Eco-Action Examples from YES! Team Projects

WATER

Picked up trash during a shoreline cleanup
Monitored a lake for aquatic invasive species
Collected data about water quality with MPCA, RiverWatch, local watershed district, or other organizations
Conducted a biodiversity index in local streams and lakes
Helped a watershed district create charts and graphs of water quality from previous years
Installed a green roof on part of the school
Created a rain garden at school
Installed rain barrels to collect rainwater and used it for watering flower beds
Made a device to collect rain/snow from their greenhouse roof to use for watering plants to save money
Replaced pavement with permeable surface
Installed low-flow showerheads, hose attachments and faucets
Replaced school toilets and dishwashers with low-flow, energy star devices. Installed faucets with automatic shut-off
Constructed a boardwalk to protect a wetland
Installed a greywater reuse system in the school to collect water from sinks, showers, etc. for use in toilet flushing or irrigation
Tested drinking-water quality
Restored shoreline habitat
Raised trout for release through Trout in the Classroom
Cleaned out storm drains in community
Stenciled storm drains in their city with “No Dumping - Drains to Waterway”
Installed pet-waste baggy dispensers in parks
Created and maintained a collection site for people to drop off used motor oil
Partnered with the city to switch all public facilities to using phosphate-free soaps and detergents
Learned how to teach water conservation to younger students in the school and provided tips on how to conserve water at school and at home
Developed a water quality curriculum they will use to teach younger students

ENERGY

Created an energy scavenger hunt for students to do at home
Installed a wind turbine at school
Learned about solar science and assembled a Solar Suitcase to bring electricity to a refugee camp in Africa
Partnered with contractor to plan construction and installation of solar thermal collectors on their school, presenting plans to school board for approval
Explored the feasibility of solar (both photo voltaic and solar thermal) for their school

Met with school board to promote solar panels for the school
Installed solar panels at school (Solar on Schools)
Started and promoted a community solar garden
Refurbished solar lights and installed them around school sidewalks
Replaced flourescent lights in school and the parking lot with LEDs
Distributed Energy Efficient CFL Light Bulbs at a local parade; each light bulb had a postcard attached, highlighting energy reduction suggestions
Removed and recycled old light bulbs on community's holiday lights, replacing them with LEDs
Installed Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs in local low-income housing
To gather data on their school's electrical usage during the school day, they distributed a survey to all staff members and compiled the results along with the data from an electrical energy usage audit they did to help them understand their school's energy habits and how they might change them
Created a website to display data from the school's energy monitoring system
Updated solar panel energy display at school to be more interactive for public viewing
Completed B3 Benchmarking assessment of the school's energy performance, identifying opportunities for saving energy
Completed an energy audit by analyzing every exterior door in their school with a laser thermometer to see where heat was leaking and which doors needed weather stripping
Monitored the staff appliances in the school district using Kill-o-Watt meters to determine a fair cost per appliance based on energy use
Educated staff and administration about energy consumption of various appliances
Performed an energy audit at home
Acquired energy-efficient automatic hand dryers and water faucets for their school
Installed automatic light switches at school
Installed reminders to turn off lights when not in use
Converted school exit signs to LEDs
Installed a Vending Miser to save energy used for a drink vending machine in their school cafeteria
Investigated motion-detector lighting for various areas of their school to help their school become more energy-efficient
Purchased a Pedal-A-Watt system to be used in their school
Built an e-bike and electric go-kart
Built and demonstrated a solar car
Built a supermileage vehicle for the annual MTEEA Supermileage Challenge
Built a solar boat and competed in the annual MRES Solar Boat Regatta
Designed and built a solar-powered trailer to haul their solar boat and/or electric vehicle to events
Designed and built portable 120 volt solar chargers for students and staff to use in and out of school
Built a tiny home
Built solar pop can heaters
Designed and built trombe walls, which will be used to offset heating costs on days when there is a large fluctuation in temperature from day to night

Researched and began to implement green roofing technologies on their school's annex building
Initiated a Lending Library of energy monitoring devices in partnership with their local library to promote energy-use awareness and conservation in their community
Went to the State Capitol with a community member to discuss how legislators are important to the energy efficiency and renewable energy fields
Provided education using an energy trailer from Get Into Energy for Earth Day
Promoted electric vehicles
Installed an electric vehicle charging station
Informed their community of how using hybrids, full electric and high efficiency gasoline powered vehicles can reduce consumption of non-renewable fuel sources
Educated 4th graders on bike safety to encourage them to bike to school more often and thereby lesson their pollution
Installed more bike racks at school
Helped build a solar-powered mini golf course to be used at community events

WASTE REDUCTION

Collected, weighed, and kept data on the amount of lunch waste produced by the student body
Did a waste sort to determine how much of what's thrown away at school could be recycled instead of sent to a landfill
Worked to reduce food waste in their school by meeting with the school nutritionist for new meal taste testing
Worked with school administration to replace stryofoam bowls and trays in the lunch line with reusable ones
Helped school cafeteria transition from single-use plastics to reusable or compostable plates and silverware
Made a video to train peers on what can and cannot be recycled in their lunchroom
Redesigned the lunch room to make it easier for students to use the correct bins for organics recycling
Worked with the art department to paint large murals on the cafeteria wall depicting which waste should go in each container
Established a 'share' table at lunch where unwanted fruits like apples, bananas, grapes, and oranges can serve another purpose
Built a compost tumbler
Installed compost bins to recycle organic waste from school cafeteria
Made worm-composting bins to recycle food waste
Collected organic lunch waste and sent to a farmer for use as hog or chicken feed (School to Farm)
Implemented a composting program involving local community farmers. In return for food waste, the farms provided the school garden with organic fertilizer
Made a composting education video for area elementary schools
Designed and conducted a four-week composting education program with the 5th and 6th grade classes
Campaigned to reduce dependence upon single-use plastics
Researched the most efficient way to compost bathroom paper towels rather than throw them away
Installed bulk milk dispensers in school cafeteria to elimate cartons
Explored ways to recycle milk cartons in cafeteria
Evaluated and redefined recycling at the high school, including determining weaknesses of the current program and setting goals for the future
Researched recycling categories to implement a common recycling station along with an informative slideshow

Increased the number of recycling containers at school and created signs to identify waste baskets and recycling bins
Identified which classrooms needed bigger recycling bins and secured larger bins for each
Designed lessons on waste reduction and taught them to younger students
Collected old cell phones for recycling
Worked with the PC's for People program to recycle or reuse old computers
Recycled holiday lights
Recycled used markers
Collected and recycled plastic grocery bags
Collected used printer cartridges and batteries for recycling
Utilized TerraCycle to recycle items that aren't accepted in current recycling system
Collected shoes, t-shirts, blue jeans, or other clothing to donate to a community closet or another organization (like WorldWear)
Collected school supplies at locker clean out day that can be reused
Held "Biggest Loser" locker-emptying challenges with the goal of recycling as much as possible
Conducted tire pressure checks on teachers' cars and left a note indicating the environmental impact and gas wasted from improperly inflated tires
Installed a bike repair station
Encouraged teachers to cancel duplicate catalogs they receive at school and make 2-sided photocopies to reduce extra paper waste
Intalled a hydration station at school and monitored the number of fills to determine amount of waste prevented
Distributed reusable water bottles to students and staff to encourage them to the hydration stations team installed at school
Made posters and a video to promote the use of the hydration station
Created a disc golf course using recycled parts for targets
Upcycled plastic bags, weaving them into bracelets to sell and "plarn" sleeping mats for homeless people
Made a sculpture to illustrate how much plasticware gets thrown out each week in the cafeteria
Created 3-D sculptures of all of the juice and milk cartons that get thrown away in a typical day in their school cafeteria to encourage proper recycling
Strung together all plastic containers placed in recycling bins at school over a three day period and calculated the impact of students' recycling habits
Picked up trash and recyclables after homecoming parade. Students walked behind the parade with signs advertising their club and their World Wear shoe collection
Cleaned up stadium after homecoming football game
Creating a recycling depot where community members can recycle plastic bags, aluminum cans, and more
Created a used oil, oil filter, and antifreeze recycling station in the community
Brought permanent recycling bins to their downtown area, involving local organizations and artists in the development and design of these unique bins
Created a display to increase awareness of the recycled plastic composite material used to build the community playground
Administered a survey to students to gauge how sustainably their peers are living, awarding points based on behaviors

LAND

Planted a prairie-pollinator garden at school or on community property
Collected prairie seeds and made seed bombs with younger students
Created a garden and shared the harvest through a community food shelf
Sponsored a community garden where the YES! students helped elementary students grow their own produce
Visited elementary classes and read a book about gardening
Utilized hydroponics and aquaponics set-ups to grow tomatoes, radishes, lettuce, cabbage, kohlrabi, peppers, and herbs
Grew food in a greenhouse or aquaponics system
Designed and constructed a hoop garden and a water system which uses rainwater runoff
Promoted permaculture
Built planter boxes or raised gardens
Designed and built vertical gardens
Ran and maintained a Deep Winter Greenhouse
Students constructed the frame for a 30' by 48' greenhouse, selected the plants to be grown, and prepared the greenhouse for plants
Installed a passive solar greenhouse and with a vertical axis wind turbine
Promoted their greenhouse by handing out fresh greens at sporting events
Harvested grapes and made grape jelly to use in educational events about the value of local foods
Planted a food forest or orchard
Planted raspberry bushes and apple trees donated from the community
Planted native trees for conservation
Planted trees and shrubs for their city through a grant from MN DOT
Removed buckthorn or other invasive species from a wooded area
Conducted river shoreline plantings in partnership with community members
Grew plants in milk cartons to give away on Earth Day
Made bee houses
Built and installed bat boxes
Built and installed bluebird houses and bird feeders
Constructed and maintained an outdoor classroom
Constructed a teaching platform, benches or shelter for outdoor education
Built a bridge to access acres of land of the opposite side of a stream in their school forest
Created natural playscapes at a local nature center
Created educational signs for their community about how climate change is impacting animal populations
Developed signs for the forest behind school with information regarding different species and vegetation types
Developed interpretive signs for native habitat or other conservation projects

EVENTS

Planned and hosted a youth climate convening for the community with Climate Generation
Led an Environmental Week at school
Led Energy Conservation Week at school
Coordinated a Blackout Day at school to promote energy conservation
Developed a “Dark Lunch” at their school to encourage awareness of energy use and the need for energy conservation
Hosted a Waste-Free Lunch
Hosted a used-clothing exchange
Hosted a Green Transportation Week at school
Taught about water quality and soil heath at an education station at community event
Organized a Community Green Day
Hosted Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day in conjunction with county household hazardous waste facility
Planned and implemented a Renewable Energy Workshop for all local 5th graders—highlighting the school greenhouse, solar ovens, and more
Put together a Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency Workshop
Hosted an all-day energy expo that included energy-related businesses and organizations, recycling of cell phones, ink cartridges, holiday lights, tennis shoes, and paper, children’s activities, and lunch
Hosted an e-waste recycling drive
Hosted a Green Your Holidays event
Co-sponsored a screening of the movie Fresh as well as a community discussion about local foods
Organized a booth at their school's Ag Day to educate students on the importance of pollinator plants
Coordinated an Earth Day Celebration
Led educational games with prizes at a lunch table for Earth Day to educate fellow students while having fun
Hosted a week-long event around Earth Day, including a blackout day/hour, a ‘Kahoot’ interactive quiz game on recycling, educational posters and presentations, and a trash audit. They also had themed dress-up days designed to spark conversations about various topics related to sustainability
Designed and implemented an Earth Day Education event for K-4th graders with 30 minute educational workshops for each grade level on topics such as solar and wind energy, recycling, and seed germination
Organized Earth Week activities for their middle school which included earth trivia cards, an Earth Day coloring contest, a Lights Out Day and green/blue day on Earth Day.
Hosted a YES! week with activities, games, trivia, learning opportunities, and dress-up days
Worked with their mayor to provide their school and community with an Eco-Fair
Coordinated an Eco-Art Competition
Hosted a YES! Run in late April. The route showcased previous projects, educating participants on the influence the team has had in the community. Registration fees were donated to water.org to raise money for communities to have access to safe water

Taught a session for younger students at Science and Nature Conference
Implemented a mini advertising campaign about an issue like water quality on YouTube, social media, posters, handouts, radio interviews, etc.
Marched in a community parade to promote a particular eco solution
Organized a Local Foods Celebration for the community where they served a local foods lunch and created a farmers market at their school
Held a community meeting where they lead a discussion with area youth on the topic of re-localization and sustainability pertaining to energy, food, and economics
Participated in Lobby Day at the state capitol to present the need for funding environmental clubs and the environment in general
Prepared a booth on recycling and answered questions by attendees at the annual STEAM Expo
Tabled at the St. Cloud State University Earth Day Expo
Exhibited and showcased renewable energy and waste reduction projects at the MN School Board Association Conference and CERTs Conference
Entered the annual MN Renewable Energy Society Solar Boat Regatta
Held a late spring star-gazing event
Hosted a Family Fun Night for school outreach, education, and fun!
Created a Water Week with activities to promote the hydration stations in their schools
Organized a clean water fundraiser that included a silent auction and brunch. Proceeds were donated to Clean Water Action
Taught Outdoor Science to students in grades 1-3, which included energy conservation, clean energy production, sustainable growing and local foods, and habitat/species diversity and protection, all embedded in the MN science standards
Hosted a Family Fun Ag Day and educated adults and children about where their food comes from
Participated in a Community Cleanup
Went on a trip to the Water Park of America to learn about water conservation and usage (and played around in the water, of course!)
Toured Valley Fair in order to learn about their recycling and waste reduction program
Took an Alternative Energy and Transportation tour of Minnesota which included a biomass plant, a solar panel plant, wind energy, hydro power, an ethanol plant, ships, turbines, dams and a historic gas station

POTENTIAL FUNDRAISERS

Sold LED light bulbs provided by their local utility for a Watts and Drops Fundraiser. Students used this opportunity to educate their community about energy savings and used the money generated to increase the number of school garbage stations and purchase smart power strips for teachers
Picked their school apples and grapes, canned sauce and jam, and baked cookies with local ingredients, which they sold at the bake sale and the local shopping mall to promote local foods
Up-cycled old lights and bottles into planters
Collected and donate shoes for WorldWear fundraiser
Sold hot chocolate and seed bombs
Sold dirt cups and solar-power made popcorn for Earth Day
Sold hot chocolate, cider, and treats at the local Lights in Motion event and helped the organization set up

Rented school garden plots of 10'x20' to the community with remaining area tended by YES! Team. Produce was used in school lunches and sold through farmers markets
Developed a brochure which they displayed and handed out at a "Green Marketplace" and plant sale they hosted to raise money for their projects
Collected scrap metal from a construction project to sell for recycling
Sold apples, cider, vinegar, honey, and flour from their 6-acre school orchard
Designed and sold reusable water bottles as well as using them as incentives in an Earth Week photo contest
Built two different hydroponic growth chambers which they used to grow basil and mint plants. Sold cuttings from these plants to faculty and staff at their school
Collected aluminum cans from the community to recycle (for cash)
Ran a paper recycling fundraiser at school during spring to help fund future energy action projects in their schools and communities
Reached out to local business to support YES! through the East Side Oil 5 cent program
Helped fund their projects through a community-based recycling initiative that resulted in 10,000 pounds of waste scrap metal being recycled and raised $4,700 for their team
Grew enough greens for their school lunch program and sold 5 CSA shares to local families to raise money in order to maintain operations and make the program sustainable
Made and sold organic granola with local rolled oats
Raised money for a hydration station in their school by selling re-useable YES! team water bottles and hosting a dance
During their school's Earth Week they ran a contest for the best graphic designs for the reusable water bottles that they plan to sell as a fundraiser for their team and to promote better hydration and health
Partnered with Minnesota Power to sell LED bulbs and encourage families to audit the energy use of their homes, thus earning funds for their school
Hosted their second annual smoothie fundraiser for a local senior center
Sold reusable grocery bags with the YES! logo on them
Made and sold solar LED jars
Made and sold recycled plastic-bottle bird-feeders
Turned donated t-shirts into reusable bags
Made and sold solar battery chargers
Sold produce from their greenhouse at a home/farm show at their school
Collected heirloom seeds for distribution at a spring garden sale
Collaborated with their school's Entrepreneurship Class to promote and sell reusable water bottles
Developed a prototype solar cell phone charger and worked to make it more compact and affordable so that they can sell them to their fellow students
Sold some of the produce they raised at their local farmer's market
Students presented their plan for the green roof to local businesses in order to secure support, both financial and otherwise
Made beeswax food wraps and lip balms for pollinator and waste reduction awareness and sold them as a fundraiser