

Principles for Taking Effective, Ethical Environmental Action

Adapted from [*Leap into Action*](#) by Sue Staniforth, "Educating for Action: A Framework for Thinking about the Place of Action in Environmental Education." by William Hammond, *Green Teacher Magazine* (1997), and guidelines developed by high school students from Florida.

- 1. Express Positions in Positive Terms.** Instead of saying what you are against, express what you are FOR. It is your responsibility to express what you stand for and what your proposed solution is, in positive, concrete terms. For example, by removing invasive plants we are helping to restore native habitats and biodiversity.
- 2. Avoid Stereotyping.** Treat everyone as a person of high moral worth whether they are in support or opposition to your project. Stereotypes get in the way of establishing positive relationships and communications, because they lump individuals into categories. Recognize that each person holds their own identity within a group.
- 3. Listen to All People's Views.** Investigate the viewpoints of all people who have a stake in the problem. Keep an open mind to the views of others. Try to consider the impact that proposed actions will have on the lives of the various stakeholders, both in the short and long term. Formulate an action plan selecting the strategies and tactics you believe are most appropriate to the situation.
- 4. Accept Responsibility.** If you fail to attain your goal for any reason, avoid the temptation to blame your lack of success on someone else or on some other set of circumstances. If you failed to attain your desired goal, it may be because you did not do something as well as you needed to. You may have not done your homework, lobbied, or communicated to all the concerned people effectively enough. Let failure be a new beginning rather than an endpoint; use what you have learned.
- 5. Recycle your efforts.** If you do not reach your intended goal, recycle your efforts or start the process all over again. You know far more the second or third time through the process than you did the first time. You know key resource people and what worked and didn't work in your initial approach. Do it again! Try again and again until you succeed.
- 6. Be Persistent—Stick with it!** People don't always recognize the potential students have to accomplish community changes, particularly on environmental problems and issues. Long term planning, commitment, and a tenacious approach are most important to the success of significant environmental action projects. The process tends to be a spiralling pattern of action-research-action-research-action. This is why recycling your efforts is critical to success.
- 7. Celebrate!** Hold a celebration when the project is completed or when you've reached a milestone. Hooray for all you have done so far!