

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS 101:

A PROJECT DRAWDOWN / SOLUTIONS

JOURNALISM NETWORK SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT

For too long, climate change news has neglected to include coverage about what's already happening to solve the crisis. In her book [Hope Matters: Why Changing the Way We Think is Critical to Solving the Environmental Crisis](#), media critic Elin Kelsey called the environmental crisis “a crisis of hope” brought on by the negativity bias of the media and academia. She argues that this bias leaves us overwhelmed and hopeless, undermining our ability to take action in the future.

In contrast, learning about solutions is empowering; knowing what works matters. This three-part assignment from the Solutions Journalism Network and Project Drawdown will introduce students to a solutions-oriented framework for understanding and addressing our planet's climate crisis.

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Part I: Preparing for Class

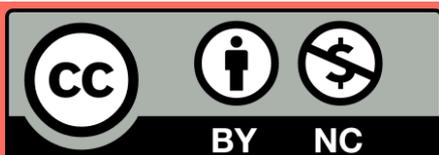
Instruct the students to watch the first four sections of [Climate Solutions 101](#):

1. Setting the Stage
2. Stopping Climate Change
3. Reducing Sources and Supporting Sinks
4. Improving Society

The total viewing time for all four videos is 67 minutes. Students will gain an understanding of:

- where we are today, and how we got here;
- Project Drawdown's “three S's” framework for understanding, discussing and ultimately taking action to avert the climate crisis;
- the largest sources of greenhouse gases by sector;
- the best opportunities presented by/ limitations of carbon sinks;
- the critical importance of centering human equality in climate solutions.

These videos present a new mental model and action framework for understanding, discussing and ultimately taking action to avert the climate crisis, and they will prepare students for the in-class discussions set up in part two of this assignment.



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Part II: In Class

Spend the first 20 minutes of class watching the final two videos in [Climate Solutions 101: Putting it All Together and Making it Happen](#). After watching the videos, instruct each student to find an example of an existing solution to climate change that a community, nonprofit organization, business or government is already implementing.

To do so, they will need to use the Solutions Story Tracker, SJN's in-house archive of news published by outlets around the world on solutions to social and environmental problems.

Once each student has found and read a solutions story, split the group into pairs and ask each student to share what they learned with their partner. Here are some questions to consider:

- Which sector does the solution fall in: electricity, food, industry, transportation or buildings?
- Does the solution reduce a source of greenhouse gas emissions or enhance a sink?
- Does the solution address issues of human health & equity directly or indirectly?
- Is the solution driven by a business? a nonprofit? a government agency?
- Is the solution replicable or scalable?

After about 20 minutes in pairs, bring the students back together as a group to reflect on shifting the focus from climate doom and gloom to solutions, and share about the following:

- Do they feel more hopeful and optimistic about the future now than before watching Climate Solutions 101?
- Did learning about a particular solution and seeing news stories about what's working shift their perspective or make them more hopeful?
- Climate communications expert Anthony Leiserowitz of Yale University calls the gap between fear of climate change and feelings of powerlessness to do anything about it the "hope gap." Ask the students if they have experienced the hope gap?
- Might continuing to read about solutions to the climate crisis help close that gap and empower them to take action? Why or why not?
- What other actions might they take to mitigate the hope gap?

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Part III: Follow Up

After the students have finished the discussion outlined in part two, wrap up the assignment by having them consider what meaningful individual actions they might take to combat both climate change and the hope gap. If they need prompting, here are a few suggestions to get them started:

- Educate friends or family about solutions in your community to help move beyond the “hope gap.”
- Commit to planting and maintaining a garden.
- Attend or organize a community organizing session dedicated to shared goods, services, and assets.
- Reduce your food waste or commit to a plant-based diet.
- Join an organization working to solve the climate crisis.
- Send an email or call elected officials and ask them to support policies to combat climate change.

Instruct students to explain their hope for a better future and create at least two specific action steps that they will implement and share them on Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag #SolvingClimateChange.

If your students would like to include news about solutions to the climate crisis as part of a healthy media diet, send them to the Solutions Journalism Network to sign up for [Solutions Worth Sharing](#). They might also like [The Climate Optimist](#), a monthly dispatch from Harvard University’s C-Change initiative. Finally, the digital magazine [Reasons to be Cheerful](#) regularly publishes excellent solutions journalism on climate change.