

Earth Day

CELEBRATING OUR PLANET – APRIL 22, 2022

More than a **billion people**, representing **193 nations**, participate in honoring Earth Day every year, making April 22 the most celebrated civic observance in the world. Since the establishment of Earth Day, environmental conservation has become a hot topic. Most recently, at the 2021 Glasgow Climate Change Conference, participating nations pledged to engage in the collective effort and adopt the Glasgow Climate Pact, turning the current **decade** into a time for climate action. Earth Day is so much more than just a date.

DID YOU KNOW?

1. The idea of designating a special day to celebrate our planet originated in 1969. Senator Gaylord Nelson was prompted to establish Earth Day after witnessing a large oil spill in Santa Barbara, California.
2. There is a specific reason why April 22 was chosen – it was supposed to encourage student participation as it fell between most students' spring break and final exams. The first Earth Day was celebrated a year later, in 1970.
3. It was not until 1990 that Earth Day became a worldwide event, and in 2009, the United Nations gave it a new name – International Mother Earth Day.
4. The first Earth Day was recognized by 20 million Americans, which at that time represented 10% of the U.S. population!
5. Over the years, Earth Day has led to the passage of numerous environmental laws in the United States, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Environmental Education Act. Many countries adopted similar changes, and famously, the United Nations designated Earth Day to sign the Paris Climate Agreement in 2016.
6. Earth Day has also been responsible for the establishment of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with many countries soon adopting similar laws.
7. Over 95% of primary and secondary schools in the United States observe Earth Day each year!
8. Earth Day has triggered numerous civic campaigns, including the Climate Literacy Campaign, National Civic Education Program, Educators Network, Green Schools, and many more.
9. Each Earth Day has a theme. In 2011, *A Billion Acts of Green* was chosen, aimed at reducing carbon emissions. Around the globe, many countries took up the challenge – in Afghanistan, **28 million** trees were planted as part of the *Plant Trees Not Bombs* campaign.
10. 2020 marked the **50th anniversary** of the Earth Day movement.

As educators and professionals, we have an obligation to educate ourselves about climate support and instill this knowledge and values into future generations. Did you know that over **three billion** students

still lack much-needed climate education? A large body of literature and research has emphasized an array of benefits environmental education brings to primary grade students:

“Environmental education is about hope and change. There is a mountain of evidence that suggests EE is a powerful way to teach students. Over 100 studies found that it provides transformative learning opportunities that bring tremendous results and engage young people in the world around them in meaningful, collaborative ways. There is no doubt that environmental education is one of the most effective ways to instill a passion for learning among students.”

Dr. Nicole Ardoin, Stanford University

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Show children how to respect the environment by teaching them simple habits:
 - Place a recycle bin in the classroom, and explain to the children that it is to reuse and recycle materials.
 - Encourage children to pick up trash found on the playground and in other outdoor spaces.
 - Turn off unneeded lights and water. Remember to explain to your students why it is so important!
 - Have your students help with the classroom pet and plants. Show children how to gently handle a class pet to avoid hurting it, or ask them to help you water plants.
 - Insects are good for the environment; therefore, explain the vital role they play in the natural world’s ecosystems.
- Support climate literacy and education. Incorporate environmental education into your curriculum – there are **tons** of useful resources available. Some of these are listed below.
- Become a catalyst for change – nominate your school to become a Green Ribbon School.
- Organize a school cleanup. Invite local families and community partners to help clean the school building or a local park. You can even register your event!
- Become a social media advocate – use your own platform to encourage others to engage in Earth Day activities.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

[Learn about Earth Day 2022](#)

[Learn more about the Glasgow Climate Change Conference – October-November 2021](#)

[Read about Benefits from Environmental Education - Key Findings](#)

[Join the Illinois Green Ribbon Schools Program](#)

[Register a cleanup](#)

[Earth Day 2022 Action Toolkit - Social Media](#)

CURRICULUM RESOURCES:

[Environmental Literacy for Illinois - A Framework](#)

[Kids for Conservation® - March 2022](#)

[The Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Grants for Schools](#)

[The Benefits of Environmental Education for Toddlers](#)

[Earth Day Schools](#)

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