the conclusion of the Challenge in June 2011 academic year we will ask you to send us the same student enrollment and energy use information as outlined above but for 2010-2011 as well as the amount of money you raised to pay for green energy premiums for this or next year. From this information, we will calculate the impact that your conservation efforts have had on reducing your school's electrical energy CO2 footprint. Each kilowatt of energy saved will be worth 10 points and each \$1 raised toward kilowatt premiums will also be worth 10 points.. We will also be anxious to hear what your school, students and teachers did during the year to achieve your results, the impact on learners and learning and ideas you would like to share with other schools, students and educators.
6. We will analyze results and best practices by school category, size and location as well as posting your school's year over year percentage electricity use reduction on the Lights Out web site. We will also contact schools that achieved the largest percentage improvements to see how they did it and whether they would like to provide write-ups on their projects and act as champions in future years. As well, we will provide an overall report on the experience which students, teachers, principals and parents can use in discussions with their peers and neighbours to encourage greater energy conservation within other organizations and homes in their communities.
7. During the course of the next year, Lights Out Canada will be searching for sponsors who are prepared to donate prizes to schools that show the greatest electricity conservation improvement, which provide the most innovative energy saving ideas and which undertake the most participatory programs to raise awareness in the school and its community. A volunteer panel of educators and environmentalists will make these decisions.

Lights Out Canada aims to help schools educate a new generation of more environmentally aware citizens who appreciate the critical importance of global warming and who are motivated and empowered to address its causes and effects. In this context, the LOC Challenge provides an important opportunity for authentic learning and leadership development. In the course of their participation students will gain a wide range of skills and experience, including project planning and management, leadership and team building, communications and interaction with various community groups and research and experimentation in energy use and conservation. We hope you agree that the LOC Challenge offers a tremendous educational opportunity for you and your students. Please contact us about becoming involved. Visit us online at www.lightsoutcanada.org. Email us: at lightsoutcanada@gmail.com.