Student Climate Change and Conservation Congress

November 1-3, 2016

The Green Herald
About Sc3x

The Sc3x event is the regionally organized Student Climate & Conservation Congress, organized by Maria’s Public School (MPS), Guwahati, Assam, India, which introduces the Green School Alliance to some of the leading schools of Guwahati, which have been significantly undertaking projects and programs related to Environmental Awareness and Conservation. Through this 3 day spanned event, MPS is trying to introduce the different Green Activities of the school over the past few years and share the experience that the students and teachers have had during Sc3 2015 & 2016, with Students, Principals and Teachers, participating from the Guwahati Schools. The participants get to interact with representatives who have come from the Green Schools Alliance, USA and delegates from our International Partner School from Australia. The Sc3x event also tries to give the participants a chance of knowing some of the most prominent naturalists, scientists, conservationists and experts from Assam, as they share wonderful stories of their own journey through conservation. Empowerment of the teaching faculty through educational methods like the ‘Open Space Technology’ also forms an important part of this introductory event to be held at the MPS School Campus at Birkuchi, Narengi, and the NEDFi Convention Center, Guwahati, Assam.

THE KICK-OFF

Unequivocally engulfing the intricacies of our mind, pulling towards itself our attention, nature has its own way of making us notice that something is amiss. "Scorching sun, burning skins "isn’t the kind of picture we paint for the beginning f November in Assam. It is like the nature’s way of saying, “Dude, still wondering about the change? You are burning, melting; don’t you feel it?” It wasn’t too long before the suppressed voice of nature blared out jarring us from our illusion. “The die is cast, this beautiful sunny morning, the undulating hills of Assam, the red Brahmaputra seem to have all united in perfect harmony to script history, to add yet another feather to Maria’s Public School which is all set to host the SC3X congress as the National Coordinator School for the Green School Alliance, Indian Chapter!.” With these words our teacher Maushumi Mahanta ma’am began our quest to hear the unheard. She welcomed the green heralds from Beyond the Boundary and lent the stage to Nellie ma’am who thanked the guests Katy Perry, Juan Elizondo,
She reminisced about the eventful congress attended by Marians twice and brought a little piece of West Virginia in the humid and picturesque terrain of Assam. She shed light on the various accolades achieved in the environmental criteria by the school and eloquently concluded saying, "Climate change and conservation is not an issue to be discussed over a cup of coffee for us but it is our cause and to work for its betterment is our mission." After that the ceremonial lamp was lit, a traditional and integral part of the Indian culture to eliminate the ignorance created by darkness. Then, it was followed by the felicitation of the special guests with ‘seleng chador’, salver and a packet containing the GSA t-shirts and other goodies. Then our guest, Katy Perry, not talking about the singing diva but the nature’s superstar as we would like to call her shared her views. Her exterior exuded the unprecedented desire to sustain the tainted mother nature.

She talked about how SC3 is so welcoming and a peaceful place; a place where people can think; a place where people can connect. She recalled about the congress and how each year she looks forward to her visit there in June. She then went on to quote the lyrics of a soulful yet simple country song by John Denver and it goes like this- “life is old there, older than trees. Younger than the mountains, blowing like a breeze.
Country roads, take me home to the place I belong. “It is the kind of song you can’t get out of your mind, the kind of song that keeps echoing in the valley of your heart. Then she proceeded to talk about the differences between US and India but there were similarities too and those similarities lay in nature. She ended her speech with a note of thanks for having her here in the congress. Piercing the air with the music that your feet cannot resist dancing to, the dancers of “Bhurtal Nritya” didn’t miss a chance to mesmerize the audience with their graceful and lithe movements. Kudos to them for making a mark in the minds of the viewers.

-Harshita Modi and Ipsita Choudhury.

THE CIRCLE OF GREEN ILLUMINATION

“Save electricity, have candle light dinners.”
“Save paper, say no to exams.”
“Save Greenery, eat less vegetables.”
Crazy ideas, aren’t they? Well, we shall get back to this later.

First let us introduce you to “Open Space Technology (OST)” which is seriously nothing about technology but all about open spaces. It aspires us to dream big, very BIG and execute our green thoughts into green actions. The first stage of OST was “Big Circle” where everyone came together. Mentored by the student coordinators, everybody was requested to close their eyes and think of two persons. Then they were supposed to move to a position where they can be at an equal distance from the two persons that they had thought about. The playground bustled with enthusiasm as everyone tried to get into position. However, they soon realized that it was just not possible to stand at a single position. They had to be in constant motion to maintain the equilibrium. The vantage point behind all this is – ‘We are all connected and linked to each other. So we have to keep moving together to sustain our Mother Earth.’ Thereupon we moved to answer the Big Question, “How will you translate our knowledge of climate and conservation challenges into action in your school and community?” And thus we get back to the point where we started. The main idea was to translate scientific facts to student impact. Everyone came up with serious as well as silly ideas. From creating awareness to being green consumers, from making comics to saying ‘no’ to potato chips and AC’s, from making pollinator gardens to promoting sustainable development, we snapped our fingers to showcase our support to the green ideas. At last spring came and the Big Tree of Answers blossomed with the green ideas.
Thus, everyone had an interesting session, interacting and exchanging their green thoughts. The OST – Big Circle thus dissolved with the promise of a greener, better and charismatic three-day SC3x. Till then, everyone go green because green is in.

~ Ana Barua,
Tanim S. Mozumder

TEACHER’S WORKSHOP ON OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY WITH NATURE’S SUPERSTAR

The concrete building did succeed in suppressing the rather invincible wrath of nature that overshadows us. In the best ambience, possible, the workshop began in the graphic design room. The teachers were seated in this huge circle. It was, as if for a moment, the teachers were no longer the knowledge imparters but rather knowledge takers. Katy Perry akin to a maestro did know how to get the unfathomable views pour down and create the music of ideas. “Why are you interested in this workshop?” a question that spurred their minds. For Katy it was Alpine pica drowning in the annihilating waves of human destruction.

“The impatient ‘let- me -share- my -view -first’, the resisting and whispering ones, the ones with ‘I-have-the best answer’ look”, the hiding student in the grown up body resurfaced after ages. Commencing with her obsession for Brahmaputra, Shehnaz ma’am strenuously constructed the disparaging image of Majuli. Global warming, ceaselessly growing industries, animal threat and nonchalant disposal of sewage were then brought to limelight. Maushumi Sharma ma’am then engrossed everyone by talking about a book, ‘Ocean of Churns’ which is based on the Indian Ocean and how it shaped human history. The inconceivable delight of gazing at the stars was Dhriti Sundar sir’s way of connecting with what lies beyond. He talked about the diminishing night
sky to which Katy Perry remarked, "we have taken the stars from the sky and turned it upside down as the city lights we see." Nandita ma’am then went on to talk how the rain gave her an irresistible urge to dance. However, now with concrete buildings around she’s bound to dance in the confined balcony.

Then Katy stressed the fact that personal responsibility is the key factor in achieving our goals. According to her change comes from our hearts and once we activate our hearts, it activates our brain and in turn it activates our hands.

Digging up the buried architectural dreams, the blank canvas witnessed the construction of ideas that for so long was hidden. When one wanted to have classrooms outside the concrete walls, another thought about having classes in boats while one thought of having a class shaped like a Greek Amphitheatre. After that, there was a feedback session among the teachers and the whole room was filled with laughter and hilarious jokes about their drawing similar to the cave paintings.

The session ended with the converging of dissimilar yet connecting ideas.

- Harshita Modi and Ipsita Choudhury

**A WALKING DREAM**

Even before the workshop began, there was steaming excitement, curious eyes and inaudible murmurs that only a Marian would understand. And in the middle of it stood Mr. Juan Elizondo with a smile on his face and a glimmer in his eyes to make us aware of the raw beauty that surrounds us-his cowboy halo soft yet firm.

Over fifty students swirled their green heads and turned to each other with the craziest, quirkiest ideas involving nature that reached our ears with a few Harry Potter jokes tossed around the space.
Mr. Elizondo the moderator of the workshop, began the story of redemption from a schooling system that we know and loathe to a whole new world of learning, exploring and creation—this time dedicated not to equations or red marks phobia but to the true power that lie within us and that which has the power to turn every ordinary into something amazing and everlasting—quite like our moderator itself, who at the age of 29 considers himself to be “super young” (he forgot to mention being fit as a fiddle and his oh-so-wonderful smile).

Through the many videos that he showed to the students, he brought out a wide array of subjects that succeeded in putting the ever hyper minds of the students to a peaceful zone where they were able to connect, share and receive from the boundless stretch of flowers and trees.

The room was quiet but the laughter that was erupting from all the hearts fluttering was unmistakable. To add to this was Furr High School’s very own Woodsy Owl, Frankie the bee and Puddles the goose (which was more like a penguin with the flabs forgotten back in the polar). Also there was a fat issue that was discussed at length and trust us when we say this, the girls were the most excited when Mr. Elizondo talked about a fun way to get rid of it—zumba. And after that a very Marian-style hell broke loose with all our dancers taking to the library floor with a roar and laughter. Even our teachers Sushmita ma’am and Biswajit sir was not able to resist the infectious “Zumbathone”. They showed that if they can do it, we can do it too.

The minutes that were ticking away gave all the students something that is essential but hard to find—hope. He talked about nature, conservation. He told us every sad fact about the consequences of misbehaving with mother earth. He showed us the loopholes of the present situation but never with a tinge of faith and hope lined to it. He believed in legacies that all of us could create and leave behind and when he believed in our cause, we did too.

There were stories which were spun beyond the need to educate people about nature. Those were stories to bring life and sustain it. To inspire and be inspired, because he told the students never to doubt themselves, he told the students about his oldest principal who believed in the newest possibilities.

For the 45 minutes that we were there, in our old library, with a brimming fire in our hearts to chase and conquer along a new Mexican-American friend by our side, we saw new horizons merging with the previous ones—creating magic for us and for you.

Because someone has said, “just wait and watch, something amazing is coming up. Just like the twilight series.” (after all who doesn’t like vampires?)

- Niharika Borah and Jupitora Bordoloi
"The youth have an immense power to influence everything, as long as they drive the change and take responsibility.”

Kim Davies, the coordinator of the Surf Science Specialist Program at John Tonkin College, Australia, captivated us with these powerful words. She started off the workshop with an anecdote highlighting how a person, no matter how young, can have an amazing amount of impact, simply by asking a question. The program that she currently coordinates, the Surf Science Specialist Program, has had much success. In one of their ventures, they adopted a wild shark, tagged it, and made it race with other sharks at an event in Ningaloo!

Within this program she had established a group, called the Estuary Guardians, also run by students. Their main purpose? To undertake activities in collaboration with the community and other environmental organizations to monitor the health and sustainability of the Peel-Harvey Estuary, Australia. The Guardians observed and identified the dolphins by looking at their fins and indexed this data into an app and The Mandurah Fin Guide Booklet, unveiled in India for the first time. This was followed by a game where the participating audience had to correctly identify dolphins by the photographs of their fins and the aforementioned fin guide. The winning group was rewarded with pencils and candy!
After the game was over, Barbara Sing, a teacher at Surf Scientist Specialist Program and mentor at Estuary Guardians, took to the mike and presented the Bush Ranger Program; normally taken up by high school students as a vocational activity. They had a practical approach to nature conservation and environment management; a demonstration of which was given by her, through a well-built bat box.

We came to know the importance of pollinators, and were enlightened to the ways of the Bush Rangers, who planted trees and bee settlements for the protection and growth of such insects. The entire workshop was delighted by the idea of Bee Hotels and were encouraged to entertain the idea of building one ourselves! We were given out instructional guides to build bee settlements so that the knowledge truly goes beyond the constraints of the auditorium.

- Meghna Bhattacharyya and Madona Barman
SPRINKLING THE POLLENS OF WISDOM

The Big Circle dissolved, but our dear readers, it is not a matter of concern but rather a moment of joy for the Big Circle has fragmented to form five Mini-Circles and we are going to tell you about the first stage of the Baby Circles’ development. As we all know that the first stage in the development of the baby is the nutrition of the foetus. Likewise, the participants of the Mini Circles developed progressively while discussing and gaining knowledge on the various topics of conservation.

The second stage after the baby is born is his intake, inquisitives and sharing of ideas. The participants likewise moved around pollinating their ideas and building their own personal Green Wikipedia.

Going back to business, let us introduce the 5 Mini Circles:

- **OST Circle 1: Justice, Policy and Awareness.** No courtrooms though.
- **OST Circle 2: Social Media and Philosophy.** It’s not all about Facebook and Instagram.
- **OST Circle 3: Zero Waste and Sustainability.** You will be surprised to learn about how something so useless can be so useful.
- **OST Circle 4: Plant and Wildlife Conservation.** There’s more to it than what meets the eyes for it goes beyond poaching and encroachment.
- **OST Circle 5: Community Engagement.** It does not end or start by the word Awareness.

This is just a sneak peek of the ingredients of the cake that we are going to serve day after tomorrow. The batter is ready with a lot of ideas, debates, discussions, and also a lot of enthusiasm has been added to it. We hope you will be there on the Serving Day. See you!

~Ana Barua, and Tanim S Mozumder
THE MENTORS FROM THE US & AUSTRALIA

Katy Perry

Katy Perry joined the Green Schools Alliance in 2009 and has been working tirelessly ever since to promote environmental action and education through such programs as the GSA Peer-to-Peer network, Student Climate and Conservation Congress (Sc3), Green Cup Challenge, and GSAx events. At present she is the Director of Programs, GSA. After teaching middle and high school science and math in Buffalo, NY and Farmington, CT, Ms Perry was the first-ever sustainability coordinator at Miss Porter’s School. She worked as a Science Teacher in the same school from July 2005 to June 2007 and taught Biology, Anatomy and Physiology. Before joining Miss Porter’s School she taught Biology in high school and General Science in Middle School, Earth Science and Developmental Mathematics in The Glow School from August 1998 to June 2003. She worked as a Program Director at the Science and Discovery Center. She created original programs for a newly founded and innovative hands-on at a science center located in a mall storefront. She recruited, trained and supervised over 300 volunteers and staff. She also founded Super Science Summer, an adventure-based science day-camp for elementary school age children. As a Research Assistant at the Institute for Sensory Research, Syracuse University Katy examined the effect of aging on vibrotactile sensitivity. She has done her masters in Experimental and Biological Psychology. The causes Katy cares about are Children, Education, Environment, Health and Human Rights.

Juan Elizondo

We welcome Juan Elizondo who is a born and raised Mexican-American native from Houston, Texas. He is currently pursuing sustainability and environmental justice projects with students at the Green Institute at the Furr High School as a career and Technical Educator teaching classes in Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources. He is a certified permaculture designer and organic specialist. He serves as the Woodsy Owl Conservation Corps Green Ambassador Coordinator, an urban pilot initiative funded by the U.S. Forest Service and with support of Americas for Conversation + Arts and Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service along with many local, state and urban federal partners. Juan is representing the Green Schools Alliance and will be involved with workshops with students of Maria’s Public School related to Pollinator Conservation, which forms a part of our International Conservation Programmes.
Barbara Sing

Barbara teaches students aged 7-9 in the Surf Scientist Specialist Program at John Tonkin. She engages her students in Environmental Education endeavors and acts in a supporting and mentoring role to the student led Estuary Guardians; a group dedicated to collaboration with the community and other environmental organization to monitor the health and sustainability of the Peel- Harvey Estuary, Australia. She has been an Exploration Geologist and her personal interests also include Environmental Education and Photography. She links the action of her community groups Mandurah Heritage and Environment Group, ORRCA Sea Mammal Rescue and Seabird Rescue to my school via Bushranger Cadets and Estuary Guardians.

Kim Davies

Kim Davies is currently the coordinator of the Surf Science Specialist Program at John Tonkin College which is located in Mandurah, Western Australia. Within this program she had established a group called the Estuary Guardians which is run by students. The Main brief of this group is to undertake activities to protect the Peel- Harvey Estuary in Australia. Estuary Guardians is also ground level point of connect for schools in the Mandurah district. She is involved with the Bushranger program and teach Biology to grade 11 and 12 students. Their major projects are to revegetate and rehabilitate a salt affected farm in the south east of Western Australia.
IMAGE GALLERY