

January, 2015

Dear RCE Colleague:

The Grand Rapids RCE introduced an initiative to host an annual Youth Virtual Conference on Sustainability related issues. For the past 2 years we have successfully connected schools from 8 countries on 3 continents in real time to present and discuss issues pertaining to sustainability such as water and food systems. We will be hosting the 3rd Annual Youth Virtual Conference and this year's topic is Energy Systems and Sustainability.

On May 15, 2015, eight secondary schools (ages 14-18) from RCE cities across the world will be linked in a four hour, peer-education symposium. Each class/student group will present their research on a sustainability related energy issues of interest to them and their region.

The following RCE cities have participated in the past and/or have expressed interest in participating:

Grand Rapids, Michigan, United States  
Portland, Oregon, United States  
Curitiba, Brazil  
Kerkrade (Rhine-Meuse), Netherlands  
Lima-Callao, Peru  
Bogotá, Columbia (Colegio Montessori in Medellin, Columbia)  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Saskatchewan, Canada

The benefits of this conference are many and include the following objectives:

- Create a global learning community in order to understand the complex issues of sustainability related to food systems and security
- Develop a skills set of collaboration, communication and problem solving among bright young people
- Understand how local actions have global impacts

**To make this an excellent learning opportunity will take some work by our RCEs and by the classroom teachers and school leaders of the schools/classes selected to participate.**

First, we need you to take the time to review the attached documentation. Please **complete and return the Registration Form by email** as quickly as possible so that we know who will be participating. **The deadline for returning the Application is February 20th, 2015.** Completing this form requires your selecting a school and classroom(s) to participate. You will see that we have included an

Abstract of the Virtual Conference, a Registration Form and a Project Guide for each teacher to use/modify in preparing their students.

Second, you will need to **be available for a Blackboard Collaborate Technology Test to be scheduled upon registration**. The “Blackboard” technology we are using is very robust and will adapt well to the format we are using. However, the hardest part of any virtual event such as this is ensuring that the technology works well for all the participants; so we will do one test and a second if it is required.

We have established a website for the Youth Virtual Conference. Please visit [www.GrandRapidsRCE.org](http://www.GrandRapidsRCE.org) for details and videos from previous YVCs and return to it from time to time as we begin to post additional information. Please communicate via email with [grandrapidsrce@gmail.com](mailto:grandrapidsrce@gmail.com)

This extremely impactful conference format will continue to pave the way for future important RCE interactions and student-to-student learning opportunities in all corners of the world. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your registration.

*In the name of education for sustainability,*

*George K. Heartwell  
Mayor of Grand Rapids, MI, USA  
Chairman RCE-Grand Rapids*