SUSTAINABILITY AMBASSADORS

# City Classroom CAP - Series

PBL support for using your City Climate Action Plan as a Living Textbook
for local relevance, student agency, and community impact.

Credit: Kevin Lisota

# The Language We Use (When We Talk About Climate Change)

We make meaning of the world around us through language and conversation. Narratives for how to navigate the world form our identities and set in motion behavior choices. What can we learn about these choices just from the words we use? This lesson has three sections: (1) language brainstorming in the classroom, (2) curating conversations with significant adults that students identify with, and (3) analyzing patterns and trends in the language we use.

## What we say when we talk about climate change

1. Get a teacher's guide with words to help prompt student thinking.
2. Invite each student to come up with several **words, phrases, or concepts** related to climate change, climate justice, or climate solutions, things they have heard from their family or caregivers, mentors or coaches in the community or other adults they respect.
3. Students write the words or phrases on some sticky notes or 3x5 cards. Words can be offered in any language as there may be insightful nuances in cultural associations.
4. Students arrange their notes on a white board, on a wall, or around a shared table.

## Brainstorming Words and Phrases
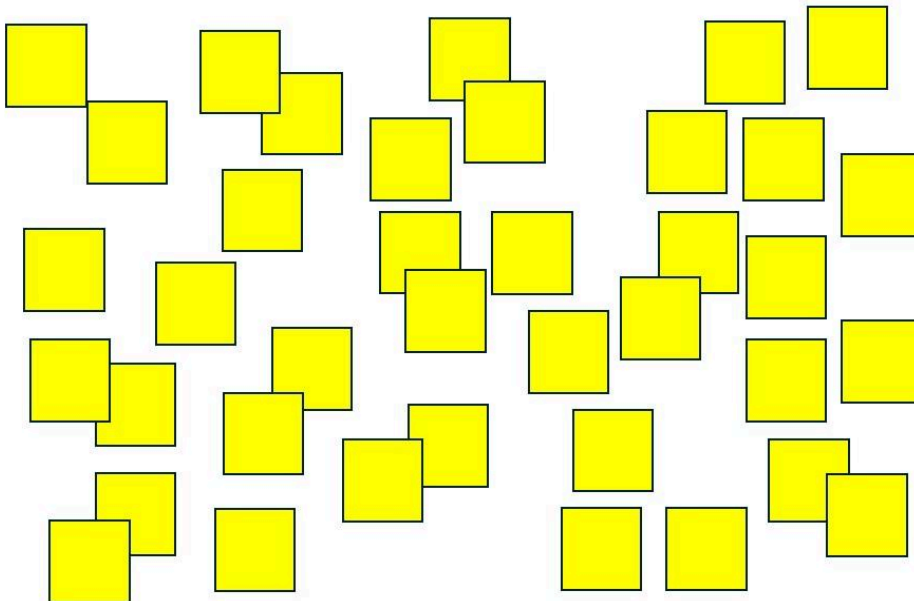
## Systems Thinking  ([Get the Slides](#))

Student teams identify connections between the words and phrases they have displayed. Through conversation, new ones can be added. Use markers, colorful string, or physically rearrange the sticky notes or cards to visually demonstrate connections between the words.

**Here are some possible prompts for systems thinking…**

Clean Energy Generation

Energy Conservation

Transportation Choices

Urban Planning

Green Building

Affordable Housing

Water Supply (conservation)

Water Quality (less pollution)

Local Food Systems

Zero Waste, Consumer Power
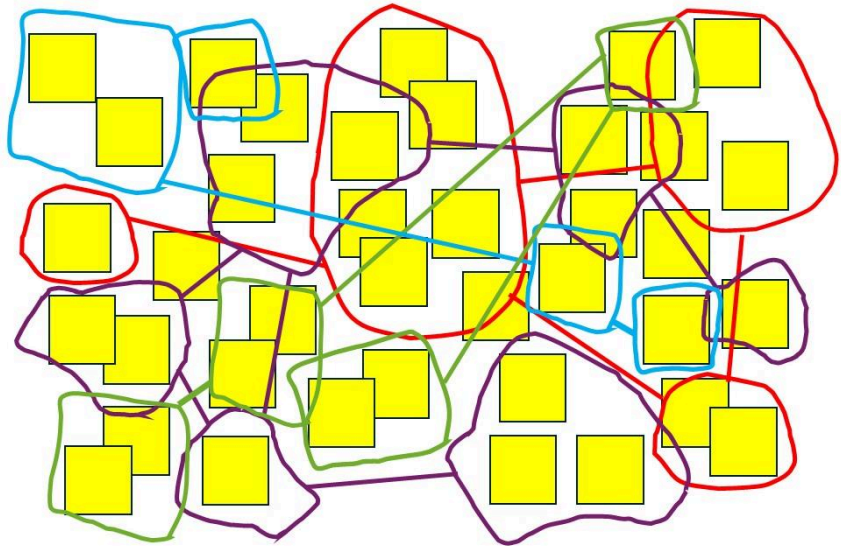
## Reorganize and Debate Sustainable System Categories

Challenge students to refine their thinking by prioritizing the most important sustainable system categories that they think would improve sustainable community conditions.

**Some possible lines of inquiry…**

- What are the **fundamental needs for our daily lives** and how might we categorize these into systems? *(water, clear air, food, shelter, transportation, waste, access to green space, etc.)*

- **What is a system?** *("A networked collection of different parts that work together to make a functioning whole. Take one part out and the whole system changes.")*

- What do we mean by **sustainable?** *(explore [Collection of Definitions](#))*

- How do these systems play out at the **community scale** in our own lived experience? *(affordable housing, energy costs, light rail and bus systems, bike pathways, tree canopy, access to healthy foods, access to parks and open space, access to information, inclusion in decision making, family wage jobs, etc… )*

ENERGY

WATER

TRANSPORTAION

FOOD

GREEN BUILDING

ZERO WASTE
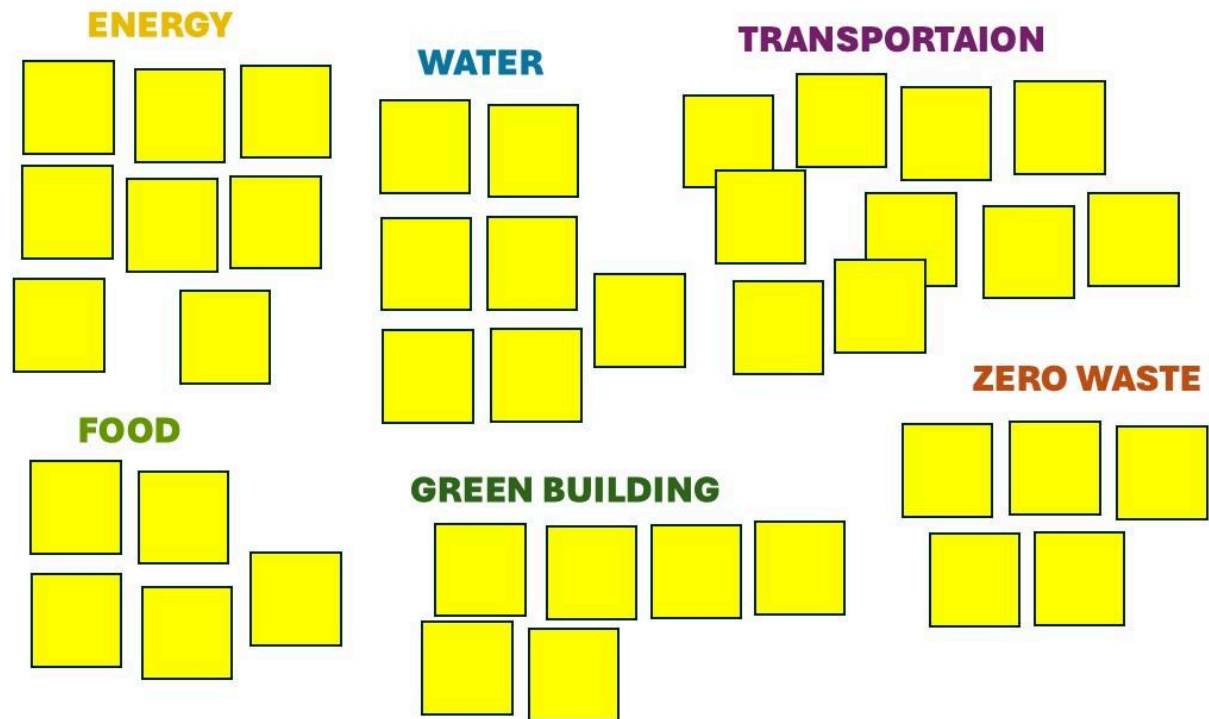
## Curating Conversations with Adults Who Know Us Well

Help students be ready to initiate a conversation with their families or caregivers, coaches, mentors, guides, or counselors from any part of their lives where they feel that they have good rapport with adults who know them well.

**WHERE:** Consider conversations at home or at a community center, teen center, cultural center, or faith community.

**WHEN:** What is the right timing for a meaningful conversation? Sometimes you can set it up with, "Can we have a conversation? I want to sit down for a sec. I am curious about how you think about something…"

**WHAT:** Open this up for a two-way dialogue where you can ask questions and gather responses, but also gather new questions from adults about what you are learning and how you are thinking about things?

**TIPS AND TALKING POINTS**

**Here are some possible questions you might ask. But put them in your own words! Or write new ones of your own.**

- My class has been studying climate change and local impacts and so I was curious to learn more about your thoughts on it. Can we take some time after dinner to talk?
- What does eco-friendly mean to you?
- I'ver heard about people being green?  What does that mean to you?
- I wanted to ask you about your opinion on climate justice.
- What is your perspective on power and privilege related to climate change?
- Do you think that our family is already participating in any climate solutions?
- What do you mean when you think of the word "sustainable?"
- What do you mean by "protecting the environment?"
- Is there a relationship in your mind between your faith and the idea of taking care of the environment?
- In our mother country or native language, what words or phrases are similar or unique?
- Are there some words, ideas, or bits of wisdom in our native language that do not directly translate?

## So… How Did it Go?

After students have facilitated conversations, invite them to write a short reflection on what their experience was like talking with the adult(s) they chose.

 *A few prompts…*

1. Use one word to describe how the conversation went for you.
2. Pick an emoji or gif to describe how the conversation went for you.
3. What did you feel inside your emotions or in your body before, during, or after this conversation?
4. What happened that you expected?
5. What happened that you didn't expect?
6. Do the words and ideas you gathered differ from what you hear at school?
7. What new insights did you gain from a different cultural perceptive or through the lens of a different language?
8. Pair and share with a neighbor or as a table group. Add new words, phrases, or perspectives to our word bank regarding climate change, climate justice, climate solutions.
9. Return to the Ranking Solutions image set to reorganize them as a table group based on the conversations you had at home. How might you update your original set of table notes?

## Trend Lines Over Time

What do you predict will happen if we collect this kind of baseline data from the families and adult friends of students who take this class next year, and the year after that? What about after 10 years? What is your prediction?

1. Do you think we would see an increase in climate solutions or sustainable practices at home or in our community or cultural centers of connection?
2. How fast do you think the rate of change will be? Draw an informal graph that predicts this year by year for the next decade or two.
3. Does the rate of change you forecast align with your sense of what our planet needs to do to solve the climate challenge?

## *Also explore…*

## Student Agency - Impact Project Design

**See Lesson Ideas:** Students practice the IP3 Strategy to develop individual, team, and school-wide projects with metrics that measurably advance the City's Climate Action Plan and other policies, plans or programs. Classrooms and clubs can pursue Impact Volunteer Hours.