

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

What one bold new step would you recommend for all organizations to ensure that environmental education fosters lifelong environmental stewardship from K-Grey?

The Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellows presented three steps that they would recommend to ensure that environmental education fosters lifelong environmental stewardship. Their top three steps involved:

- Cultivating community involvement and connections
- Enhancing the use of data technology and social media
- Addressing current challenges and possible solutions

One bold new step is to encourage community involvement and connections by getting children and adults outdoors, fostering an appreciation and attachment to nature and the surrounding environment. By changing and challenging social norms, EE can create lifelong stewards of the Earth and foster attachments by using place-based learning to get people outdoors. Using citizen science as a part of place-based learning, EE can create structures for public participation and should leverage partnerships to share resources and systematically reach every audience.

Another step also discussed the use of citizen science and using the collection of data from citizens to engage communities in environmental activities and make them aware of environmental impacts through authentic research. Once data is collected, it can be used to engage the community further by analyzing the results, its implications, and to develop solutions to environmental concerns. EE should also use technology and social media as a tool to get children and community members outside and to connect people with community-based learning projects that are meaningful for those involved.

Finally, the Einstein Fellows commented on the challenges faced by environmental education and posed some possible solutions. Funding is one of the biggest challenges that environmental education faces, but making EE interdisciplinary and integrative is also a challenge. It was suggested that EE must be included in the next generation of science standards and integrated into common core subjects, such as language arts and mathematics. To help formal educators incorporate EE, it is important to highlight the best practices associated with EE and provide professional development opportunities. EE needs support from the highest levels of government to spark action.