



2027 World Citizen Engagement Contest (WCEC) Resource Guide

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OVERVIEW

The **World Citizen “Engagement” Contest (WCEC)** reimagines what it means for students to engage with global issues by shifting the focus from "Who writes the best essay?" to "Who most effectively communicates an informed perspective on a global issue?" While essays remain an important component of the contest, the WCEC expands opportunities for students to demonstrate research, critical thinking, creativity, and civic engagement through a variety of

formats, including written essays, podcasts, photo essays, and video essays. This evolution recognizes that today's students communicate through multiple mediums and that global competence requires not only strong writing skills but also the ability to analyze information, consider multiple perspectives, and effectively share ideas with diverse audiences.

The reimagined contest is designed to be more than a standalone competition; it is intended to serve as a meaningful, project-based learning experience that educators can integrate into their classrooms. By connecting local issues to global challenges, students will investigate complex topics, develop evidence-based solutions, and reflect on their role as informed and engaged global citizens. The contest will emphasize transferable skills such as research, communication, media literacy, creativity, and civic engagement through a common rubric that values the quality of students' thinking rather than the format they choose. A student reflection or narrative accompanying each submission will provide additional context for judges and encourage students to articulate their learning process and creative choices.

About the WCEC Resource Guide

The **World Citizen Engagement Contest (WCEC) Resource Guide** is designed to help students, educators, and parents navigate the contest, explore global issues, and develop meaningful submissions. Whether you're writing an essay, creating a photo essay or video essay, or producing a podcast, this guide offers helpful tips, tools, and resources to support you throughout the process.

Inside, you'll find guidance on choosing a topic, conducting research, exploring different perspectives, connecting local experiences to global issues, citing sources, and using technology and AI responsibly. You'll also find resources to help turn curiosity into action and communicate your ideas through the format that best fits your voice and creativity.

The goal is to support the process, not prescribe the outcome. Students are encouraged to follow their curiosity, ask thoughtful questions, consider diverse perspectives, and explore how they can make a difference in their communities and beyond.

Educators can use this guide to introduce the contest, support student learning, and encourage thoughtful, creative engagement with our interconnected world.

You don't need to have all the answers to get started. Start with an issue that matters to you, stay curious, and discover where your questions lead.

2027 World Citizen Engagement Contest: Eligibility & Submission Guidelines



Eligibility

The World Citizen Engagement Contest (WCEC) is open to students and youth in **grades 3–12 who reside in Washington State**. Students may participate independently or submit an entry as part of a classroom assignment. All submissions must reflect the student's own learning, ideas, and work.

Important Dates

- **Contest Launch:** Tuesday, October 13, 2026
- **Submission Deadline:** All eligible entries must be successfully uploaded by 11:59pm Pacific Time at the end of the day on Monday, March 22, 2027

All entries must be fully submitted through the official submission form by the deadline. Late or incomplete submissions may not be considered.

Submission Categories & Requirements

Choose the format that best allows you to explore your chosen global issue and communicate your perspective. Each submission should demonstrate thoughtful research, critical thinking, and an understanding of how global issues affect people and communities.

1. Traditional Essay

- Maximum length: 1,000 words.
- Times New Roman font, 12 pt.
- Present a clear, informed perspective on a global issue supported by credible research and evidence.
- Include citations or a list of sources to acknowledge the information used in the form of a Works Cited page or Bibliography.
- Your essay should reflect your own analysis, ideas, and conclusions.

2. Photo Essay

- Include 5–8 original photographs.
- Include a written reflection of 500 words or fewer.
- Use the photographs and accompanying captions to communicate your perspective on a global issue.
- The reflection should explain what you explored, what you learned, and how your creative choices help communicate your message.
- Include citations or a list of sources to acknowledge the information used within your captions or identify sources directly within the submission form.
- Upload your photographs and captions together as a single PDF document. The reflection can be typed directly into the submission form or you may copy and paste your completed reflection.

3. Video Essay

- Length: 3–5 minutes.
- Maximum file size: 250 MB.
- Use video, narration, interviews, or other visual storytelling techniques to explore a global issue and communicate an informed perspective.

- Include credits at the end of your video or identify sources directly within the submission form.
- Include a 2–3 sentence overview directly into the submission form describing your submission, its central message, and its connection to the global issue you selected.

4. Podcast

- Length: 3–5 minutes.
- Maximum file size: 250 MB.
- Use audio storytelling, interviews, commentary, or discussion to explore a global issue and share an informed perspective.
- Include credits verbally at the end of your audio submission or identify sources directly within the submission form.
- Include a 2–3 sentence overview directly into the submission form describing your submission, its central message, and its connection to the global issue you selected.

Judging Criteria

The 2027 WCEC judging rubric is coming soon! All submissions will be evaluated using a common framework that prioritizes the quality of students' thinking and communication rather than the format they choose. Criteria will reflect research, critical thinking, understanding of diverse perspectives, creativity, and effective communication.

Originality & Responsible Use of AI

All World Citizen Engagement Contest (WCEC) submissions must reflect the student's own ideas, learning, research, and creative contributions.

Students may use AI tools for limited support, such as brainstorming or organizing ideas and reviewing spelling or grammar. However, AI-generated content must not replace the student's own thinking, writing, storytelling, or creative work.

AI and generative AI tools may not be used to create, generate, alter, or modify images, photographs, audio recordings, video footage, or other media submitted as part of a contest entry. Students must use authentic media they created themselves or have permission to use, and must accurately represent any people, places, events, interviews, and actions shown or described.

Standard editing is permitted. Students may crop or resize photographs, adjust brightness or contrast, trim audio or video, adjust volume, add captions or subtitles, and make other basic

edits to improve clarity, accessibility, or presentation, provided these edits do not fabricate, misrepresent, or materially alter the content.

Students must use media they created themselves or have permission to use. Any third-party media must be appropriately credited. Students must disclose any use of generative AI in preparing their submissions, including the tool used and how it was used.

Entries may be reviewed for originality and compliance with these guidelines. AI detection tools may be used as one part of the review process, but an AI detection score alone will not determine disqualification. Submissions that violate the contest's originality or responsible AI-use requirements may be disqualified following review.

Your submission should reflect your voice, your perspective, and what you have learned. We want to hear what you think and see how you creatively engage with the world around you.

Submission File Check

Important: Protect Your Identity for Judging

Do not include your name, school name, or other personally identifying information anywhere in your uploaded submission, including the document, photographs, captions, video, audio, or credits. This information will be collected separately through the online submission form. To support a fair judging process, submissions will be distributed to judges without identifying information.

1. Traditional Essay

- Save your essay as a **PDF**.
- Name your file using this format: **[Grade Level]_[Submission Title].pdf**
- Use **E** for Elementary School, **M** for Middle School, or **H** for High School.
- Remove spaces from your submission title.

Example: A middle school student submitting an essay titled *"Solutions to Climate Change"* should name the file:

M_SolutionstoClimateChange.pdf

2. Photo Essay

- Combine your **5–8 original photographs, captions, and reflection** into one PDF.
- Name your file using your grade-level letter, an underscore, and a shortened version of your submission title, with no spaces.

Example: An elementary school student submitting a photo essay titled “*Plastic Pollution in My Community*” should name the file:

E_PlasticPollutioninMyCommunity.pdf

3. Video Essay

- Save your video in a supported video format and ensure it is **3–5 minutes long** and no larger than **250 MB**.
- Name your file using your grade-level letter, an underscore, and a shortened version of your submission title, with no spaces.

Example: A high school student submitting a video essay titled “*Protecting Our Oceans*” should name the file:

H_ProtectingOurOceans.mp4

The file extension may vary depending on your video format.

4. Podcast

- Save your audio in a supported audio format and ensure it is **3–5 minutes long** and no larger than **250 MB**.
- Name your file using your grade-level letter, an underscore, and a shortened version of your submission title, with no spaces.

Example: A middle school student submitting a podcast titled “*Why Food Waste Matters*” should name the file:

M_WhyFoodWasteMatters.mp3

The file extension may vary depending on your audio format.

Before You Submit

Before submitting your entry, make sure your file is saved in the correct format, meets the requirements for your chosen submission type, and is named according to your grade level and the WCEC file-naming guidelines. Please ensure your files meet the specified length and size limits and complete all required fields in the submission form. Entries must be submitted by March 22, 2027, at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time to be eligible for judging.

A Note on Learning Standards Presented in this Guide



Three sets of standards have been linked to each of the learning objectives in this packet. The **Washington State K-12 Social Studies Learning Standards** and the accompanying Grade Level Requirements are the social studies standards for WA State.

The College, Career,& Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards are the standards published by the National Council for the Social Studies. Guiding the packet as a whole is the Framework for Global Learning created by the Asia Society and the Council of Chief State School Officers titled *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World* (2011).

Cross-objective standards are listed at the beginning of the packet, and content-specific standards can be found after each learning objective. The standards provided have been selected for relevance, but are not exclusive: many other standards, such as Common Core, may be applicable to the resources and learning objectives identified in this packet. The intention for this packet's organization is to provide educators with an idea of resources available and

possible uses for resources. Users should feel free to create their own learning objectives and to select resources according to the specific needs of their classrooms.

WASHINGTON STATE K-12 SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING STANDARDS

There are five EALRs in Social Studies, one for each of the discipline areas: civics, economics, geography, and history, and a fifth for social studies skills.

(1) Social Studies EALR 1: CIVICS

The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

(2) Social Studies EALR 2: ECONOMICS

The student applies understanding of economic concepts and systems to analyze decision-making and the interactions between individuals, households, businesses, governments, and societies.

(3) Social Studies EALR 3: GEOGRAPHY

The student uses a spatial perspective to make reasoned decisions by applying the concepts of location, region, and movement and demonstrating knowledge of how geographic features and human cultures impact environments.

(4) Social Studies EALR 4: HISTORY

The student understands and applies knowledge of historical thinking, chronology, eras, turning points, major ideas, individuals, and themes on local, Washington State, tribal, United States, and world history in order to evaluate how history shapes the present and future.

(5) Social Studies EALR 5: SOCIAL STUDIES SKILLS

The student understands and applies reasoning skills to conduct research, deliberate, and form and evaluate positions through the processes of reading, writing, and communicating.

COLLEGE, CAREER, & CIVIC LIFE C3 FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES STATE STANDARDS

The C3 Framework is organized into the four Dimensions, which support a robust social studies program rooted in inquiry.

The four Dimensions are as follows:

(1) Developing questions and planning inquiries;

(2) Applying disciplinary concepts and tools;

(3) Evaluating sources and using evidence;

(4) Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRIES	DIMENSION 2: APPLYING DISCIPLINARY TOOLS AND CONCEPTS	DIMENSION 3: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE	DIMENSION 4: COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION
Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries	Civics	Gathering and Evaluating Sources	Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions
	Economics		
	Geography	Developing Claims and Using Evidence	Taking Informed Action
	History		

1 - Dimension 2 has four disciplinary subsections: (1) Civics; (2) Economics; (3) Geography; (4) History. Each disciplinary subsection has three to four additional categories, which provide an organizing mechanism for the foundational content and skills within each discipline.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/C3-Framework-Applying-Disciplinary-Tools-and-Concepts-Reprinted-from-The-College_fig2_333610103

CIVICS	ECONOMICS	GEOGRAPHY	HISTORY
Civic and Political Institutions	Economic Decision Making	Geographic Representations: Spatial Views of the World	Change, Continuity, and Context
Participation and Deliberation: Applying Civic Values and Democratic Principles	Exchange and Markets	Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture	Perspectives
Processes, Rules, and Laws	The National Economy	Human Population: Spatial Patterns and Movements	Historical Sources and Evidence
	The Global Economy	Global Interconnections: Changing Spatial Patterns	Causation and Argumentation

2 - C3 Framework Organization

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/C3-Framework-Applying-Disciplinary-Tools-and-Concepts-Reprinted-from-The-College_fig2_333610103

EDUCATING FOR GLOBAL COMPETENCE

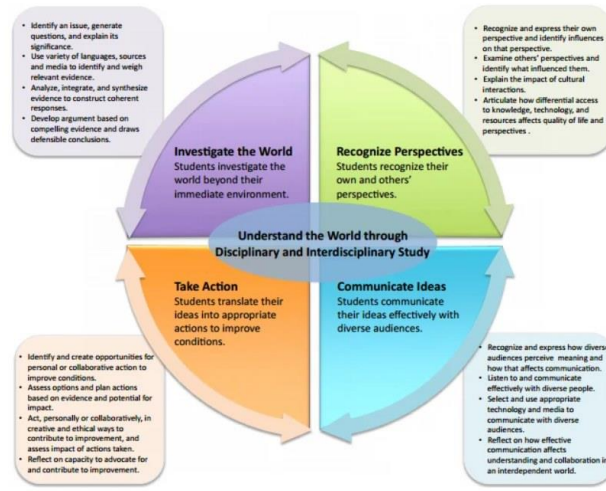
Frameworks taken from *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World* (Asia Society and the Council of Chief State School Officers 2011).

“Global competence is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance.” (Chapter 2).

Globally competent students are able to perform the following four competences:

1. **Investigate the world** beyond their immediate environment, framing significant problems and conducting well-crafted and age-appropriate research.
2. **Recognize perspectives** others’ and their own, articulating and explaining such perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully.
3. **Communicate ideas** effectively with diverse audiences, bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological, and cultural barriers.

4. **Take action** to improve conditions, viewing themselves as players in the world and participating reflectively.



Framework for Global Competence by Mansilla and Jackson (2013)

3 - <https://pressbooks.pub/drrashijain/chapter/unit-1-global-competence/>

Getting Started



2027 World Citizen Engagement Contest Prompt

What issue facing our interconnected world do you believe deserves greater attention and understanding, and why?

People, communities, and countries are connected in many ways—through trade, technology, travel, the environment, and many shared challenges. Events and decisions in one part of the world can affect people in another, and local actions can have global impacts.

Choose an issue that affects people across communities, countries, or regions, or one that connects your local community to the wider world. After researching and analyzing the issue, explain:

- Why is this issue important to you and/or to people directly affected by it?
- How does the issue affect people locally, globally, or both?
- Why does greater awareness, understanding, or engagement with this issue matter?
- What is one way you, your community, or others could take action or contribute to positive change?

You may present your ideas through a **traditional essay, photo essay, video essay, or podcast**.

We suggest sharing your thoughts with friends, teachers, and family as you refine your ideas. As you develop your submission, consider how your experiences, background, interests, and perspectives inform the way you see the issue. There is no single "right" perspective or "right" answer. We encourage you to bring your own voice, insights, and experiences to your project.

Suggested Steps

1. Select an issue that has local and global connections, or that affects people and communities across countries or regions.
2. Reflect on why this issue matters and who is affected.
3. Research your topic using several credible sources (explore the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Below for Ideas)
4. Consider how the issue connects your community to the wider world.
5. Reflect on how greater awareness, cooperation, or engagement could help address this issue.
6. Choose how you would like to present your ideas.
7. Create your essay, video, podcast, or photo essay.

- a. Essays should have a maximum of 1000 words (excluding bibliography).
 - b. Videos should be a maximum of 5 minutes.
 - c. Podcasts should be a maximum of 5 minutes.
 - d. Photo essays should range between 5-8 photos with captions and a reflection that is 500 words or less.
8. Identify the sources you used to research your topic. **Source citations are required for middle and high school students.** Include a bibliography or Works Cited page with your written submission, as applicable. For video essays and podcasts, you may include your sources in the credits at the end of your video or audio submission. Alternatively, you can list your sources in the designated section of the online submission form. Always give credit to the original creators of information, images, audio, and other materials you use.

[Explore Sustainability: 2027 WCEC Sustainability Award](#)

Thanks to the generous support of **Weyerhaeuser**, students interested in exploring environmental sustainability will have the opportunity to be considered for a special award recognizing work in this area—the WCEC Sustainability Award. This award will recognize one elementary, one middle school, and one high school submission that thoughtfully examines an environmental sustainability issue and presents a meaningful, action-oriented response.

The 2027 WCEC Sustainability Award is an **additional award opportunity** beyond the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place awards and honorable mentions. You do not need to submit a separate entry or answer a different prompt! If your WCEC submission focuses on **environmental sustainability and connects the United Nations Sustainability Goals (SDGs) with meaningful local action**, you can choose to have it considered for the Sustainability Award.

Simply select “**Yes**” on the submission form when asked if you would like to be considered. Your entry will then be included in both the general WCEC judging pool and the 2027 WCEC Sustainability Award judging pool.

Looking for a Topic?

The **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)** can be a great place to start! The 17 SDGs address some of the world's most important challenges and show how issues affecting people and the planet are connected.

For example, you might explore:

- **Climate Action (SDG 13)** — How are communities responding to climate change?

- **Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6)** — How can we protect access to clean water?
- **Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12)** — How can we reduce waste and use resources more responsibly?
- **Life Below Water (SDG 14)** — How can we protect oceans and marine ecosystems?
- **Life on Land (SDG 15)** — How can we protect forests, wildlife, and biodiversity?
- **Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7)** — How can communities transition to cleaner sources of energy?
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)** — What can make our communities healthier and more sustainable?

These are just examples. You may also find connections between environmental sustainability and other SDGs, such as **No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, and Reduced Inequalities.**

What Makes a Strong Sustainability Submission?

Ask yourself:

What is the issue?

Explore an environmental sustainability issue that matters to you or your community.

Why does it matter?

Explain how this issue affects people, places, or the environment locally, globally, or both.

What could be done?

What actions could you, your school, or your community take to help address the issue or make a positive difference?

Your action **does not have to be big**. It could be something you do at school, at home, in your neighborhood, or with a community organization. What matters is that you notice an issue, learn more about it, and take meaningful action.

Think Globally. Start Where You Are.

The SDGs can help you connect something happening **in your own community to a larger global challenge.**

You don't have to solve a global problem on your own. We want to see your **curiosity, creativity, learning, and action**—and how you believe young people can contribute to positive change.

Start with an issue that matters to you. Learn more. Take action. Then share what you discovered.

Utilizing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Your Submission



Before creating your submission, take time to learn about your topic, explore different perspectives, and identify reliable information.

- [United Nations: Student Resources](#) — Explore the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), learn about global challenges, and discover activities that encourage students to take action. This is a helpful starting point for students of different ages.
- [United Nations: Global Issues](#) — Find background information about issues such as climate change, poverty, health, migration, inequality, and peace.
- [National Geographic Education](#) — Explore educational articles, maps, photographs, and other resources about people, places, cultures, geography, and the environment.

- [NASA Climate Kids](#) — Learn about climate change, weather, energy, oceans, and our planet through accessible explanations and interactive activities. Particularly useful for younger students.
- [Our World in Data](#) — Explore research, statistics, charts, and visualizations about global topics, including education, health, poverty, population, and climate change. Especially useful for middle and high school students looking for data to support an argument.

Research tip: Use more than one reliable source. Check who created the information, when it was published, what evidence supports it, and whether other credible sources agree. Consider whose perspectives are included—and whose may be missing. Keep track of your sources so you can give credit in your submission.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #1: No Poverty](#)



"Over the last decade, global poverty reduction has slowed substantially compared to the sharp decline in 1990-2015. This slowdown is due to a combination of interconnected crises, including sluggish economic growth, high levels of debt, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and fragility, and severe weather-related shocks. By 2026, one in ten people worldwide is still living in extreme poverty, showing limited improvement. Growth and population forecasts, even before the recent conflicts in the Middle East, suggest that about 9% of the world's population is likely to be living in extreme poverty by 2030. However, countries have steadily made progress in halving national poverty rates over the SDG period. For instance, East and South-East Asia, despite starting with the lowest poverty levels, are projected to have the highest share of countries achieving halving national poverty rates by 2030."

Local to Global Connections

[2026 Policy Agenda: It Takes a Village](#)

"In our Washington state, we understand that positive outcomes require positive investments. By supporting people in meeting their basic needs, we can build a stable foundation for everyone to thrive. The other Washington (DC) has chosen to turn their back on those who have the least to benefit the ultra-wealthy. With deep poverty on the rise in WA, our state must contend with federal funding cuts meant to gut lifeline programs and place blame on people living in poverty. In our prosperous state, scarcity is a myth and poverty is a policy issue. Therefore, we are committed to spending money on support instead of skepticism. In this Washington, we will fight to leverage progressive revenue and investments in robust social services to support our families and neighbors."

[How Policy Has Helped Eradicate Extreme Poverty in India](#) *(January 29, 2025)*

"According to the World Bank, India has lifted 171 million people out of poverty in just 10 years. In 2011, 16.2% of the population was living on less than \$2.15 per day. By 2023, this number went down to 2.3% This is the fastest reduction of poverty seen by any nation globally. India has seen strong economic growth, increased employment rates and improved infrastructure. The continual implementation of policy reforms has made the biggest difference in eliminating extreme poverty in India."

LESSON TWO

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #1, NO
POVERTY



End poverty in all
its forms
everywhere



IMAGE BY
GETTY IMAGES

4 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-two-sdg-1-no-poverty/>

In this lesson, students learn about United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #1: No Poverty. They will watch a series of short videos that will provide an introduction to the SDGs and the no poverty goal. This specific lesson has students explore the connection between environmental issues (one of the themes of this module series) and poverty.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #2: Zero Hunger](#)

2 ZERO HUNGER



“Progress towards ending hunger shows modest improvement but remains insufficient. After peaking in recent years, global hunger declined slightly in 2024. But undernourishment and food insecurity remain well above 2015 levels, affecting billions worldwide. Food price pressures have eased significantly and returned to near pre-pandemic levels in many countries, offering some relief. However, progress towards sustainable and productive agriculture is only incremental, and public spending on agriculture has not recovered to earlier highs. However, climate change, economic shocks and conflicts continue to disrupt food production, supply chains and trade, contributing to volatility in global food and fertilizer markets and heightening vulnerability in import-dependent countries.”

Local to Global Connections

[Feeding Washington Unites the Efforts to End Hunger in our State](#)

“Hunger is the problem. Here are the ways we are addressing it:

- We support community-level hunger relief organizations like regional food banks and local food pantries.
- We get nutritious farm-grown food to people facing hunger across the state.
- We are a voice for hunger relief by uniting champions and advocating for change.”

[World Hunger Facts and Statistics](#)

“There’s enough food to feed everyone on the planet.

But 645 million people are going hungry every day – that’s 8% of the global population. Poverty, conflict and the climate crisis are keeping life-giving food out of reach.

What is world hunger?

The UN Hunger Report defines hunger as populations who are experiencing severe food insecurity. That means when people can’t get a steady, daily supply of safe and nutritious food to live an active and healthy life [...]

Conflict is the biggest cause of hunger globally. War, conflict and armed violence is the biggest causes of hunger in the world today. War disrupts people growing and exporting crops all over the world, which is increasing food shortages in regions directly impacted by the violence and beyond.

85% of people facing hunger crises live in conflict-affected countries. Armed violence often leads to infrastructure destruction, with food markets, farmland and supply chains being destroyed."

LESSON SEVEN

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #2, ZERO
HUNGER

2
ZERO
HUNGER



End hunger, achieve food
security and improved
nutrition and promote
sustainable agriculture



IMAGE BY
ISTOCK

5 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-seven-sdg-2-zero-hunger/>

In this lesson, students learn about UN Sustainable Development Goal #2: Zero Hunger. They examine the causes and consequences of food insecurity and explore solutions. Activities include KWL or Jamboard exercises, UN videos and infographics, discussions, research, and advocacy projects. These experiences help students deepen their understanding of food insecurity and its global impact, develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills, and connect with local organizations addressing the issue. Enrichment projects and advocacy efforts further enhance their learning and solution-generating abilities.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #3: Good Health and Well-Being](#)

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



“Major global health targets remain elusive, with gains in some areas offset by persistent and emerging challenges. Maternal, newborn and child under 5 mortality has declined since 2015, but progress is far too slow to meet the 2030 target. While reductions in HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths are notable, progress has stalled and funding shortfalls threaten further gains. Tuberculosis and malaria trends remain concerning as key targets are off track. Improvements in reproductive health, adolescent birth rates, and reducing tobacco use show positive momentum. However, financial hardship from health spending remains widespread, and critical shortages of health workers persist in many regions.”

Local and Global Connections

[An Attack on Healthcare Every Six Hours, and No One Held to Account](#) (August 14, 2026)

“The fact that attacks have wide-reaching and long-ranging consequences is supported by hard evidence.

Mr. Musani cited a study of 69 attacks in northwest Syria which found that outpatient consultations fell by 51 per cent the following day, with the reduction continuing for up to 37 days.

In Sudan, 37 percent of facilities were reported non-functional in 2026, while only three percent of assessed facilities had inpatient care, he said.

Meanwhile, all 36 hospitals in Gaza have been damaged, with only half remaining partially functional, and primary healthcare similarly impacted.

Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine, WHO has verified more than 3,000 attacks affecting health facilities, ambulances, warehouses and supply chains.

Furthermore, 12 attacks on healthcare have been verified since the DRC declared the current [Ebola](#) outbreak in May, disrupting the response.”

[Adolescent and Young Adult Health Data](#)

" In 2020, there were nearly 1 million young people aged 10-19 in Washington State. That is more than ever before. This tells us that public health services for adolescents and young adults are needed more now than ever. (2022 at [Estimates of April 1 population by age, sex, race and Hispanic origin | Office of Financial Management \(wa.gov\)](#))

Teen pregnancy rates are down in Washington and are lower than the national average. This tells us teen pregnancy prevention strategies – like Family Planning, Comprehensive Sexual Health Education and initiatives that are youth-friendly and culturally responsive – are working.

74% of 12th graders reported moderate or high on the Hope Scale, which defines hope as the belief that the future can be better than the past and you play a role in making it so. Research has shown that hope can be taught and is connected to academic achievements, well-being, and positive outcomes."

LESSON SIXTEEN

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #3, GOOD
HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



Ensure healthy lives and
promote well-being for all
at all ages



IMAGE BY
UNSPLASH

6 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-sixteen-sdg-3-good-health-well-being/>

In this lesson, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of SDG #3: Good Health and Well-Being, including its key targets and their significance. Students will begin by examining the historical impact of pandemics and diseases, connecting these events to the development of modern healthcare systems and societal changes.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #4: Quality Education](#)

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



“Globally, there have been gradual gains in educational outcomes in the past decades. Access to improved school infrastructure and connectivity has expanded. However, learning outcomes remain a major concern in middle- and high-income countries, with recent assessments showing declining performance in key subjects. Persistent inequalities—linked to income, location and access— continue to limit opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged groups. Without targeted efforts to improve learning quality and equity, achieving inclusive and equitable education for all will remain out of reach.”

Local and Global Connections

[Nationwide Report Shows Washington Struggling to Meet Kids’ Education Needs](#)

“Washington state is falling behind in education. That’s according to [a report from The Annie E. Casey Foundation](#), which measured child well-being across the country.

The report looks at how factors like education, healthcare, economic well-being and community impact youth. Washington ranked 17th overall. But Soleil Boyd, the executive director of the state youth advocacy organization Children’s Alliance, said that’s a reflection of the extent of problems facing children.”

Quality Education, Sustainable Development Goals

"In 2019, only 58% of children achieved minimum reading proficiency, and just 44% reached minimum mathematics proficiency by the end of primary school. Between 2018 and 2022, proficiency levels among lower-secondary students declined further—dropping by 15 points in mathematics and 10 points in reading."

LESSON FOUR

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #4,
QUALITY
EDUCATION

For Educators



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION

Providing quality
education for all is
fundamental to creating a
peaceful and prosperous
world

IMAGE BY
UNSPLASH

7 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-four-sdg-4-quality-education/>

In this lesson, students explore United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #4: Quality Education. Students will learn about why access to quality education is an essential human right that promotes life-long learning opportunities. They will identify and discuss some of the barriers (economic, political, and social/cultural) faced by youth in different contexts through video clips, reading personal stories, and engaging in additional research activities.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #5: Gender Equality](#)

5 GENDER EQUALITY



“Progress on gender equality has advanced since 2015, driven by institutional and legal reforms worldwide aimed to eliminate discriminatory laws and strengthen legal frameworks to advance gender equality, especially in the past five years. The last decade has seen child marriage decline at twice the pace of the previous one. However, no indicator has yet reached target levels; discriminatory laws and harmful practices persist, progress in decision-making parity is slowing, and without rapid acceleration, this goal will not be achieved by 2030.”

Local and Global Connections

[Washington Defies National Trend of Wage Gap Widening – But Not for Everyone](#) (March 25th, 2026)

"Women had to work this far into the new year to earn what men made the year before. Notably, this year's Equal Pay Day is later than in 2024 – by nearly two weeks. 2025's Equal Pay Day delay reflects the gender wage gap widening between 2022 and 2023."

[The World Is Failing Girls and Women, According to New UN Report](#) (September 3, 2023)

“The Gender Snapshot 2023 warns that, if current trends continue, over 340 million women and girls – an estimated 8 per cent of the world’s female population – will live in extreme poverty by 2030, and close to one in four will experience moderate or severe food insecurity. The gender gap in power and leadership positions remains entrenched, and, at the current rate of progress, the next generation of women will still spend on average 2.3 more hours per day on unpaid care and domestic work than men. The annual publication provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of gender equality across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and highlights prevailing trends, gaps, and recent setbacks on the journey towards achieving gender equality by 2030.”

LESSON EIGHT

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #5, GENDER
EQUALITY

5 GENDER
EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality
and empower all
women and girls

IMAGE BY
ISTOCK

8 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-eight-sdg-5-gender-equality/>

In this lesson, students explore United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #5: Gender Equality. They will research, watch videos, and engage in discussions to understand the importance of empowering women and girls for stable societies. The lesson covers gender equality as a human right and includes activities to analyze the economic, social, and political impacts of gender bias. Students will use primary and secondary sources, collaborate in discussions, reflect on peers’ conclusions, and research efforts to reduce gender bias. They will evaluate actions addressing gender inequality and consider how to contribute individually and collectively.



“While global access to essential services steadily improved between 2015 and 2025, billions of people still lacked safely managed drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. The share of safely treated household wastewater has shown no significant progress since 2020. Water use efficiency showed considerable regional variation, and similar disparities are evident with respect to water stress. Implementation of integrated water resources management has improved since 2017, but the pace remains too slow to meet the 2030 ambition. Minimum river flows remain close to the long-term reference period, but regional disparities are increasing.”

Local and Global Connections

[Contaminated Sites with PFAS in Drinking Water](#)

"Although PFAS chemicals are not manufactured in Washington, they can still be released to the environment from consumer and industrial products. Firefighting foam is a key suspected source of PFAS-contaminated drinking water in Washington."

Global Water Crisis 2026

“The global water crisis remains one of the most urgent humanitarian challenges of our time, with 2.1 billion people, or roughly one in four globally, still living without safely managed drinking water in 2026. This is water that is available at home, free from contamination, and there when a family needs it. According to the WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), the latest assessment confirms that progress has slowed at the exact moment the need is rising. Behind every statistic is a child who falls sick from unsafe water, a girl who misses school to fetch it, and a family that cannot plan beyond the next day.”

LESSON NINE

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #6, CLEAN
WATER AND
SANITATION**

6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



Ensure availability
and sustainable
management of water
and sanitation for all



For Educators

IMAGE BY
PEXELS

9 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-nine-sdg-6-clean-water-sanitation/>

In this lesson, students will learn about UN Sustainable Development Goal #6: Clean Water and Sanitation. Currently, 2 billion people live in water-stressed communities, and 3.5 billion lack safe sanitation. Students will investigate the causes and effects of unequal access to clean water and sanitation, focusing on the impact on women and children. They will explore current solutions and identify further actions needed. Through research, presentations, discussions, and a community project, students will deepen their understanding, develop problem-solving and collaboration skills, and learn about organizations addressing these issues. The lesson will also highlight the interconnectedness of UN Sustainable Development Goals. Ultimately, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of SDG #6 and the ability to advocate for clean water and sanitation as a fundamental human right.



“Global energy progress has gained momentum, with electricity access reaching 92% in 2024 and renewable energy capacity per capita growing at a record 14% from the previous year. Since 2015, clean cooking access has increased by 11 percentage points to 75% of the global population, and the share of modern renewables in total energy consumption continues to rise. However, major challenges remain. International financial flows to the most vulnerable countries have declined, while 655 million people still live without electricity and over two billion people worldwide remain dependent on polluting and hazardous fuels for their cooking needs. To meet 2030 targets, the pace of the energy transition, including electrification and energy efficiency improvements, must nearly double.”

Local and Global Connections

[Environment and Climate Bills that Passed and Failed in WA’s Legislative Session](#) (March 22, 2026)

“With just three more sessions scheduled before state law mandates greenhouse gas emissions in Washington be at least 45% below 1990 levels, lawmakers took this year to close polluter loopholes in the state’s climate laws and advance a major bill to upgrade and expand the electrical grid.

Data centers were also a huge draw this session. They are expected to become the largest source of electricity demand in the Pacific Northwest. Lawmakers pressed to regulate them in order to meet climate goals and prevent data center-inflicted hikes for other utility ratepayers.

A sweeping regulatory measure focused on the facilities ultimately failed in the Senate. But under a different bill, the state will require independent facilities that feed power to data centers to conform with a law setting emissions reduction targets.

Attempts to regulate textile waste and increase recycling of bottles and cans failed to pass, but lawmakers intend to continue to work on those policies in the future.”

[What Are the Problems faced by Renewable Energy?](#)

“The challenges faced by the renewable energy industry are many. Political pressures, government policies, corporate influence, age-old infrastructure, lack of proper [battery storage](#) system, and present market scenario stand in its way for a wider adoption worldwide.

Despite these factors, renewable energy has undertaken a global adoption as a means to alleviate climate change. It is free of direct pollution and carbon emissions. It is the most feasible substitute for fossil fuels. With time it is becoming an inevitable part of the mix of energy production.”

LESSON TEN

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #7,
AFFORDABLE
AND CLEAN
ENERGY

7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



Ensure access to
affordable, reliable,
sustainable and
modern energy for all



IMAGE BY
ISTOCK

10 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-ten-sdg-7-affordable-clean-energy/>

In this lesson, students will explore the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #7: Affordable and Clean Energy. They will learn about efforts to provide universal access to clean and affordable energy across various sectors, identify barriers faced by communities, and understand how sustainable energy policies can lead to positive outcomes.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #8: Decent Work and Economic Growth](#)

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



“Estimates from early 2026 had indicated that real GDP per capita at the global level was expected to grow at around 1.9% through 2027, with the corresponding figure for LDCs at 5.1%. However, these figures have been downgraded due to the conflict in the Middle East. Progress on Goal 8 is reflected in near-historic low unemployment, a reduction in child labour, and broadened financial inclusion, with tourism rebounding and employment in the sector on the rise. However, structural bottlenecks persist as informal employment remains stubbornly high, labour rights compliance has declined, and youth unemployment continues to outpace that of adults, with young people nearly four times more likely to be unemployed. To accelerate progress, countries should prioritize worker formalization, stronger labour rights, and expanded training pathways for youth and women.”

Local and Global Connections

[Employment and Social Trends 2026](#)

"The Employment and Social Trends 2026 report examines the state of global labour markets, highlighting stable headline employment alongside stalled progress in job quality and widening inequalities."

Ferguson Launches Economic Council to Bolster Washington's Competitiveness

"Gov. Bob Ferguson said Thursday that Washington's strong economy cannot be taken for granted, even as the state continues to rank among the nation's top-performing economies. "We cannot take our strength for granted," Ferguson said during a news conference. Ferguson announced the creation of a 26-member economic development council composed of leaders from organized labor, major employers and higher education. The council includes representatives from Microsoft, Amazon and T-Mobile, as well as the presidents of the University of Washington and Washington State University."



11 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-fourteen-sdg-8-decent-work-economic-growth/>

In this lesson, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of SDG #8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, including its key targets and global relevance. The unit begins with an introduction to the foundational elements of SDG 8, focusing on the importance of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



“Global progress under SDG 9 reflects meaningful advances across trade, manufacturing, innovation, and connectivity. Seaborne trade has grown steadily since 2015, while manufacturing value added per capita rose and the sector posted solid growth in 2024. The share of medium- and high-technology manufacturing reached a record high in 2023, research and development investment expanded consistently, and 5G coverage now reaches more than half the global population. However, progress is held back by persistent structural gaps, as the majority of small manufacturing enterprises lack access to formal credit, manufacturing employment has stagnated, and CO₂ emissions hit an all-time high in 2024. Deep regional disparities, particularly between high-income countries and LDCs, further threaten to leave the most vulnerable behind, underscoring the need for more targeted investment and international cooperation to translate aggregate gains into inclusive progress, including greater support for green innovation and green industrialization to align growth with climate goals.”

Local and Global Connections

[The Future of the Northwest’s Power Grid Is at Risk. Where Is the Leadership?](#) (August 21, 2026)

“The Pacific Northwest is drifting toward an energy crisis of its own making. The newly appointed leader of the Bonneville Power Administration, Travis Kavulla, with support from Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, has the background and ability to stop the drift and return BPA to the role it has traditionally played.

Congressional lawmakers need to step up. Most of BPA’s customers are in Washington state. Yet both of our senators, Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, seem silent about the slow-cooking crisis afflicting the grid. Cantwell’s silence is particularly perplexing, as her tenure as chair of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources provided her with a close-up view of the region’s energy developments.”

[Five Years to go: Are We on Track to Meet the Sustainable Development Goals?](#) (September 12th, 2025)

"Only 18% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are on track, with nearly half progressing too slowly and close to a fifth even regressing."

LESSON THREE

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #9,
INDUSTRIES,
INNOVATION, &
INFRASTRUCTURE

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Build resilient
infrastructure, promote
sustainable industrialization
and foster innovation



IMAGE BY
ISTOCK

12 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-three-sdq-9-industry-innovation-infrastructure/>

In this lesson, students explore United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #9: Industries, Innovation, and Infrastructure. Students will examine readings, videos, and other online resources to learn about the use of new technologies and infrastructure projects to support sustainability.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #10: Reduced Inequalities



“Progress toward SDG 10 is mixed. Most countries have seen improvements in pro-poor growth and poverty reduction since 2015. However, Central and Southern Asia saw limited progress, while many low-income countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, face non-pro-poor growth. Financial resilience has strengthened since 2015 through higher capital adequacy and lower nonperforming loans. However, the global labor income share remains below 2015 levels. Migrant deaths remain alarmingly high with significant undercounting.”

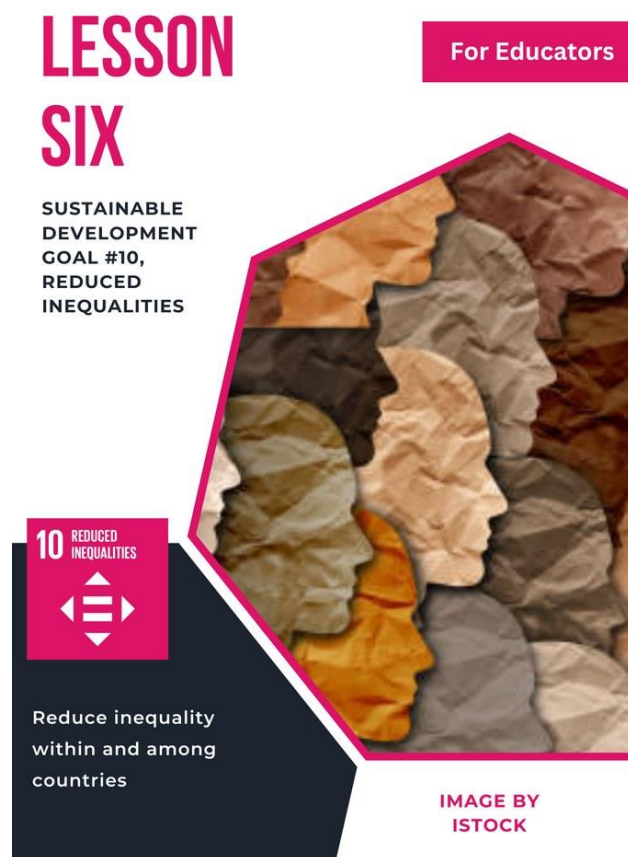
Local and Global Connections

[The IRC in Seattle, WA](#)

“The International Rescue Committee provides opportunities for refugees, asylees, victims of human trafficking, survivors of torture, and other immigrants to thrive in America. Each year, thousands of people, forced to flee violence and persecution, are welcomed by the people of the United States into the safety and freedom of America. These individuals have survived against incredible odds. The IRC works with government bodies, civil society actors, and local volunteers to help them translate their past experiences into assets that are valuable to their new communities. In Seattle and other offices across the country, the IRC helps them to rebuild their lives.”

[Refugee Data Finder](#)

"117.8 MILLION forcibly displaced people worldwide at end-2025 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order."



13 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-six-sdg-10-reduced-inequalities/>

In this lesson, students learn about United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #10: Reduced Inequalities. Students will engage in learning activities that include reflecting on short videos, small group discussions, and problem-solving activities. As millions of people have been displaced around the world, this lesson focuses on nations, individual communities, and

international organizations that can develop collaborative solutions to address the inequalities that refugees encounter locally and globally.”

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #11: Sustainable Cities and Communities](#)



“Urban development shows mixed progress alongside persistent challenges. While some regions have reduced the share of people living in slums, about 1.16 billion people, around one in four urban residents, still lack adequate housing, and the total continues to rise with rapid growth in developing regions. Investment in cultural and natural heritage remains uneven, though 57% of countries reported increased spending in recent years. At the same time, disasters continue to damage infrastructure and disrupt essential services. Overall, these trends point to modest gains but significant bottlenecks, highlighting the need for stronger investment in inclusive housing, heritage preservation, and resilient infrastructure.”

Local and Global Connections

[Climate Resilience In Seattle](#)

“Climate change is here, and we are feeling its effects with hotter summers and warmer winters. Seattle faces severe climate impacts like flooding, extreme heat, and wildfire smoke.

While we work to reduce the emissions that cause climate change in the long term, we are also preparing communities for the climate impacts they are already experiencing. Supporting frontline communities is a critical part of Seattle’s climate resilience strategy.

Frontline communities feel climate change impacts first and worst, not only during extreme weather events, but also daily. Frontline communities include groups who experience disproportionate burdens from climate events: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, people with low incomes, elders, youth, people with disabilities, outdoor workers, undocumented people, and people in certain geographic neighborhoods with higher exposure to hazards.”

LESSON FIFTEEN

For Educators

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #11,
SUSTAINABLE
CITIES AND
COMMUNITIES**

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



**IMAGE BY
UNSPLASH**

14 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-15-sdq-11-sustainable-cities-communities/>

Through this lesson, students are meant to gain a comprehensive understanding of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, including its key goals and its local and global importance. Students will learn about the challenges cities are facing to combat prevalent issues in cities today, such as climate change and slums, as well as what urban planning is and how it is connected to several other areas.



“Global progress on sustainable consumption is advancing, with policy instruments up 16% since 2019, fossil fuel subsidies down 10.2% in 2024, compared with 2023, and a gradual improvement in monitoring tourism's contribution to sustainable development. Yet implementation consistently lags policy adoption, with persistent gaps in food waste data and e-waste recycling capacity falling well short of generation. To bridge this gap, countries should prioritize national monitoring systems, standardized e-waste collection, food waste tracking and circularity principles. The United Nations is addressing these challenges through the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, playing an important role in supporting the translation of global commitments into national action and scaling multi-stakeholder cooperation.”

Local and Global Connections

[UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024](#)

“To catalyse essential action towards reducing food waste and achieving SDG 12.3, it's imperative to grasp the extent of food waste. Measuring food waste allows countries to comprehend the magnitude of the issue, thereby revealing the size of the opportunity, while establishing a baseline for tracking progress. The Food Waste Index Report 2021 marked a pivotal moment in understanding global food waste across retail, food service, and household sectors. It unveiled a greater availability of food waste data than anticipated, particularly at the household level, and revealed that per capita household food waste generation was more consistent worldwide than previously thought.”

LESSON THIRTEEN

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #12,
RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND
PRODUCTION



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



Ensure sustainable
consumption and
production patterns

IMAGE BY
UNSPLASH

15 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-thirteen-sdg-12-responsible-consumption-production/>

In this lesson, students will explore United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #12: Responsible Consumption and Production. They will engage in a series of individual and collaborative learning activities that emphasize sustainable practices that reduce waste (including food waste), promote responsible manufacturing, and encourage effective natural resource management.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #13: Climate Action](#)

13 CLIMATE ACTION



“Climate change continues to intensify, with record-high temperatures and rising greenhouse gas concentrations driving increasingly severe and widespread impacts. While disaster-related mortality has declined, the number of people affected has more than doubled. Progress is evident in the widespread adoption of national disaster risk reduction strategies and renewed global commitments to climate finance. However, current efforts remain wholly insufficient to curb emissions or fully address escalating risks. Accelerating progress will require stronger mitigation, scaled-up adaptation, and effective implementation of climate finance commitments to support vulnerable countries.”

Local and Global Connections

[Washington’s Comprehensive Climate Action Plan](#) (April 22, 2026)

“OLYMPIA – Washington’s new [Comprehensive Climate Action Plan \(CCAP\)](#) could significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 while saving the state nearly \$17 billion statewide. The new climate plan, the result of a partnership between the Washington state departments of Commerce and Ecology, is the state’s first-ever economy-wide roadmap for meeting the state’s [legislatively mandated](#) greenhouse gas emissions limits.

As Washington moves from planning into action, the state will host roundtables with local leaders to gather regional insights and align CCAP implementation with ongoing and future climate work. The first of those sessions was held on Earth Day, April 22, in Pierce County.

Washington is already a national leader in climate policy. The Comprehensive Climate Action Plan builds on that foundation by outlining additional actions to reduce emissions and support a sustainable economy. These climate actions will also lower energy costs, improve soil health, make infrastructure investments more efficient, and direct funding to communities most affected by climate change and pollution. The CCAP was developed through extensive engagement with Tribes, impacted communities, local governments, businesses, workers and technical experts.”

[United Nations: Causes and Effects of Climate Change](#)

“Fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas – are by far the largest contributor to global climate change, accounting for around 68 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions.

As greenhouse gas emissions blanket the Earth, they trap the sun’s heat. Because of this, the planet is warming up and the climate is changing. The world is now warming faster than at any point in recorded history. Warmer temperatures over time are changing weather patterns and disrupting the usual balance of nature. This poses many risks to human beings and all other forms of life on Earth.”

LESSON ONE

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #13,
CLIMATE ACTION

13
CLIMATE
ACTION



Take urgent
action to combat
climate change
and its impacts



IMAGE BY PEXELS

16 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-one-sdg-13-climate-action/>

In this lesson, students learn about United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #13: Climate Action. They will examine the causes and consequences of climate change and explore possible courses of action to address the issue. Students will engage in activities to reflect on previous knowledge, develop new learning, and encourage creative and critical thinking.

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #14: Life Below Water](#)



“The ocean is critical for sustainable development, yet growing efforts to strengthen ocean governance are met with persistent detrimental pressures on marine ecosystems. With increasing absorption of CO₂, acidification and warming of the ocean increases; and key marine biodiversity areas remain without full protection. Declining sustainability in fisheries and limited investment in marine research highlight ongoing structural challenges. However, advances in monitoring, management, and international cooperation, including the entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement in January 2026, are improving understanding of ocean state and coordination of efforts aimed at reducing pressures. Ensuring the sustainable use and protection of ocean resources will require investing in sustainable ocean economies, scaling-up effective area-based conservation and integrated coastal zone management, greater protection of the oceans and coastal communities and enhanced investments in science and innovation.”

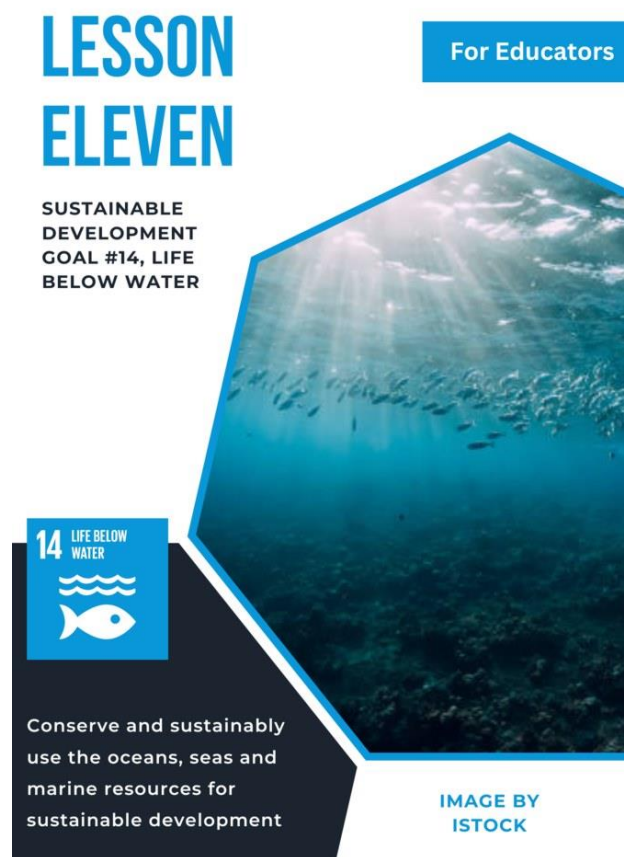
Local and Global Connections

[7 Ways El Niño and Large Marine Heatwave Could Affect West Coast Marine Species](#) (June 12th, 2026)

“A large marine heatwave has bathed parts of the West Coast in very warm ocean waters over the past year, breaking temperature records in the Pacific. NOAA has also announced that El Niño has developed in the tropical Pacific and is predicted to intensify to a moderate or strong level this fall.

El Niño represents another form of marine warming, though with different drivers and influences. The prolonged period of high temperatures could affect fisheries and marine life in the California Current that have already been buffeted by shifting ocean conditions over the last decade.

One factor may help dampen the impacts, though: The same strong upwelling of cool water along the coast that fuels the West Coast ecosystem with nutrients could help keep some warmer waters at bay, as happened in 2025.”



17 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-eleven-sdg-14-life-below-water/>

In this lesson, students explore United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #14: Life Below Water. Through individual and collaborative activities, they will learn the importance of conserving and sustainably using oceans, seas, and marine resources. In small groups, students will assess how proactive policies and collective action can address ocean challenges. They can choose to evaluate issues like plastic waste, warming oceans, acidification, or damaged ecosystems.



"Progress on protecting and restoring terrestrial ecosystems reflects a mixed picture of advancing commitments but continued ecosystem decline. While more countries are strengthening biodiversity-related policies, expanding protected areas, and improving forest management, deforestation persists and species extinction risk continues to rise. Gains in conservation coverage remain uneven, with many critical ecosystems still insufficiently protected. Overall, closing the gap between policy ambition and on-the-ground impact will be essential to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems. The UN is advancing global action on land restoration and biodiversity through recent COP processes, which are mobilizing resources for conservation, sustainable forest management, and nature-based solutions. Momentum has also been strengthened by the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which is driving renewed implementation efforts. Across the globe, UN efforts have also supported countries in building resilience through sustainable resource management and innovation, including through the Strategic Plan for Forests."

Local and Global Connections

[Washington State, 2025 Forest Action Plan](#)

"Washington forests face increasing pressure from wildfires, droughts, insect and disease outbreaks, invasive species, and forest conversion. The changing climate is only intensifying these challenges, threatening not only forest ecosystems, but the communities, infrastructure, and economies that depend on them. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) developed the State Forest Action Plan as a unifying strategy to sustain and restore forest health and resilience across all lands. Building on more than a decade of progress since the first plan was published in 2010, this revision reflects an all hands, all lands approach that engages partners across federal, state, Tribal, local, private, and community levels. "

LESSON TWELVE

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #15, LIFE
ON LAND



15
LIFE
ON LAND

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

IMAGE BY
ADOBE STOCK

18 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-twelve-sdg-15-life-on-land/>

In this lesson, students will comprehensively understand SDG #15: Life on Land, including its key targets and significance. They will learn the importance of sustainable practices to protect and restore biodiversity, exploring how economic activities like agribusiness drive deforestation and its broader impacts.



“Violent conflicts have reached their highest levels in decades, rapidly erasing hard-won development gains. The wars in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar and elsewhere have demonstrated with brutal clarity that decades of development progress can be reversed in months. As of June 2025, over 117.3 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide, including nearly 42.5 million refugees. Attacks on civilians, humanitarian workers, and critical infrastructure reflect a deepening crisis of impunity that directly undermines Goal 16. Violence, exploitation and limited access to justice continue to affect large segments of the global population, particularly children, women and vulnerable groups. While institutional gains are emerging in public financial management and the adoption of legal frameworks for access to information, women and youth remain significantly underrepresented in political leadership. Advancing Goal 16 requires the political will to end ongoing wars, uphold international law, close the accountability gap, and deliver inclusive protection and functional justice.”

Local and Global Connections

The Growing Shadow of Autocracy

" Global freedom declined for the 20th consecutive year in 2025. A total of 54 countries experienced deterioration in their political rights and civil liberties during the year, while only 35 countries registered improvements.

Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, and El Salvador had the largest one-year score declines, while Syria, Sri Lanka, Bolivia, and Gabon recorded the largest gains. Three countries—Bolivia, Fiji, and Malawi—improved from Partly Free to Free status thanks to competitive elections, growing judicial independence, and the strengthening of the rule of law.

Among countries rated Free, the United States, Bulgaria, and Italy have experienced the year's largest declines. In the United States, an escalation in both legislative dysfunction and executive dominance, growing pressure on people's ability to engage in free expression, and the new administration's moves to undermine anticorruption safeguards all contributed to the negative score change. "

LESSON FIVE

For Educators

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #16, PEACE,
JUSTICE, &
STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS

Promote just,
peaceful and
inclusive societies

IMAGE BY
ISTOCK

In this lesson from the World Affairs Council of Seattle – Global Classroom Program, students learn about United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Students will engage in a series of individual and collaborative learning activities that prompt them to reflect on the concepts, peace, and justice, and how they are important to creating stable and inclusive societies. Students will work in small groups to assess how societies can enhance civic engagement, representative decision-making, and protect individual and collective freedoms.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #17: Partnerships for the Goals



“Goal 17 is the "enabler" Goal — if it fails, every other Goal becomes harder to achieve. Current evidence points to growing structural challenges. While digital connectivity continues to expand, rising debt burdens, sharp declining ODA, reduced FDI to developing economies, and uneven investment are undermining the means of implementation at precisely the moment they are most needed. The countries with the greatest development needs are also the ones with the least connectivity, limited statistical capacity, and the most constrained fiscal space.”

Local and Global Connections

[The Washington Climate Partnership](#)

“We're Washington’s lead agency on climate change. The impacts of climate change are happening now and will continue to affect our communities and ecosystems for decades to come. Learn how we're already responding to and planning for future impacts of climate change in Washington.”

LESSON SEVENTEEN

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL #17,
PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



Strengthen the means of
implementation and
revitalize the Global
Partnership for Sustainable
Development

For Educators



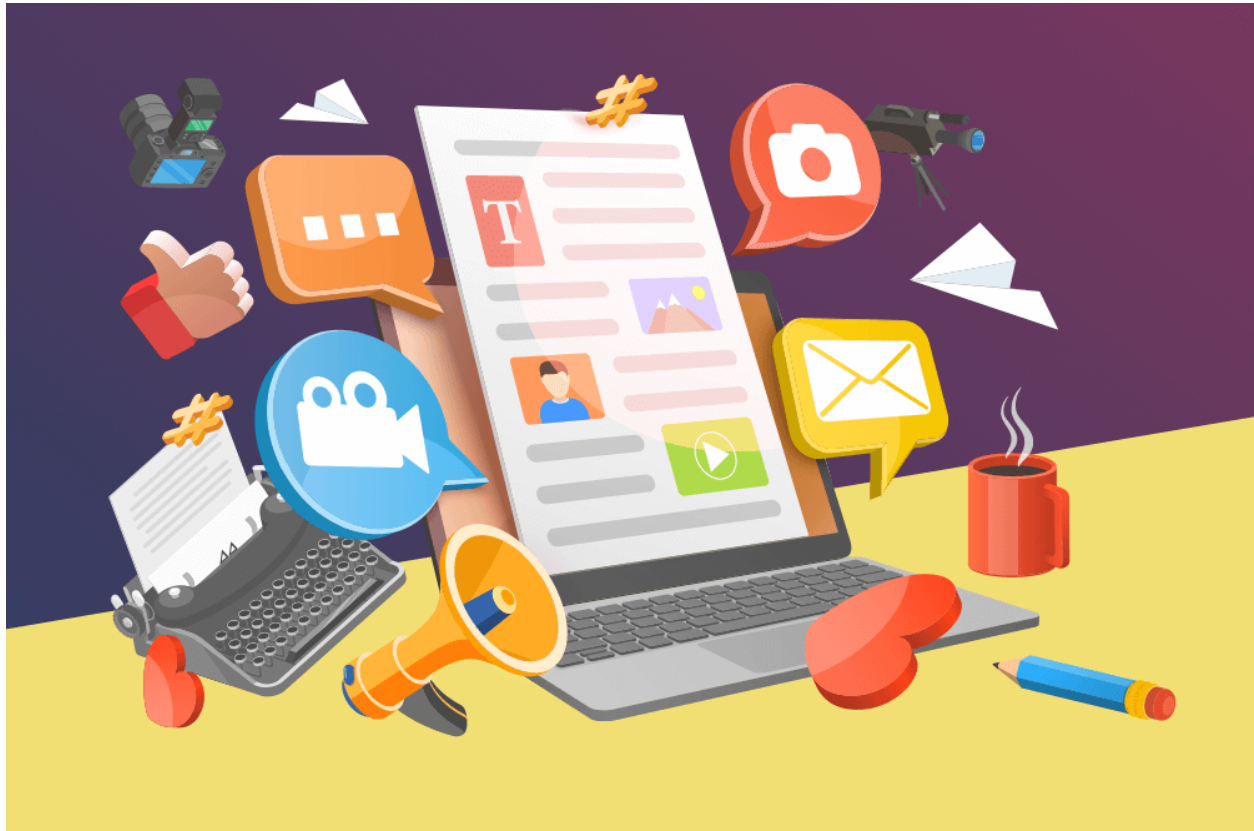
IMAGE BY
UNSPLASH

20 - Resources

<https://www.world-affairs.org/lesson-seventeen-sdg-17-partnerships-for-the-goals/>

In this lesson, students will explore United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #17: Partnerships for the Goals. Students will engage in a series of individual and collaborative learning activities to better understand how all the UN SDGs can be better achieved through collaborative planning, investment, and action.

FREE Digital Storytelling Tools



You don't need expensive equipment or professional editing skills to participate in the World Citizen Engagement Contest (WCEC)! Whether you want to write, take photographs, make a video, or record a podcast, these free resources can help you explore a global issue and share your perspective.

You can use a computer, tablet, or smartphone for many of these projects. Some tools require a school account, work only on certain devices, or offer optional paid features. Ask a teacher, librarian, or trusted adult for help if you need it.

Photo Essay

A photo essay uses a series of photographs and captions to tell a story, explore a global issue, or help an audience see a topic from a new perspective.

- [Canva for Education](#) — Design photo essays, infographics, presentations, posters, and visual narratives using templates and drag-and-drop tools. Canva Education is free for eligible K–12 schools and students, with student access typically provided through a teacher.

- [Google Slides](#) — Arrange photographs, captions, and text into a visual sequence. It can be a simple option for students who want to organize their photo essay and export or download it as a PDF.
- [Adobe Express for Education](#) — Create graphics, visual stories, presentations, and other media. Free education access is available through participating K–12 schools and districts.
- [Unsplash for Education](#) — Browse a large collection of free photographs if you need visual inspiration or supplementary images. Review the license and credit information for any image you use.

Photo essay tip: Your own original photographs can help make your story personal and distinctive. Think about what each image communicates, how the images work together, and what readers should learn from the captions. If you use photographs taken by someone else, follow the applicable license and provide credit where required.

Reminder: The WCEC photo essay must include **5–8 original photographs**, captions, and a written reflection of **500 words or fewer**. Combine your photographs, captions, and reflection into **one PDF** for submission. Check the official contest guidelines for the complete requirements.

Video Essay

A video essay combines visuals, narration, interviews, and other audio or video elements to communicate a message about a global issue.

- [iMovie](#) — A free video-editing option for supported Apple devices. Combine video clips, photographs, narration, titles, and music to create a short documentary, interview, or video essay.
- [Adobe Express for Education](#) — Create and edit videos, add text and visual elements, and combine media into a short story. Education features are available through eligible K–12 school or district access.
- [Canva for Education](#) — Build video presentations and visual narratives using video clips, photographs, text, and narration. Availability of specific features depends on account access.
- [Clipchamp](#) — A browser-based video editor with tools for combining clips, adding text, recording, and editing a short video. Check current account, device, and feature requirements before starting.

Video essay tutorials:

- [iMovie video tutorial](#)
- [Vimeo video tutorial](#) — Use this as a starting point for learning about video sharing and hosting. Vimeo is primarily a hosting and sharing platform, rather than a full video editor.

Video essay tip: Start with a clear message. Plan a beginning that introduces the issue, a middle that presents evidence and perspectives, and an ending that explains why the issue matters or what could be done about it. You can use a smartphone to record footage and narration.

Reminder: The WCEC video essay must be **3–5 minutes long** and no larger than **250 MB**. You must also complete a **2–3 sentence overview** in the online submission form describing your video, its central message, and its connection to your selected global issue.

Podcast

A podcast uses spoken words, interviews, narration, and sound to help listeners understand a topic. You can create a podcast without appearing on camera.

- [GarageBand](#) — A free audio recording and editing option for supported Apple devices. Record narration or interviews, arrange audio, and add sound effects or music when appropriate.
- [Audacity](#) — A free, open-source audio recording and editing program for supported desktop computers. Record narration, combine audio clips, reduce unwanted noise, and edit your recording.
- [BandLab](#) — An online music and audio creation platform with recording and editing tools. Check current account requirements, age restrictions, and privacy settings before using it.
- [Vocaroo](#) — A simple browser-based voice recorder that may be useful for a straightforward narration. Check its current download, sharing, and privacy options before recording or uploading your work.

Podcast tutorial:

- [GarageBand podcast tutorial](#)

Podcast tip: Write a brief outline before recording. Introduce your topic, explain why it matters, share evidence and different perspectives, and finish with a takeaway for your audience. Speak clearly, record in a quiet space, and listen to your finished recording to check the sound quality.

If you include an interview, ask permission before recording and be respectful of the person's experiences and perspective. Use music and sound effects only when you have permission or the appropriate rights to use them.

Reminder: The WCEC podcast must be **3–5 minutes long** and no larger than **250 MB**. You must also complete a **2–3 sentence overview** in the online submission form describing your podcast, its central message, and its connection to your selected global issue.

Additional Free Resources

Find Images, Music, and Other Media Responsibly

You may want to include supporting visuals or sounds in your creative process. However, not everything available online is free to reuse.

- [Unsplash](#) — Find photographs that may be used under Unsplash's license. Review the license before using images.
- [Pixabay](#) — Search for photographs, illustrations, video clips, and audio resources. Review the content license and any restrictions before using a file.
- [Creative Commons](#) — Learn how Creative Commons licenses work and what permissions different licenses provide.
- [Wikimedia Commons](#) — Find photographs, diagrams, audio, and other media that may be available for reuse. Check the license and attribution requirements for each individual file.

Important: These resources are for learning about and finding media that may be legally reusable. They do not replace the WCEC requirement that submitted work be original. Do not present another person's photograph, video, illustration, audio, or other creative work as your own. Follow the contest rules for original work, and credit sources as required.

Plan and Organize Your Submission

You don't need special software to plan a strong entry. These free tools can help you organize your ideas before you begin creating.

- [Google Docs](#) — Brainstorm, outline, draft, and revise your ideas. It can also help you keep a list of research sources.
- [Google Slides](#) — Create a storyboard for a video, plan the sequence of a photo essay, or organize the structure of a presentation.
- [Canva for Education](#) — Use templates to map out a visual story, organize ideas, and plan the layout of your final project.

- **Paper, pencils, and a notebook** — A simple outline, storyboard, or sketch can be just as effective as a digital tool, especially when you are getting started.

HOW-TO'S



TRADITIONAL ESSAY

[A Guide to Teaching Any Middle School Academic Essay](#)

"The organization of an academic essay largely depends on who is teaching the setup. All teachers should include examples and give a lesson on how they think an essay should be organized before assigning a paper. Many teachers start with the five-paragraph model as a beginning point on how to show students what a piece of writing should look like. Some people despise the five-paragraph essay. For the sake of this post, I am going to show you the setup that worked for me for over 10+ years of teaching for both a paragraph with evidence and an overall essay. The organization will change depending on genre and assignment, but these are two examples to get you started.

Example Paragraph Setup:

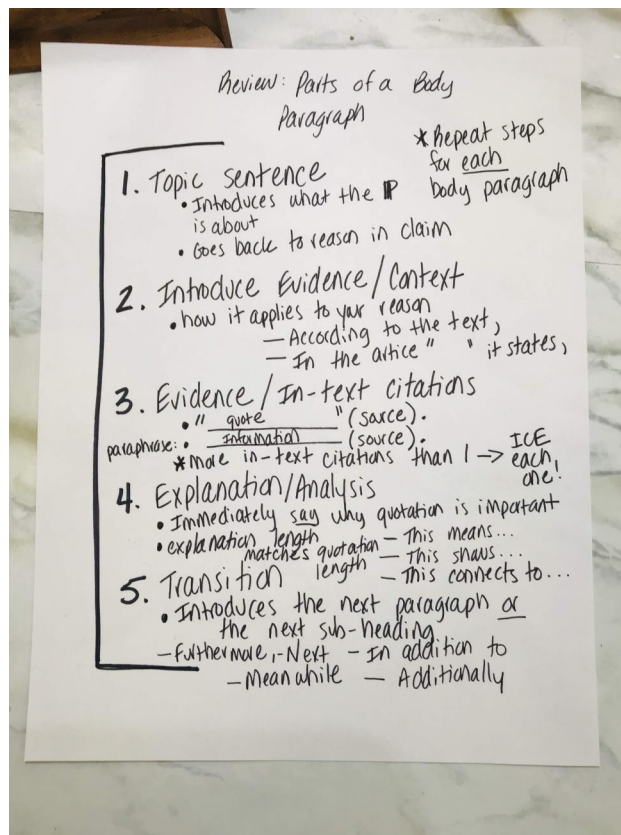
1. Topic Sentence
2. Supporting Detail-Introduces Evidence

3. Supporting Detail-States and Cites Evidence
4. Supporting Detail-Explains Evidence (This part may be more than 1 sentence depending on the amount of evidence presented)
5. Concluding Sentence/Transition"

The Essential Elements of Essay Formatting

"Introduction: The Importance of Proper Essay Formatting

Before diving into the details, let's emphasize the significance of proper essay formatting. A well-formatted essay not only showcases your writing skills but also enhances the readability and comprehension of your work. It allows your readers, including teachers and peers, to follow your arguments more easily, ultimately leading to a higher evaluation of your work."



21 - <https://www.writingmindset.org/blog/teach-the-academic-essay>

PHOTO ESSAY

What Makes A Great Photo Essay? Structure, Examples & Tips

"Photo essays tell stories with pictures instead of a bunch of boring words. While regular essays stack paragraphs like bricks, photo essays line up images that pull you through a story or

argument. They've blown up in journalism, art, and school stuff because they can show complex ideas through pictures that hit you right in the feels."

[Photo Essays](#)

"TIPS: The tips below will help you if you are creating your first photo essay.

Pick a specific topic. Just as you need a specific topic or angle with a traditional essay, you need a specific focus for your photo essay.

Do some research. Just as you often need to conduct research to write a traditional essay, it's important to conduct some research when you create a photo essay. Doing research can help you narrow your focus and have a better idea about what you want to photograph for your essay.

Take more photos than you think you'll need. It's important to plan well for a photo essay, and part of that planning involves taking more pictures than you may feel is necessary at first. When it's time to put your photo essay together, you'll be thankful if you have a lot of options.

You don't need a fancy camera. You can take some excellent pictures using your cell phone and edit them using Instagram. Instagram will also let you change the look and feel of your pictures using filters, which can allow you to edit your pictures to really fit the mood of the photo essay you are trying to create."

[VIDEO ESSAY](#)

[Video Essays](#)

"Much like photo essays and traditional essays, video essays tell a story or make a point. The difference is that video essays use video to present the information.

When you make a video essay, you can use video, pictures, text, music, and / or narration to create a video essay that is powerful and effective. If you think about it, many music videos are actually video essays, so chances are, you know a lot more about video essays than you might think. And, because the creation of videos for YouTube has become so popular, many professors are assigning video essays as an alternative to traditional essays. The sample video essay linked at the right will give you a good idea about how videos and essay come together to create an argument in a video essay. Just click on the image to visit the link."

[What is a Video Essay? The Art of the Video Analysis Essay](#) (June 14, 2024)

"In the era of the internet and YouTube, the video essay has become an increasingly popular means of expressing ideas and concepts. However, there is a bit of an enigma behind the construction of the video essay largely due to the vagueness of the term.

What defines a video analysis essay? What is a video essay supposed to be about? In this article, we'll take a look at the foundation of these videos and the various ways writers and editors use them creatively. Let's dive in."

PODCAST

[Teaching with Podcasts](#)

"Podcasts are serial recordings, posted regularly online. Robert Rozema describes a podcast as "a blog in audio form" (31). Basically, producing podcasts is the technology-based equivalent of oral storytelling. Much as oral stories and news have been shared with listeners by medieval bards, Native American storytellers, and others, podcasters share news and stories with their listeners, who download the files online.

Podcasts can be used for any purpose a text might serve—they can tell fictional stories, share and comment on recent events, inform listeners about a topic, and persuade listeners to take an action or adopt a stance. As a result, podcasts are valuable tools for teaching students to use spoken language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes."

[Starting Your Podcast: A Guide For Students](#) (January 20, 2026)

"What's A Podcast?

Podcasts come in all shapes and sizes. That's good news for you, because it means that you have lots of room to be creative and make something you're excited about. Some podcasts, like *This American Life*, are long — sometimes an hour or more. Others, like *Kind World*, a podcast from WBUR, are less than 10 minutes. Some podcasts, like NPR's *Up First*, are about news. *Up First* comes out every morning, and the hosts talk about the news and feature stories from guests reporting on the news. Other podcasts tell stories. Lots are funny. Some feature people having conversations. Many are educational: They teach listeners about a specific topic. NPR's *Hidden Brain* is about science and human behavior. And there's *Planet Money*, a podcast all about money and life."

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

[Keeping Up with Digital Storytelling](#)

"To begin, let us consider the two words separately. First, what do we mean by storytelling? To tell stories is fundamentally human. The word's connotations suggest the classical or folk model of a speaker engaging an audience through narrative. As a more recent buzzword, storytelling emerged in popular consciousness around the turn of the 21st century. Its usage has become so common as to dilute its meaning. Second, what do we mean by digital? It is, perhaps, easier to say what it is not: it is not only text on a page.

Digital storytelling is the latest iteration of a narrative tradition. It involves creating and sharing stories using digital tools, incorporating multimedia elements such as image, sound, and words in a narrative that is then disseminated via a web platform. Bryan Alexander offers the most concise definition: "Simply put, it is telling stories with digital technologies. Digital stories are narratives built from the stuff of cyberculture."

(Video) [What Is Digital Storytelling?](#)

"What is Digital Storytelling? Digital Storytelling uses multimedia tools to bring narratives to life. Digital Stories are versatile and can cover a wide variety of topics. Such as explaining a concept, reflecting on a personal experience, retelling an historical event, or making an argument. Digital stories are typically videos that combine audio, images, and video clips to tell a story. Even though we recommend that digital stories be two to three minutes long, a lot of work goes into making one! First, you will need to brainstorm what you want your digital story to be about. Once you've determined the purpose of your digital story, the next step is to create a script and a storyboard. When writing a script, you will need to decide what you want your digital story to accomplish. The script and storyboard will layout exactly how the digital story will unfold. The next step is to create your video!"

[ARGUMENT VS. COUNTER-ARGUMENT](#)

[Essential Skills for Teaching Argumentative Writing](#) (August 3, 2026)

"Arguments surround us every day. From social media posts to bumper stickers, editorial cartoons to blog articles, people constantly express their beliefs and try to persuade others to agree. But having an opinion isn't enough. Persuasion requires support — clear reasons and solid evidence.

In elementary school, students learn to do exactly that. They take a position, support it with reasons, and wrap it up with a conclusion. The structure is clear. The expectations are manageable.

Then middle school arrives and the game changes.

Suddenly, students are expected to acknowledge the other side. To weigh competing evidence. To build a case strong enough to hold up against opposition. That shift — from persuasion to argument — is a significant jump in writing instruction.

And the stakes are real. Secondary students are already swimming in arguments—on their phones, in their feeds, in every headline and comment section. The student who can build a strong case, anticipate pushback, and defend a position with evidence doesn't just perform better on a writing assessment. They think more clearly, communicate more convincingly, and are harder to mislead."

[How To Construct an Argument](#) (November 23, 2023)

"Whether you teach Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) or not, it is important for students to learn how to create strong arguments based on evidence. Engaging in argumentation encourages students to find the most plausible solution out of multiple possible answers. It also highlights the fact that our understanding of the world can change as we gather new evidence.

Effective argumentation requires the use of critical 21st century skills like data and media literacy, clear communication, and critical thinking. Convinced? We are too."

INCORPORATING YOUR OWN VOICE IN STORYTELLING

[Finding Your Creative Writing Voice: Practical Exercises to Help You Write Authentically](#)

"Voice is often described in the context of the writer's personality—the warmth or bite that emerges through word choice and phrasing. This gives each writer a unique flair that comes across in the space of a few sentences.

By developing a distinct voice, writers let audiences know who they are and why their message matters. No single element defines voice; rather, it represents the culmination of simple word choices or rhythms that convey your personality and perspective."

Utilizing Technology with Integrity



ORIGINALITY & AUTHENTICITY IN WRITING

[Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing](#)

"What are the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing?"

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material."

ETHICAL USE OF AI IN WRITING & STORYTELLING

[Using AI Ethically in Writing Assignments](#) (July, 2024)

"Many instructors fear that students will use chatbots to complete assignments, bypassing the thinking and intellectual struggle involved in shaping and refining ideas and arguments. That's a valid concern, and it offers a starting point for discussion:

Turning in unedited AI-generated work as one's own creation is academic misconduct.

Most instructors agree on that point. After that, the view of AI becomes murkier. AI is already ubiquitous, and its integrations and abilities will only grow in the coming years. Students in grade school and high school are also using generative AI, and those students will arrive at college with expectations to do the same. So how do we respond?"

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

[What Is Plagiarism?](#) (May 18, 2017)

"Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense: According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, to "plagiarize" means: to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own to use (another's production) without crediting the source to commit literary theft to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward. But can words and ideas really be stolen? According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered

intellectual property and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file)."

METHODOLOGY IN WRITING & STORYTELLING

[The Art of Storytelling: Techniques & Tips](#) (July 6, 2026)

"It is hard to describe the art of storytelling, but you know good storytelling it when you read it. You read a passage of prose and it raises your arm hairs, makes your blood tingle, gets your heart racing; suddenly you're swept up in the experience of beautiful writing.

Indeed, writers seem to possess a certain magic of storytelling—but anyone can learn the tricks of the trade. From story structures to style advice, this article covers the storytelling techniques that make readers laugh, weep, gasp, and stay up past their bedtimes.

Along the way, we discuss the key elements of storytelling, and we answer the question "Why is storytelling important?" But first, let's dissect the art of storytelling itself. How do writers tell great stories?"

[15 Storytelling Techniques and How to Use Them](#) (July 17, 2023)

"Structure and Key Elements of Storytelling

To understand effective storytelling techniques, let's begin with the structure of stories. Usually, stories follow a three-act structure, popularized by [Syd Field](#) in his book *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*.

- The setup or exposition: This is where you introduce the characters, the setting, and their challenges.
- The rising action or confrontation: This is the part where the problem escalates and the characters face bigger challenges.
- The falling action or resolution: The characters have now solved the problems and achieved their goals.

When learning methods of storytelling, it's important to understand these key elements necessary to successfully narrate a story, whether it's a presentation or a blog."

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



About the Contest

1. What is the World Citizen Engagement Contest?

The World Citizen Engagement Contest (WCEC) is an annual opportunity for students to explore global issues, share informed perspectives, and demonstrate their creativity, critical thinking, and global awareness. The contest has expanded beyond traditional essays to recognize different ways students communicate ideas and engage with the world.

2. Why did the contest change from an essay contest to an engagement contest?

Global issues deserve more than one way of telling a story! The WCEC recognizes that students have different strengths and that global competence involves more than writing. Through research, storytelling, and creative expression, students can demonstrate their understanding of global challenges and communicate ideas to diverse audiences.

3. Who can participate?

The contest is open to students and youth in grades 3–12 who reside in Washington State.

4. Can I participate independently, or do I need a teacher?

You can participate independently or through a classroom assignment. Teachers are encouraged to integrate the WCEC into their curriculum as a project-based learning opportunity.

5. Can I submit more than one entry?

No. Each student may submit **one entry only** to the 2027 World Citizen Engagement Contest. Choose the submission format—traditional essay, photo essay, video essay, or podcast—that best showcases your ideas and perspective.

[Submission Formats](#)

6. What types of submissions are accepted?

Students may choose from four formats:

- Traditional essay
- Photo essay
- Video essay
- Podcast

Each format provides a different way to explore a global issue and communicate an informed perspective.

7. Can I use a platform or tool that is not listed in the Resource Guide?

Absolutely! The platforms listed in the WCEC Resource Guide are suggestions to help you get started, not requirements. You are welcome to use another platform or tool that better fits your needs, skills, or creative vision, as long as your submission meets all WCEC guidelines and format-specific requirements. Remember that all submitted work must be your own original work, and generative AI may not be used to create or modify any part of your submission.

8. Do I need to be a good writer to participate?

No! Strong writing is valuable, but it isn't the only way to communicate your ideas. You can choose the format that best fits your strengths, interests, and message. All entries will be evaluated using a common judging rubric that emphasizes the quality of your thinking, research, and communication.

9. What are the submission requirements for each format?

- **Traditional essay:** 1,000 words or fewer.

- **Photo essay:** 5–8 original photographs with captions submitted together as one PDF. A written reflection of 500 words or fewer is required as well, and can be completed directly within the submission form.
- **Video essay:** 3–5 minutes, with a maximum file size of 250 MB.
- **Podcast:** 3–5 minutes, with a maximum file size of 250 MB.

10. Do video and podcast submissions require a written reflection?

No. Photo essays require a written reflection of 500 words or fewer. Video and podcast participants will instead provide a brief, 2–3 sentence overview explaining what their submission is about and its central message.

11. Can I submit a video or podcast if I don't have professional equipment?

The contest is about your ideas, research, and ability to communicate—not access to professional equipment. Focus on creating a thoughtful, clear submission that meets the contest's length and file-size requirements.

12. Where do I submit my entry?

Submit your completed entry through the official WCEC online submission form. Be sure to select the correct submission format and review all requirements before submitting.

[Research, Originality & AI](#)

13. Can I use AI to create my submission?

Generative AI must not be used to create or modify contest submissions, including written content, photographs, illustrations, audio, video, or other media. Your entry should reflect your own thinking, research, and creative work. Please review the official contest rules for additional guidance on permitted research tools and originality requirements.

14. Do I need to cite my sources?

Students should acknowledge the sources they use to support their research and factual claims. Refer to the **2027 World Citizen Engagement Contest: Eligibility & Submission Guidelines** section for citation instructions appropriate to your submission format and grade level.

15. Can I include other people's photographs, music, or video clips?

Photo essays must include original photographs. For all formats, students should follow the contest's originality requirements and respect copyright. Consult the Resource Guide for guidance on third-party materials and any applicable exceptions.

16. Will my submission be checked for AI-generated content?

Yes. To help uphold the World Citizen Engagement Contest's originality requirements, World Affairs Council Seattle may use a combination of AI-detection and other review tools to identify content that may have been generated or modified using generative AI.

For written submissions, we may use tools such as **Grammarly, GPTZero, QuillBot, and other AI-detection tools**. For photo, video, and audio submissions, we may use available media-authentication or AI-detection technologies when appropriate.

AI-detection tools are not perfect and cannot independently prove whether a submission was created using AI. A flagged result may be inaccurate, so no single detection score will automatically determine whether a student's submission is disqualified. If questions arise about a submission, World Affairs Council Seattle may review the work more closely and/or contact the student/teacher for additional information about their creative and research process.

Students should keep drafts, notes, original photographs or recordings, project files, and other materials that demonstrate how they created their submission. These materials may be helpful if we need to verify the originality of an entry.

Remember: Generative AI may not be used to create or modify any part of a WCEC submission, including written content, photographs, illustrations, audio, video, or other media.

Judging & Awards

17. How will submissions be judged?

All submissions will be evaluated using a common judging rubric emphasizing research, critical thinking, consideration of diverse perspectives, creativity, and effective communication. The rubric is designed to recognize the quality of students' ideas and how effectively they communicate an informed perspective on a global issue, regardless of the format they choose.

The judging rubric will be available in the WCEC Resource Guide when finalized.

18. How many general contest winners will there be?

There will be **nine general contest winners**, with first-, second-, and third-place awards in each of the three grade-level categories:

- **Elementary School:** 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place
- **Middle School:** 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place
- **High School:** 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place

Additional submissions may receive Honorable Mentions in recognition of outstanding work.

19. What is the WCEC Sustainability Award?

The WCEC Sustainability Award recognizes students who are taking action to address environmental sustainability in their communities and beyond. It celebrates young people who connect their learning to meaningful action.

20. How many Sustainability Award winners will be selected?

There will be **three Sustainability Award winners**, with one winner selected in each grade-level category: elementary, middle, and high school.

21. Can a student win both a general contest award and the WCEC Sustainability Award?

Yes. The WCEC Sustainability Award is separate from the general contest awards, so a student may receive recognition in both. WCEC Sustainability Award winners may overlap with the nine general contest award recipients.

22. Will there be Honorable Mentions?

Yes. In addition to the first-, second-, and third-place awards, judges may recognize additional outstanding submissions with Honorable Mentions.

23. Will winning submissions be shared publicly?

Selected winning submissions may be featured on the World Affairs Council's website and social media channels. Photos and videos from the awards ceremony may also be used for these purposes. Students and their families will be asked to review the applicable media permissions and releases as part of the submission process.

[Contest Timeline & Important Dates](#)

24. When does the 2027 WCEC begin?

The contest launches on Tuesday - October 13, 2026. Students can begin exploring global issues, preparing their submissions, and reviewing the contest guidelines.

25. When is the submission deadline?

All entries must be successfully submitted by **Monday, March 22, 2027, at 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time**. We encourage students to submit early to avoid last-minute technical difficulties.

26. When will submissions be judged?

Judging will take place throughout April 2027. Entries will be evaluated using the WCEC judging rubric, which emphasizes research, critical thinking, diverse perspectives, creativity, and effective communication.

27. When will winners be announced?

Winners will be selected following the April judging period and contacted directly during the first full week of May 2027. Please keep an eye on your email for updates!

28. When is the awards ceremony?

The 2027 WCEC Awards Ceremony is scheduled for **Thursday, May 27, 2027**. Additional details will be shared directly with winners and their families as the event approaches.

2027 Contest Timeline

- **October 13, 2026:** Contest launches
- **March 22, 2027:** Submission deadline
- **April 2027:** Judging period
- **May 3–7, 2027:** Winners contacted directly
- **May 27, 2027:** Awards ceremony

29. What should I do if I have trouble accessing the submission form or uploading my entry?

Contact the contest team as soon as possible if you have questions or encounter technical difficulties.

- **Email:** contest@world-affairs.org
- **Email:** jpatterson@world-affairs.org

We're happy to help you navigate the submission process.

30. Additional Questions?

We encourage students and educators to review the contest guidelines and WCEC Resource Guide before beginning their submissions. If you need clarification or support at any point, please reach out to the contest team at either email address above.