



## **You Are Not Stuck in a Traffic Jam, You Are the Traffic Jam: Teaching Students How to Take Responsibility for Their Planet.**

Claudia Pollach

AHS Heustadelgasse, Heustadelgasse 4, 1220 Vienna, Austria (Claudia.Pollach@gmx.at)

Teaching Geography and Economics to our school's fifth graders (14 year-olds), we focus on topics like the ecosystem, climate, natural resources and natural disasters. In addition to the usual curriculum we would like to deepen their knowledge and we want to establish a link between facts, figures and students' lives.

The main aim is to raise their awareness of "Our Changing Planet". They should learn how human activity influences climate and environment. Moreover, the students should understand how every single action a human being sets has a positive or negative impact on our earth. Even little steps made by each one of us can help the earth and everyone of us has the choice. The idea is to set up a project in which all 14-year-olds take part. They work outside their usual schedule and examine the topic's various aspects for up to three days. Plus, they can explore their individual options to help fix our planet. Possible topics are the sustainable usage of resources such as water, air, wood, fuel and energy. What is my ecological footprint? How can I support the planet by acting responsible as a consumer? How can we make our school "greener"? Our mission is not only to gain information on the topic but also to change certain habits so that we live and act in a more responsible and sustainable way.

Teachers of related subjects give their expertise and help exploring the issues. The "Our Changing Planet" project days peak in an assembly where the student teams present their findings plus an international climatologist is going to give a short lecture.