



Civic & Stewardship Volunteer Initiatives

10 Points School

Updated January 2018

Civic and Stewardship Initiatives directly connect the school with its surrounding environment by providing opportunities for students to participate in projects with community-based organizations, thereby gaining real-world learning experience with a broad realm of sustainability issues, from land and water stewardship to socio-economic stewardship. This action awards points to schools that have at least two events or activities that provide students with opportunities and tools to become engaged with environmental stewardship and civic action outside the classroom setting. Points can also be awarded to schools with civic/volunteer participation as part of a graduation requirement. The civic and stewardship volunteer initiatives must have been active from within twelve months of the application's initial submission deadline.

PLEASE NOTE: Collection drives (such as of food, coats, toys, coins) will only qualify for points under this action if the school demonstrates how the students were engaged in the causes of the organizations they were supporting. This could be through a discussion, reading, film-viewing, speaker, or other educational activity related to the issue being addressed (e.g. homelessness, food insecurity, animal welfare, literacy). The civic/stewardship volunteer activity needs to be about more than the act of collecting goods or raising money.

Why is it important?

Engaging students with civic and stewardship service organizations and projects provides real-world skills and creates personal connections to sustainability causes. A hands-on experience allows students to learn from experts, develop leadership and social skills, and ultimately reflect on their impact. Some students may even be inspired to pursue civic or sustainability-related careers as a direct result of participating with such projects, or at the very least take what they learn home and make changes in their own lives.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

A staff member (e.g., guidance counselor, club advisor, teacher, or PTA member) or a subcommittee of the school Green Team could be appointed to identify, vet, and organize a resource directory of civic- or stewardship-related volunteer opportunities. This person or subcommittee should keep a record of participants, and the total hours completed by each student. Ideally, all students should have the opportunity to participate in the civic and stewardship service projects offered. Student clubs, service organizations or even athletic teams have utilized civic or stewardship volunteer activities to build stronger bonds between the students and their community.

Timeframe

The timeframe necessary to plan for an enrichment program will vary. It is prudent to give significant lead-time (three to six months) for reaching out to nonprofit community organizations to explore and set up opportunities for students to serve as volunteers.

Project costs and resource needs

Providing students with transportation to service sites may be a cost factor to consider. Although not necessary, it may be a helpful resource for students who do not have after-school transportation available. On-site service projects, such

as at a community garden, a local park, or school grounds, will require varying material and resource inputs. Assistance with materials and technical support may be sought out from partner organizations, local businesses, colleges, extension services and municipalities, school foundations, school administration, and school facilities and teaching staff. Many local non-profits, as well as civic and stewardship organizations, welcome student volunteers.

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action.

Throughout the process of completing this action, please keep the following requirements in mind:

1. The civic and stewardship volunteer events and/or activities must have taken place no more than twelve months before the application's initial submission deadline.
2. The opportunity to participate in the events and/or activities must be open to all students in the school or in a grade level. This does not mean that a program should be able to accommodate all of these students, but rather that the application or registration process is open to all, even if enrollment is capped at a lower number.
3. The civic and stewardship volunteer initiatives must consist of at least two volunteer events or activities, and should provide meaningful engagement for students with an external organization, OR, the school must require students to complete service hours for graduation.

PLEASE NOTE: Collection drives (such as of food, coats, toys, coins) will only qualify for points if the school demonstrates how the students were engaged in the causes of the organizations they were supporting. This could be through a discussion, reading, film-viewing, speaker, or other educational activity related to the organization's mission (e.g. housing, food security, animal welfare, literacy).

There are several ways that a school may undertake the completion of these requirements.

A school could create and manage a volunteer bank to match students with volunteer opportunities in the community. Another approach is for the school to develop and run one or more service projects in collaboration with local non-profit organizations or with local municipalities. Projects may be done at the school or off-site. Schools should strive for equal access to projects and activities by considering potential barriers for some students such as fees and other costs of participation, timing, and transportation. Types of projects may include but are not limited to the following:

- lake/stream/beach cleanups;
- invasive species removal;
- streambank restoration/tree planting (e.g. planting of native trees/vegetation);
- growing or harvesting produce for food pantries and soup kitchens;
- restoration of school grounds or local park;
- community cleanup days;
- mentoring and tutoring younger children;
- volunteering at senior centers or residential facilities;
- volunteering for local community and youth service organizations such as YMCA; Boys and Girls Clubs, and public libraries;
- participating in home and school building/re-building projects with non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity and United Way;
- doing projects and collection drives for animal shelters.

Once the school has an idea of the type of project it wishes to pursue, it should follow these steps where appropriate.

1. Determine funding and resource needs (including staffing, space, snacks, and liability insurance) to develop and implement the program.
2. Identify and reach out to community organizations, institutions and other non-profits that could potentially serve as partners in a volunteer stewardship program to explore opportunities.
3. Identify a contact person or develop a system (e.g., application to guidance counselor or other designated person) through which non-profit organizations can submit their projects or needs for volunteers to populate the volunteer bank or to initiate new projects.

4. Develop a system to enroll participants and track their volunteer hours.
5. Publicize the program to students, teachers and families, as well as to the external community at least one month prior to its start date. Use flyers, posters, newsletters, local media, websites, and social media associated with the school, municipalities and community organizations. Consider effective means of getting the word out to all students and families who fall in the target population of the program, and address issues such as non-English speakers and limited access to the internet, computers, and printers (e.g., mail fliers and registration forms in addition to providing web access; deliver school announcements via text messages). Recognize supporters and partners in outreach and publicity materials.
6. Enroll participants and orient them to the program.
7. Throughout the program, monitor progress and collect information to assess how it went from the perspective of all participants: students, the school, and the external partner. Assessment information may be obtained via one or more of the following: feedback forms, pre and post tests or surveys, registration and attendance data, interviews, photographs, narrative description of program activities. Assessment data is helpful to writing reports for funders and partners, as well as for sharing with the school and community.

What to submit to earn points for this action

In order to earn points for this action, the following documentation must be submitted as part of the online certification application in order to verify that the action requirements have been met.

1. Description of Implementation. In the text box provided on the submission page for this action provide a short narrative (about 300 words or less) of the two volunteer initiatives that have meaningfully engaged your students with the cause of an external organization. Be sure to explain how the opportunity to participate was promoted to all students in the school or a grade level.
2. Upload documentation of the two events and/or activities that engaged students in a meaningful way with at least one external organization from within twelve months of the application's initial submission deadline. [*Collection drives (such as of food, coats, toys, coins) will only qualify for points if the school demonstrates how the students engaged with the mission of the organization they were supporting, e.g. through a discussion, reading, film-viewing, speaker, or other educational activity.*] Documentation could include samples of printed and electronic communication, flyers, news articles, or social media, showing dates of program activity, event photographs, or screen shots from a volunteer bank showing the database and user interface. OR, upload documentation of the school requirement for students to complete service hours for graduation that has been in effect from within twelve months before the application's initial submission deadline.
3. Upload documentation that shows efforts to promote the activities/events and to recruit students school-wide or across an entire grade level, such as examples of printed and electronic communication, flyers, news articles, or social media.

Action approval will expire on August 31 of the application year.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

There is a limit of six uploaded documents per action and individual files must not exceed 20 MB. Excerpts of relevant information from large documents are recommended.

All action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submissions should not include any information or documents that are not intended for public viewing.

Spotlight: What NJ Schools are doing

Egg Harbor School District,"Catawba Project

The Catawba Project is a grassroots environmental education program designed to partner Egg Harbor Township public school children with Township leaders, environmentalists, parents and community members to work together to help solve real environmental problems. Guided by their teachers, the program puts students in the driver's seat and in charge of their own educational destiny championing causes, planning classroom activities, and implanting high quality Service-Learning projects from beginning to end.

What began as a water-quality testing classroom experiment in 2000 has grown into an award-winning environmental umbrella program that has impacted more than 5,000 Egg Harbor Township students and sparked many ancillary district projects including Fresh and Saltwater expeditions, outdoor classroom sites, reforestation projects, energy-saving solar and recycling programs, and soon a six-acre community teaching garden! It has shaped the way Egg Harbor Township middle schoolers view the world and empowers them as environmental stewards charged with the hands-on knowledge, tools, and desire needed to make a difference in their community. The service-learning infused program curriculum incorporates science, mathematics, technology, historical/social studies, language arts, visual and fine arts, and physical education core content curriculum standards. For more information click [here](#).

NJ Department of Environmental Protection

"Building Ecological Solutions for Coastal Community Hazards"

Marine Academy of Science & Technology, Monmouth County Vocational School District [Stabilizing Dune Systems to Reduce Coastal Flooding](#)

The Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) is located in the Fort Hancock Historic Area at the tip of Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Sandy Hook is a barrier spit, approximately 6 miles in length and varying from 0.1 - 1.0 miles wide, and is located at the north end of the New Jersey coastline. A spit or sandspit is a deposition bar or beach landform off of coasts or lake shores. It develops in places where re-entrance of water occurs, such as at a cove's headlands, by the process of longshore drift by longshore currents. Many students were directly affected by the aftermath of superstorm Sandy. Recently, they have observed increased flooding to their transportation roads leading to the school, local trees/forest die-out due to salt invasion, and increased flooding on school grounds during rain events. The students determined that the erosion of coastal dunes during storm events was contributing to the increased flooding on their school grounds and in the community. Students developed a plan to increase dune vegetation in the coastal area by planting dune grasses that had been lost due to superstorm Sandy. They partnered with the National Park Service and referenced the NJ Sea Grant Consortium's Dune Manual for their plan.

United Way of Monmouth County: Sandy Rebuild

Engaging organizations and students with rebuild projects in Monmouth and Ocean County. A build day begins with learning the story of the home and family, participating in a rebuild project (dry-walling, demo, subfloor, etc.), lunch at a local deli or restaurant effected by Sandy, continuation of projects and reflection. Students can participate as groups or as part of a "Break a Difference" in the winter, spring and summer.

Resources

The following resources may be helpful in completing this action.

Alliance of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC): Provides a listing of environmental commissions in the state and information about their functions

<http://www.anjec.org/NJCommList.htm>

AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bears/ameriCorps.htm>

American Rivers

<http://www.americanrivers.org/>

County Park Systems (Search for websites by county names, e.g. Middlesex County Department of Parks and Recreation <http://www.middlesexcountynj.gov/About/ParksRecreation/Pages/default.aspx>)

Green Apple Day of Service

<http://mygreenapple.org/>

National Youth Leadership Council

<http://www.nylc.org/>

New Jersey Clean Communities Council: Provides supplies (e.g. gloves and bags) and support for volunteer clean-

ups of public lands

www.njclean.org

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Parks & Forestry for invasive species removal projects, lake cleanups, etc. Includes a list of state parks, forests, recreation areas, and marinas listed by location and activity supported <http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/parkindex.html>

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, State Environmental Education Directory (SEEDS): List of volunteer programs in New Jersey

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/sect8.htm>

New Jersey Water Resources Research Institute provides links to watershed associations in New Jersey

http://njwrri.rutgers.edu/watershed_orgs.htm

Rutgers Cooperative Extension County Offices: Find the cooperative extension personnel in your county

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/>

Rutgers Water Resources Program: Rain Garden/Rain Barrel Projects

<http://www.water.rutgers.edu/> (Go to "Useful Links" for more information)

Teens Turning Green: Web-hosted green challenges for high school and college students

<http://turninggreen.org/>

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary

www.delawareestuary.org

Transportation Management Associations provide support for Safe Routes to School and other sustainable commute initiatives

<https://www.tmacouncilnj.com/>

United States Environmental Protection Agency, Climate Ambassadors

<https://blog.epa.gov/blog/2009/04/climate-for-action-becoming-a-climate-ambassador/>

United Way of New Jersey

<http://www.uwnj.org/>

Volunteer Match: National directory of volunteering opportunities searchable by location

<https://www.volunteermatch.org/>

Youth Service America: Website provides ideas, news and links to resources for youth service projects

<http://www.ysa.org/>