
KEY CHARACTERISTIC #4 ACTION ORIENTATION



Environmental education materials should promote civic responsibility, encouraging learners to use their knowledge, personal skills, and assessments of environmental problems and issues as a basis for environmental problem solving and action.

4.1) Sense of personal stake and responsibility.

Materials should help learners to examine the possible consequences of their behaviors on the environment and evaluate choices they can make which may help resolve environmental issues.

What to look for:

- Materials promote intergenerational and global responsibility, linking historical and current actions with future and distant consequences.
- Learners are provided with opportunities to reflect on the effects of their actions and to sort out their opinions about what, if anything, they should do differently.
- Materials contain examples of people of different ages, races, genders, cultures, and education and income levels who have made a difference by taking responsible action.
- Materials convey the idea that many individual actions have cumulative effects, both in creating and addressing environmental issues.

4.2) Self-efficacy. Materials should aim to strengthen learners' perception of their ability to influence the outcome of a situation.

What to look for:

- Materials challenge learners to apply their thinking and act on their conclusions.
- Materials include a variety of individual and community strategies for citizen involvement and provide learners with opportunities to practice these strategies through projects they generate individually in their school or in the larger community.
- There are examples of successful individual and collective actions. Learners are encouraged to examine what made these actions successful. (Where actions were not successful, students are encouraged to examine the reasons for failure.)
- Learners are encouraged to share and celebrate the results of their actions with peers and other interested people.



Example: 4.2
Different Kinds of Action

Following are some examples of individual and community strategies for citizen involvement included in environmental education materials. The actions range in scale from the individual level to the larger community level.

How Can I Help? In this activity, students are encouraged to take action to improve their community by making some positive environmental changes. Students brainstorm a list of possible projects, narrow the list to ones that particularly interest them, and select one or more that can be accomplished during the school year. Simple projects might include picking up litter from an area; planting flowers, grass, shrubs, or trees; scrubbing graffiti off walls; or designing a mural for a nearby wall.

Ecological Citizenship: Urban Environmental Education and Action. Chicago, IL: The Chicago Academy of Sciences, 1996.

Pollution Detectives This activity encourages students to seek out and describe water quality in their community. Students may choose to develop a photo essay or videotape to accompany their presentation, and may wish to make presentations at a schoolwide assembly, a community meeting, or a meeting of a local environmental group.

Always a River. Cincinnati, OH: USEPA Office of Research and Development, 1991.

Car Trouble This lesson begins by asking students to examine their own use of motor vehicles [in light of] facts about motor vehicle usage. Students then examine the hidden environmental costs of driving ... and look back at the automobile's history to see how our dependence on the gasoline-powered automobile developed. Finally, students consider what they can do to address the problems outlined in the lesson.

Paden, M., ed. *Teacher's Guide to World Resources.* Washington, D.C.: World Resources Institute, 1994.