



Environmental Citizen Activity

Objectives:

This activity is designed to introduce the concept of the environmental citizen: a proactive member of the community who understands the importance of being a steward of the planet's limited natural resources and is committed to going beyond private actions by using civic actions to sustain them. (Reference 'Attributes of an Environmental Citizen')

The nurturing of the environmental citizen is the true goal of environmental education.

Materials:

- One large sheet of newsprint or chart paper per small group
- Markers

Procedure:

1. Divide your class into small groups of about 3-6.
2. Give each group one sheet of newsprint and 2-3 colors of marker.
3. Each group should begin with a head and torso drawn on their paper.
4. Ask the large group – "What is a citizen?" Discuss responses. "Now imagine you want to be an Environmental Citizen – what would you need? (Physical, mental, emotional attributes – real or whimsical) Working in your small groups, use your paper to create an Environmental Citizen. Give him/her the physical and mental attributes you think would be necessary. Be sure to label each part. For example, everybody needs a mouth. But how would an Environmental Citizen use their mouth?"
5. Give the groups at least 10-15 minutes to work. You may need to move between groups, offering encouragement, helping them expand on their ideas, and reminding them to add explanation labels that will help them make a presentation about their Citizen.
6. Give each group a chance to do an oral presentation on their Environmental Citizen.
7. Post the Citizens around the wall. Groups can continue to add attributes later, if desired.

Some typical attributes (it is amazing what youth will think of – no two Citizens will be alike!):

- A heart to care
- A brain to analyze community issues
- Hands to reach out to others/ to hold a shovel/ to write letters
- A pocket for seed packets/ to hold a notebook
- Soft shoes to tread lightly/ sturdy shoes for walking through the community
- Extra hair to give to birds for nests
- A nose to smell pollution/to smell trouble/to smell the flowers

Another option with a classroom of younger children is to build an Environmental Citizen together using the blackboard. Students often say their Environmental Citizen needs a friend to help them – so this option allows the space to draw additional friends and helpers!



Attributes of an Environmental Citizen

knowledge

- **ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS**
Awareness of current local environmental issues, needs, and resources.
- **HISTORICAL AWARENESS**
Understanding how the past ecological events, political decisions, and economy have affected the environment.
- **POLICY & PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT**
Understanding that environmental issues might be influenced by public and private policies and community practices.
- **STAKEHOLDERS & INTEREST GROUPS**
Awareness of the decision-makers who can influence public and private policies and community practices associated with an environmental issue.
- **CIVIC ABILITY**
Understanding of the roles that citizens can play in shaping policies or community practices to help the environment.
- **PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE**
Understanding the mission, scope and process of Earth Force.
- **INCLUSIVITY**
Understanding the importance of integrating diverse experiences and perspectives into all aspects of learning.

skills

- **RESEARCH**
Ability to conduct a thorough and balanced investigation of the root causes of a local environmental and/or community issue.
- **ANALYSIS**
Ability to assess various sources of information for credibility and bias.
- **COMMUNICATION**
Ability to defend a position on an environmental issue both orally and in writing.
- **COOPERATION**
Ability to work cooperatively with peers and adults toward a common end.
- **ADVOCACY**
Ability to bring about a plan for sustainable improvements to the environment or community.
- **PROBLEM-SOLVING**
Ability to make wise decisions and plans to solve environmental and community issues through the use of sound research.
- **REFLECTION**
Ability to think critically about experiences so lessons can be learned.

character traits

- **CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY**
Sense of personal responsibility for and commitment to the long-term well-being of the environment and the community.
- **CONFIDENCE**
Belief in one's abilities to make a positive change in the environment and community.
- **INTERDEPENDENCE**
Belief that it is both valuable and necessary to work together for a common purpose.
- **COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS**
Sense of bonding with and respect for educators, community leaders, and other adults.
- **ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT**
Personal sense of achievement and accomplishment in and out of school.
- **SOCIAL RESPECT**
Willingness to respectfully consider diverse points of view.
- **PROGRAM AFFINITY**
Sense of connectedness to a national movement of students involved in Earth Force.

