



Earth Force Six-Step Process

Our Philosophy

Earth Force engages young people as *active* citizens who improve the environment and their communities now and in the future. At Earth Force, we are passionate about young people finding their voice and assuming leadership roles in solving environmental and community problems. We have dedicated ourselves to:

- Catalyzing communities as the means to create opportunities for young people,
- Revolutionizing the way adults work with young people,
- Championing the role of young people in their communities, and
- Building cutting-edge environmental programs that put youth in the driver's seat to solve local issues.

What are the Six Steps?

The cornerstone of our work is the Earth Force Process, a six- step problem solving process that young people use to identify and address issues of concern in their community. We deliver the Earth Force Process through a professional development program designed to train and support educators as they use service-learning and civic action with youth in their communities.

Step 1. Community Environmental Inventory – Students identify issues and strengths in their community.

Step 2. Issue Selection – Students learn democratic decision-making processes to select the issue they will research. They delve into the issue, narrowing and refining its definition.

Step 3. Policy and Community Practice Research – Students identify and analyze policies and practices related to their issue. They identify key stakeholders to engage in their research and action plans.

Step 4. Options for Influencing Policy and Practice – Students identify a policy or practice related to their issue that they want to affect and *democratically* determine a course of action.

Step 5. Planning and Taking Civic Action – Students develop and implement a well-organized plan of action to ensure the project reaches completion. Then, they implement that action plan!

Step 6. Looking Back and Ahead – Students celebrate successes, share their stories, assess the project and process, and identify next steps.

In today's realm of hands-on, minds-on learning, the Earth Force Process:

- is a real world application of the Next Generation Science Standards;
- supports educators in meeting Common Core Standards through engaging youth in an experiential learning process; and
- supports problem-based learning and includes opportunities to document learning during the development of a portfolio.

The Earth Force Process in Action

Students at Cedarbrook Middle School decided to investigate their local watershed. After testing the water quality of a nearby stream, they determined that the water was more polluted by the road than it was further upstream in the woods. Puzzled by this, they worked with a local watershed organization to determine the cause of this difference.

They discovered the stream was more polluted near the road because of the run-off produced by vehicle and pedestrian traffic. They worked to build a natural buffer with native plants along the stream that would catch and absorb the run-off before it reached the stream.