

# Enhancing Ecological Education through Civic Engagement

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We wanted to improve the way that we taught about human impact on the environment to our non-science students in a laboratory class. In the past, as part of one lab activity, we asked each student to calculate his or her own carbon and ecological footprint, but we found that many students had a hard time with these abstract concepts. To increase their engagement and understanding, we combined the data-heavy footprint calculations with a tangible community-based civic engagement project. We asked students to volunteer at an organization in their community that would have a positive impact on their environment. During the experience, they had to collect data and present what they learned in either a poster session or Powerpoint presentation. Students chose to work on varied projects ranging from community park clean-ups to composting workshops, to salvaging and restoring bicycles for urban youth. These projects got students interested, engaged, and excited about learning ecological concepts. It also enhanced student's communication skills by asking them to present their experiences to their classmates. This poster will describe how to implement this project as well as discuss what students learned from their experiences.

**Link to Original Poster:** <http://www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-39/poster/?art=68>

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