



## Opportunities for Civic Engagement in EE Programming

Research\* shows that when young people are **partners in learning**, care about and can **discuss/debate** the issue and solutions, and they **ask for change** (speak to power) around those issues, they are more likely to be engaged citizens in the future. In other words, when we get the opportunity to practice civic engagement as young people, we are more likely to be civically engaged adults.

**So how can we adapt programming to ensure youth have those experiences? Consider the following:**

- ➔ Let students be the ones to reach out to adults/stakeholders throughout the project. These interactions help students more deeply understand various perspectives on their issue and offer opportunities to interact with adults in positions of power, an important civic experience.
- ➔ If your traditional programming contains service-learning project elements, consider how you can bring students in early as decision-making partners in developing these projects and how students will be asked to participate in them. This will promote student engagement and investment in these learning experiences and inform your programming.
- ➔ Discuss research questions about the policies, practices, and people connected to the issue. For example, if the issue is food waste in the cafeteria, we may ask if food is required to be thrown away (school policy) and which types of food are wasted most often (student practices). We could also ask who is impacted by this issue, who manages food waste in our school, and who are the decision-makers regarding food waste in our school (people)? Intentionally framing research questions around policies, practices, and people encourages strategies that include civic engagement.
- ➔ Consider different metrics of success for action projects. Not every project has to end in a physical action. A strategy that focuses on changing a school policy, for example, has the potential to be *very* impactful and offers students civic experience, even virtually. Remember, the *Process* is more valuable to student stewardship than the product.
- ➔ Highlight and celebrate *existing* civic engagement opportunities within an action project. For example, if students write a letter to the principal asking them to support their idea for a revised school rule, celebrate that as an example of civic engagement (asking for change).
- ➔ Look for simple civic additions to your action project. For example, if students are addressing the issue of food waste in their cafeteria with an awareness campaign, maybe they can also write a letter or prepare a presentation to the principal or school board to ask them to consider a policy that allows the school to compost.

Do you have a question, or are you looking for additional resources? Check out [EarthForce.org](https://www.earthforce.org) and [EarthForceResources.org](https://www.earthforceresources.org) for activities, lesson plans, and resources.

\*Research on this topic is shared [HERE](#)