



learning objectives

subjects

Environmental Education

WISCONSIN MODEL
ACADEMIC STANDARDS

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
B.8.10, E.8.1
C.12.4, E.12.2

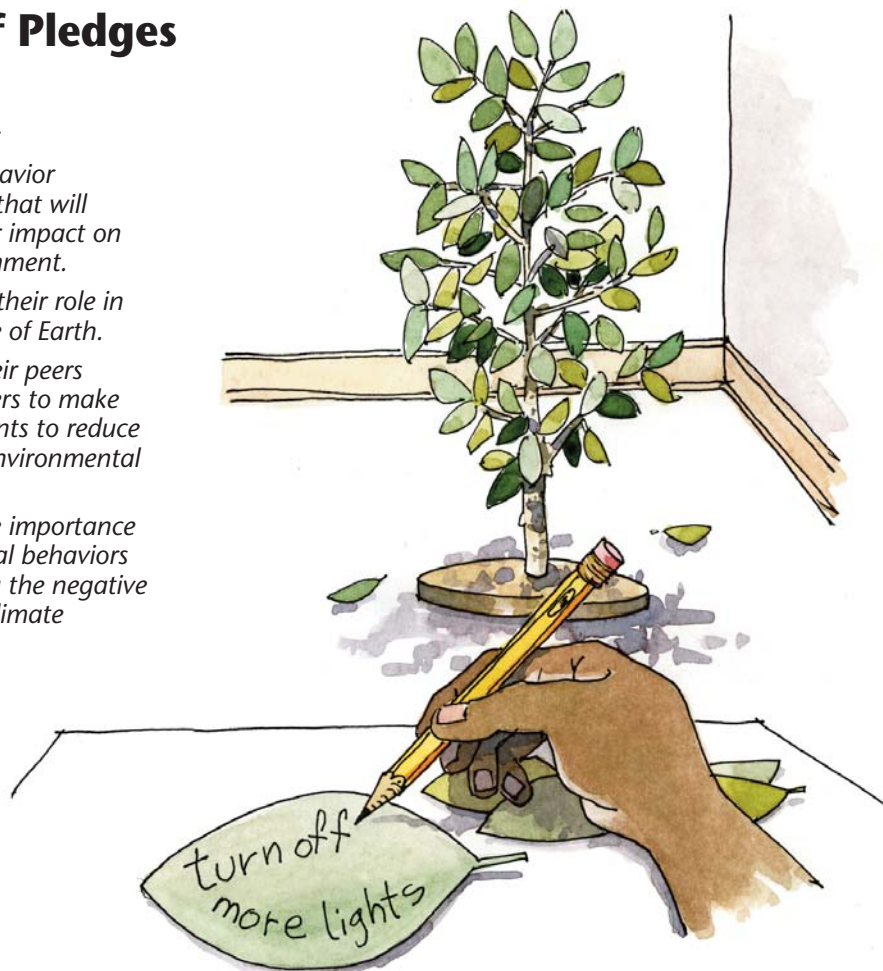
materials

- Paradise Lost
- Tree branches
- Large pots
- Potting soil
- Green paper
- Wire or string
- Markers
- Scissors

Tree of Pledges

Students will:

- Pledge behavior change(s) that will lessen their impact on the environment.
- Recognize their role in taking care of Earth.
- Engage their peers and teachers to make commitments to reduce negative environmental impacts.
- Discuss the importance of individual behaviors in reducing the negative effects of climate change.



Background

During the past 100 years, human behaviors have been affecting our world's climate. As human activity increases greenhouse gases, and the greenhouse effect subsequently warms the planet, Earth's climate and climate patterns are changing. Climate change impacts people, economies, and ecosystems. Behavior choices, large or small, can affect the degree of climate change. Talk to your students about these large and small choices, their impact on our Earth, and ways to reduce negative impacts. Small changes may not seem like they could make a difference, but over time and in

combination with others doing the same actions, even small contributions add up. Every little bit helps.

Review the *Paradise Lost* website: see the *e-Appendix* for the link.

The idea for this activity came from Mark Charon, artist at the North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin. He created a "tree" that traveled along with the rest of the art pieces in the *Paradise Lost* exhibit. At each exhibit location, people were able to add their personal pledge to fight climate change, as well as read and learn about other people's pledges.

activity

TREE OF PLEDGES

Personal Pledges

Students will construct a “pledge tree,” add personal pledges to the tree, and focus on keeping their pledges.

Procedure

- 1) Have your students design a “tree” (trunk and branches) without leaves for display in a common area. The tree could be made of real branches and twigs, wooden 2x4s and dowels, metal welded together, or anything else they imagine. “Plant” your “tree” in a pot and place soil around it to keep it upright.
- 2) Next, have students make leaves upon which pledges can be written, e.g. cut out “leaves” from green paper. Near the base of each leaf, punch a hole through the paper with a hole-punch.
- 3) Tie a 6” piece of string or a long twist-tie through each leaf hole.
- 4) Have students take one leaf apiece and write their own pledge on how they plan to fight climate change. For example, turn lights off when not in use, replace incandescent light bulbs with compact florescent bulbs, unplug cell phone and MP3 chargers when not in use, educate others on climate change, eat more locally-grown food, drive less, etc.
- 5) Next, have students hang their leaves on the tree.

- 6) After the tree is filled with leaves, ask students to read the responses and discuss the different options for reducing greenhouse gases or the impacts of climate change. Are there any that you as a teacher can implement in your classroom to set an example? Which ones can the students take home and do with their families? Are there any that can be implemented school-wide? What about community-wide?

Going Beyond

- 1) Place the pledge tree in a common area of the school. Alongside the pledge tree provide a supply of blank leaves, cut from green paper with stems of twist ties or string. Allow all students and faculty to make their own pledges and attach them to the pledge tree.
- 2) Have a student pick a leaf off of the pledge tree each day or week and read the pledge with the morning announcements for the entire school. Bigger impacts result when the entire school focuses on one pledge at a time. For example, students can remind each other to bring a reusable lunch bag or reusable water bottle.
- 3) Record some or all of your tree’s pledges on our “virtual tree of pledges” on the EEK! website. Go to <http://dnr.wi.gov/eeek/>. Compare your leaves to the others on the virtual tree. Did you add any new ideas to the virtual tree? Did the virtual tree provide new ideas that weren’t on your tree?

