

Lesson 2

School is life: living ecology?

How ecological is our school?

Learning objectives	The students realise that their school is not only a place of learning but also a place for living. They plan to take (ecological) responsibility for this “living space”.
Student tasks	Various possibilities for ecological behaviour are developed and planned.
Resources	Handout.
Methods	Group presentations, plenary discussion.

Information box

Learning about ecology means living ecology. In this way, school becomes a place of active citizenship. Active citizenship is best learned by doing – individuals need to be given opportunities to explore issues of democratic citizenship and human rights for themselves, not to be told how they must think or behave.

Education for active citizenship is not just about the absorption of factual knowledge – in this case about how to save the environment and prevent further damage – but about practical understanding, skills and aptitudes, and characters and values.

The medium is the message – students can learn as much about democratic citizenship by the example they are set by teachers and schoolmates and the ways in which (ecological) life in school is organised, as they can through formal methods of instruction.

Lesson description

In the second part of this unit, the teacher should ensure that the topic will be narrowed down to the local context. Firstly, the teacher should give a short summary of the previous lesson. It should become clear that a well-functioning community requires that responsibility is divided up between many people.

School is presented as a community in which living as well as learning takes place. It can therefore be seen as a *polis*, or city state, where social as well as ecological problems, for example, have to be solved. Among other things, school also has to become a role model for ecological guidelines and processes, and consideration has to be given as to how best to do this. There are very practical aspects to taking responsibility. The students are given the task to think about the areas of school life in which ecological processes could be improved and what they themselves could contribute.

The next task is undertaken in groups of four. Each group is given a key term and writes down a list of questions about the term, such as the following (the example here is of “litter”):

- What kind of litter does our school produce?
- Where is it being taken?
- Who is responsible for doing this?
- How can the amount of school litter be reduced?
- What can I or my class contribute to this?

For this task, one lesson and the following week should be counted as the timeframe for research and homework. If the teacher wants make it shorter, he or she will need to do the research and obtain the information him or herself. The students produce a checklist of their own which will be presented to their classmates on the “eco-wall”.

List of possible key terms for the groups:

- litter;
- waste reduction;
- energy and power;
- water;
- transport;
- health;
- school grounds;
- biodiversity;
- sustaining our world;
- general ecological measures.