



How to support student projects

Are you supporting your child, or a group of youth who are keen and ready to take on an action project? This guide is made for you to help you support them. For writing purposes, it was written for teachers assisting students, but of course any adult helping a youth can use this guide.



THE BENEFITS OF INVOLVING STUDENTS IN ACTION PROJECTS

Action projects are an effective way to meet the learning expectations for your students, and are proven to be highly motivational for students that undertake them. As they are continually exposed to the challenges of our modern world, action projects allow students to experience positive changes they can help to create.

Meets curriculum objectives and integrates diverse subjects

The study of habitats, communities, biodiversity, adaptations and other topics through wetlands are an easy fit for a science curriculum. And when you extend them to include an action project, students can apply classroom learning to real-world experiences, where you can integrate other subject areas like language, arts, social studies, visual arts, environmental studies, technical education, career studies, literacy and numeracy, civics, education for sustainability and other topics.

Empowers students

Taking action shows students that they have the power to create change. Even on small-scale projects, they learn how to approach problems in constructive ways and connect with the ideas and people who are working for positive change.

Job skills and career planning

Organization, planning, presentation skills, letter- and report-writing, research and strategizing are some of the skills that can help students in a future career. They may also develop new hands-on skills, whether it be mastering computer presentation software, handling money or learning how to plant a tree. Students may make connections and learn about different careers from the people they encounter during their project.



“Acts of conservation without the requisite skills and desires are futile. To create these desires and skills, and the community motive, is the task of education.”

— ALDO LEOPOLD, 1944

Action projects can also:

- + teach civics and connect students with their community
- + help students develop teamwork and co-operative learning skills
- + support and showcase different learning styles and skills
- + allow students to develop, practice and demonstrate communication skills



CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROJECT

Action projects should be age- and grade-appropriate, corresponding to the student's developmental stage. **Early childhood** is a time for simple, hands-on experiences that create emotional bonds between children and the natural world. They can take action by sharing their enthusiasm for wildlife and their wetland homes by:

- + writing a poem, story or play about animals and their wetland homes
- + creating a poster or storybook about wildlife who rely on wetlands
- + building a diorama of a local wetland and its inhabitants



In the **middle elementary years** (Grades 4-6) students are active and aware of issues in the world around them. This is the time to harness their concern about fairness and their desire to take action and solve problems with activities such as:

- + constructing nest boxes
- + getting involved in a local wetland issue through letter-writing
- + doing a wetland cleanup, or growing and planting native trees and shrubs streamside
- + sharing what they've learned about wetlands and wildlife through science projects, displays and other means

Older students have more opportunities to organize and physically take on projects of greater size and scope. They are more able to carry out projects such as:

- + building wetland trails and boardwalks
- + working with others to restore a wetland
- + researching and planning ways to address a local environmental concern
- + seeing the bigger picture relating to policy issues, and addressing these by attending meetings, organizing rallies or taking other actions
- + acting as mentors for younger students through such programs as DUC's Wetland Centres of Excellence
- + contributing to research through bird banding and other citizen science programs

For a full list of project ideas visit wce-education.ducks.ca/index.php/en/projects

Not everyone has a wetland next door! But that doesn't mean you and your students can't help protect wetlands and wildlife. They might want to learn about conservation issues in your province. For example:

- + Does your province have policy to protect water and wetlands? If not, what could your students do to make a difference? Write letters? Arrange a meeting with decision-makers? Write articles or create a display to inform others?
- + What wildlife in your province depend on wetlands? Are any of these "species at risk" in need of special protection? What projects could your students undertake to help out?



THE TEACHER'S ROLE

In an action project the teacher is a facilitator, helping the students to have a positive learning experience.

It should be their project

- + Help them identify an appropriate project for their age, their resources, and the timeframe. Be practical but don't let practicality snuff out the flames of enthusiasm—their passion may take them to unexpected places!

Guide them

- + Help them to plan realistically, using bite-sized manageable pieces where they can see their results.
- + Keep their planning and activities on track. Regular updates will ensure this.
- + Help them to find and process information, and to critically assess the quality of their information sources.

Coach them

- + Help them explore and practice the skills they need to undertake their project. Are the skills they require out-of-the-ordinary? Many organizations are prepared to share their expertise—especially if your students' efforts will help them address something of importance to them. You may also find advice online.
- + Your students may encounter challenges as their project progresses and they may not always experience the success they hope for. But they will learn from their experience. Teach them to celebrate their successes—large or small.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of education and helps in assessing one's impact in creating change. No matter the size of the project your students undertake, there are ways to evaluate.

- + A project scrapbook or journal can be used as an assessment tool for the project.
- + Using a planning sheet and ask students to state their goals and evaluate for themselves their effectiveness.
- + Components of the different projects can be assessed against the related learning expectations or outcomes in your curriculum, such as:
 - + "Use a variety of media to present information."
 - + "Organize and interpret/analyze information in tables/graphs."
 - + "Outline progress in meeting short- and long-term goals."
 - + "Practice responsible decision-making."
 - + "Follow established safety procedures for working with soils and natural materials."
 - + "Use appropriate science and technology vocabulary in oral and written communication."

Did your students complete a project? Let us know! Email us at education@ducks.ca or nominate your students as **Wetland Heroes**.