

Zero Carbon Fashion Footprint

For our Climate Action Project, we focused on two main projects with the ultimate goal of achieving a zero-carbon fashion footprint at our school. One of these projects is to create a sustainable sweater that can be considered part of our school's uniform. Our second project is a thrift sale where people in our community can donate and buy gently used clothing. For the sustainable uniform project, we have done thorough research to find a custom apparel company that uses sustainable, quality resources and equitable methods and shares the values that we believe are important in a company. We created a design that appeals to the community, and we are about to purchase and distribute it. We have completed all the steps for the thrift sale project and organized all the logistics. We are now collecting clothing and spreading the word about it. Our thrift sale will occur on April 28. Overall, completing these projects will be a significant step toward reducing our carbon fashion footprint, and our community will become more educated on the topic of fast fashion and the importance of reducing our zero carbon fashion footprint.

The ultimate goal of our project is to reduce our community's carbon fashion footprint equitably and sustainably by changing our school's uniforms to be completely eco-friendly and sustainable. Within this goal and our project, we decided to center our project around creating one sustainable merchandise option to introduce into our school's inventory, as well as creating and organizing a school-wide thrift sale. Our goal for creating a new and sustainable sweater for our school has shifted as we have worked on this project to focus more on one sweater rather than multiple.

We began our process by setting our short-term and long-term goals in November. On December 15, we had our first Team Meeting. Throughout December and January, we did an abundance of research, data collection, and interviews. On February 2, we formally introduced the project to the Parent's Association (PA) which is responsible for merchandise. On February 15, we met with the PA's head of merchandise and received the green light as well as the requirements of producing a uniform sweater. The following day, we received uniform logos from the PA. On February 24, we became aware of an alternate, more sustainable uniform-producing company, Kapes, to contract with potentially instead of Lands' End, Hewitt's current supplier. In March, we started the logistics process for the thrift sale, including figuring out any profits, participants, dates, storage spaces, donation times, and more. In late March, we sent the PA our order for approval with a quantity and quote in mind. In early April, we focused on raising awareness for our thrift sale, which included putting up insightful posters around the school, sending out informative emails to the high school and in the community newsletter, announcing the thrift sale on the loudspeakers as a morning announcement, presenting to the middle school, and raising awareness through word of mouth. On April 5, we were connected with 8th-grade students looking to help with the project, whom we met with later and who helped us carry out some of the logistics. On April 6, we partnered with Riley's Way Foundation, so items that are not suitable for the thrift sale, but are still very much useable, can be donated to those in need. The thrift sale donations will formally take place from April 10-April 21; however, we have already received donations and interest. The thrift sale will take place on April 28, and the sweaters will arrive before the end of the school year.

After we conducted a survey and interviewed several students, faculty, and community members to answer questions about fast fashion, brands, and uniform merchandise, we were determined to use this data to make our project as effective, impactful, and tailored to our school community as possible. As sweaters being the top purchased, worn, and favored item at our school, we decided to reinvent the Hewitt uniform sweater in a sustainable fashion. Our idea was to create a sustainable sweater that could be implemented into the school uniform and be worn by the everyday Hewitt community member to demonstrate that you do not have to compromise style or break uniform policy to make environmentally friendly fashion purchases. Once the project was approved, we talked to some of our peers and found the ideal design and logo to place on this sustainable piece of uniform merchandise. The research aspect of this initiative was essential for its success and the participation of community members, and also provided opportunities for applied research.

Some challenges we faced mainly revolved around communicating with those within our school's community. It took quite a bit of time to obtain the clearance we needed in order to create a new sweater, learn data about merchandise sales, and organize our thrift sale. Also, we spent some time sending emails to the wrong address, which prolonged communication with the PA. In addition, it took time to plan out logistics and organize meetings.

Throughout this process, we have overcome many obstacles making us stronger and more efficient along the way. We have enhanced the skills of clear communication, teamwork, and organized logistics. While doing a multitude of research on the varying aspects of fast fashion, we have truly learned so much more about the effects of this global issue and have come out of this project with a true passion for changing its impact. Our school's mission includes forging a more "equitable, sustainable, and joyous future." We have helped our community live up to this statement, make a difference, and create an accessible opportunity for them to participate, all by starting to reduce our carbon fashion footprint.

We have positively impacted our community by reducing our school's fashion carbon footprint through our initiative because all the clothes that people have donated are being reused instead of being thrown away and put into a landfill. In addition, we are helping Hewitt practice being sustainable because when people buy apparel from our thrift sale, they are choosing to purchase pre-loved clothes instead of clothes from a fast fashion store. Our sustainable sweater idea has a positive impact because instead of students buying uniform apparel from places that do not use very sustainable materials or have ethical manufacturing policies, they will be purchasing uniform sweaters that are equitably and sustainably made.

Our sweaters should arrive in a couple of weeks, and our thrift sale is nearing its implementation date. We hope the thrift sale is successful enough to become a regular practice for Hewitt. We did not imagine the inspiring journey PGC would give us, and it made us realize the importance of being educated, passionate, resourceful, productive, kind, and able to make a real difference. In our PGC journey, we are proud of our ability to freely speak to others about their fashion footprint and help Hewitt practice sustainability.

In the coming years of our school community, we hope that producing eco-friendly clothing will become the norm, thrift sales will become recurring, and Hewitt's contracted uniform partner will share the same environmental and equitable beliefs so that every piece of merchandise is sustainable; Ultimately, Hewitt's mission will come to life like never before to ensure an "equitable, sustainable, and joyous future" through the reduction of its carbon fashion footprint.