

Lesson Seven: ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENS

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to learn about people in their community who model environmentally responsible behavior. Students will identify examples of human-environment interactions in their local community and identify ways in which they, as third-graders, can be good environmental citizens.

Part I. LESSON OVERVIEW

A. Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson students will be able to:

- Research local environmental citizens and express how these individuals model good citizenship.
- Give examples of environmental citizens in their own lives.
- Identify ways in which they, as third graders, can become better environmental citizens.

B. Correlation to State and National Guidelines and Standards

[See Chart](#)

C. Textbook Compatibility

[See chart](#)

D. Materials

- Environmental Citizen Cards (laminated)—1 set per group
- Student journals

E. Advance Preparation

The environmental citizen lesson is an excellent opportunity to highlight *diverse* leaders in your community who promote care and concern for the environment. The EcoTeam's environmental citizen cards feature a local environmental citizen on one-side of the laminated card. On the other side of the card is the environmental citizen's name, a description of what this person does to promote care and concern for the environment and community, and finally their message to third-graders. Assembling a set of cards requires that your local EcoTeam does research in your community to find appropriate role models for third-graders. Explore possible contacts in local businesses, churches, environmental organizations, schools, government, etc. You will need to ask permission of these community members to highlight them in lesson seven. After you have received permission, you will need to secure a photo, a description of their work, and capture their message for third-graders. We suggest that you work with

the Education Department at your college/university and/or an elementary school teacher to determine that the information on the cards is developmentally appropriate for EcoTeam's third-grade audience. Please refer to the materials section of this site to view a sample environmental citizen card.

F. Key Vocabulary

ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZEN AN ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZEN IS A PERSON WHO CARES ABOUT THE EARTH AND ITS PEOPLE AND PUTS THAT CARING INTO ACTION.

G. References

Culen, Gerald R. "The Status of Environmental Education with Respect to the Goal of Responsible Citizenship Behavior," in *Essential Readings in Environmental Education*. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing, 1998, Hungerford, Harold, et. al. 37-46.

UNESCO/UNEP. "The Belgrade Charter." *Connect* 1, no.1, (1976): 1-2.

UNESCO/UNEP. "The Tbilisi Declaration." *Connect* 3, no.1, (1978): 1-8.

Paden, Mary. "NAAEE and Members Active at WSSD." *Communicator* 33, no. 1, (2003): 6.

PHASE II: LEARNING CYCLE APPLICATION

Phase One: Exploration (E)

1. Introduce the lesson and explain the exploration activity to the class. For example:

Today you will learn about people in your community. In order to do this, you will work in groups of two or three. Each group will receive a set of cards. On each card there is a picture of someone in your community and a short description about this person's work. Read each description. After you have explored all the cards, individually select one person that stands out or makes a positive impression on you. Answer the questions about this person in your journal sheet. Later, you will think about people in your own life. Do any of your family or friends, or any one else you know, do something to help the environment and its people? You'll have a chance to write about this person in your journal.

2. Divide the class into groups of two or three students.
3. Hand out Environmental Citizenship Cards to each group.
4. Allow students to explore for approximately 10-15 minutes. Announce to the class when five minutes remain in the exploration. Encourage the children to make sure they record their observations in their journals.
5. Collect the Environmental Citizenship Cards from students.

Phase Two: Concept Introduction (CI)

1. Discuss the exploration activity with the class. Begin by reviewing the observations and responses the students recorded in their journals.
2. Define ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZEN. *An environmental citizen is a person who cares about the Earth and its people and puts that caring into action.*
3. Ask students to share their stories about people that are environmental citizens, or care about the Earth and its people and put that caring into action.
4. Illustrate for the children how they are environmental citizens by asking the children to brainstorm things that they, as third-graders, can do in their life to become more responsible environmental citizens. List these actions on the board.
5. As you write the list on the board, ask the students to record it in their journals.
6. Ask the children to think about actions that they are willing to do in order to be more responsible environmental citizens.
7. Pass out star stickers or ask the children to draw stars to mark these actions on their list.
8. Allow time for students to decide on and mark their commitments.
9. Encourage the children to share their ideas with their classmates.
10. Challenge the students to practice/complete at least 2 of their commitments by the following lesson.

Phase Three: Concept Application (CA)

EcoTeam Application Lesson and Roots & Shoots Service-Learning Project, please see corresponding sections of website.

PART III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR FACILITATOR

A. General

The overarching theme of the EcoTeam curriculum is that each and every one of us is a member of an interconnected community of living and non-living things. In this lesson we explore the idea of environmental citizenship. By an environmental citizen, we mean someone who is aware of the interconnected community of living things and acts accordingly. In his article, “The Status of Environmental Education with Respect to the Goal of Responsible Citizenship Behavior,” Gerald R. Culen writes, “The primary goals of EE are to develop environmentally literate citizens and to promote responsible environmental behavior.”¹

Environmental citizenship is a core ingredient of high-quality Environmental Education (EE). Knowledge about the environment is one component of EE necessary to motivate active environmental citizenship. In addition, a sense of empowerment is required to show students that their actions make a difference. The EcoTeam curriculum reflects the goals of the Belgrade Charter² and the Tbilisi Declaration adopted by a United Nations. Grounded in these principles, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) provides a coherent body of information from which the field continues to draw. More recently, NAAEE facilitated a joint declaration in support of EE at the August 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The EcoTeam program is designed with NAAEE guidelines in mind and continues to evolve with field of EE.

Environmental citizenship encourages individuals and communities to think about the environmental rights and responsibilities we all have as residents of planet Earth. Becoming an environmental citizen means making a personal commitment to learning more about the environment, taking responsible environmental action, and adopting environmentally responsible behaviors.

B. Environmental Citizenship

We believe that a developmentally appropriate way to encourage environmental citizenship is to show positive, local examples of people who have put their beliefs into actions. These role models, combined with the successful completion of a small project, are attempts to develop a “can do” attitude in EcoTeam students.