



Digital disconnect

action: planting trees for screen time

While the internet's data is largely invisible, it is processed and stored in massive data centers all over the world. Those data centers are powered 24/7, just waiting to send information — videos, podcasts, music, news, memes, messages and everything else the internet offers — to our digital devices.

Using our smartphones, laptops and tablets more frequently means data centers are pushing out an estimated two percent of global greenhouse emissions — nearly the same proportion as air travel. And unfortunately, all that data that we've grown accustomed to having fast at our fingertips along with our always-on mentality ends up contributing to our digital carbon footprints.
source: nami.org & bustle

Can you think of an innovative way to explain what a 'digital carbon footprint' is? What are the climate and carbon costs associated with digital technologies and our connected society and world?

Can you suggest some ways to encourage others to reduce their own digital carbon footprint? Can you think of some ideas to help students at school to digitally disconnect and reconnect for real?

GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Everytime we send an email or save a photo onto our cloud it has to go somewhere. The data from everyone is stored in giant data centers in the North Pole with enough storage to save data from everyone in a country.

The reason data centers are located near the North Pole is because of the heat that is released. When you've used your computer for a while and it starts to get hot, and the fan starts to go into overdrive. Now imagine that on a continental scale, and instead of a fan, it's an entire continent cooling it. The heat produced from these data centers is exponential, because over time, more people are wanting electronics, and the more electronics there are, the more data is being moved around which means more data centers, and that leads in turn leads to the North Pole melting quicker. Which, we are already doing at an alarming rate.

LOCAL ACTION

How does your local action link to your global challenge?

We are making up for what damage we do, by planting trees.

Why did you choose to do what you did?

We chose to plant trees, for every hour people spend on their screens. We have asked the students of the school if they could donate a certain amount of money for every hour they spend on their computer during school and then to plant the required amount of trees to offset the carbon emitted. It is going to cost a lot of money, but if we all chip in, it's going to be a lot more affordable. Also we realise that saplings take 5 years to grow big enough enough absorb a decent amount of carbon, but we have to start somewhere!

EXPERTS CONSULTED



Phillipa Biggs,
Accountant and
Economist.

What did you learn?

We have learnt about data centers, about technology about the earth about global warming, about the astonishing amount of time people spend on screens and that they are so useful in so many situations and are relied on for so many things.

THE TEAM



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