Action Plan Final Progress Report

Oak Park is a small, quiet town in Southern California. Living in a bubble, many members of the community live a privileged life. With my action plan, I hope to raise awareness about how individuals can take steps to become more environmentally friendly, educate the community about the advantages of solar energy, and leave an example that would benefit the entire community. In order to reach my goals, I plan to first utilize education to inform individual members of the community about solar energy and how they could save energy in their own homes, followed by direct action through installing actual solar panels on the community library.

A project of this magnitude requires support and assistance from others. The main source of help came from four of my friends, Alexis, Laura, Kristen, and Wendy, all of whom provided assistance ranging from creating the lesson plan to promoting solar energy at our community service event. Together we formed our group for Ideas to Impact, a county-wide competition where groups of competitors chose an environmental topic which they expanded upon by hosting a community service event, creating a lesson plan and actually teaching it, constructing a research proposal, and compiling a creative presentation of their work. In addition to my Ideas to Impact team, I have also received help from our team advisor, who provided our team a quiet room to meet and work and was great to bounce ideas off of, the Ideas to Impact competition coordinator, who organized our community service as well as teaching event and provided all the necessary materials for the activities that accompanied our lesson, and my parents, who contributed their own ideas about my action plan and have supported me in my work.

I have accomplished educating the public through both the community service event Super Saturday, where community members of all ages were invited to the local high school to attend a fair that addressed a variety of environmental issues and topics, and a teaching event at a local elementary school. At Super Saturday, my Ideas to Impact team set up a three-panel display board with at least one team member stationed nearby to answer any questions along with take-home pamphlets to educate the community about our project on solar energy and what they can do themselves. In addition to the community service event, our team also created a lesson plan about solar energy and taught the lesson at Brookside, one of the local elementary schools, to a group of fourth and fifth graders. The students, who were given the choice to use their lunch time to attend the lesson, listened to a fifteen minute long interactive PowerPoint presentation. Along with the lesson plan, our group created a pneumonic song to convey one of the main points of our lesson as well as help the kids remember what they learned. Our lesson was supported by two hands-on activities, one where the students were allowed to race mini solar powered cars and another where they learned how to make a simple motor with a battery, magnet, and nail and experimented with powering a small fan with both batteries and mini solar panels. As for progress in the direct action part of my lesson plan, I have begun collecting information about various companies in the area that provide good quality, affordable solar panels, installation, and estimates as well as collected information on methods to finance the project, such as government subsidies, grants, and PPAs, at local Earth Day events.
From my experience working on this project, I have learned just how much work, planning, organizing, and research is needed to pull together and follow through with an action plan. Before embarking on my action plan, I typically preferred to work individually on projects because I felt like that way it was easier to project my vision of how the project should turn out like and I know that I would put all my effort into making the project the best that it can be. However, working with a group, I've realized that with more people come more creativity and more ideas that I would not have thought of by myself. I have realized that I'm not the only person interested in promoting environmental awareness, that there are other people just as interested as I am who are reliable and willing to put in the time to help. I have learned that I am not alone in the project but that there are many others ready to provide support and assistance and all I need to do is find them.

I feel as if, as they become more emerged in my passion for environmental science, the interest of the other members of my Ideas to Impact team in the environment has increased. I think that they have come to the realization that even if our topic seems overused, actually implementing what one hears into the community is something totally different and would be a worthy accomplishment to work for. I believe that the community’s awareness about solar energy has increased. I was really excited that we were able to gain a class size of approximately forty-five elementary school students who showed interest in the environmental sciences and were willing to give up their lunch time in order to learn more. The fourth and fifth grade students were eager and even experimented beyond what we taught them by observing the results when the powered the fans with multiple batteries, multiple solar panels, or a combination of batteries and solar panels. Some of the students even turned to their classmates to re-teach our lesson. I think that our project has helped increase the interest of younger students in the environment.

Although compiling an action plan is relatively simple, the harder part is actually following through with your plans. My wish to leave an environmentally friendly impact in my community that all community members can utilize and benefit from has been part of the motivation to continue working on the project. The Ideas to Impact competition has also been a great motivator. The desire to win and the competition itself keeps our team on track and provides a constant reminder to work on the action plan. This year, our team won second place in the high school division of the Ideas to Impact Competition and we are motivated to work even harder on the action plan as we aim to win first place in next year’s competition.

*Along with this report, I have sent a CD containing our Ideas to Impact project on solar energy, including our lesson plan, creative presentation, and pictures.*