

# Engaging Youth With Water Issues

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**Date:** Nov. 18, 2011

**Where:** Latornell Symposium 2011



## Why?

Changing  
Currents

Successes

Challenges

Gaps

## Why Engage Youth?

- Develops deep-rooted connections with their local environment
- Can handle and accept the knowledge
- Conduits of knowledge
- Energy, enthusiasm, creativity
- “Youth should be full and valued partners in local environmental problem-solving.”



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## Changing Currents

- Original raison-d'être of EcoSpark was to monitor
- Program established 2001
- Youth water monitoring program using benthic bio-monitoring
- Youth as data collectors and analysts
- Curriculum connections and EcoSchools connections



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## Program Successes

- Engaged 6,220 students in the program since Fall 2007
- 71 teachers trained since 2009
- Diversity
- Resulting stewardship
- Motivated youth
- Increased understanding of our interactions with local watersheds and pledges to protect watersheds
- Getting students outside!



### Key to successes:

1. Curriculum Links
2. Board Support
3. Teacher Training
4. Monitoring

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## Program Successes

- “That day was awesome, going in the water getting the samples and checking what we got was all fun. I’m beginning to like stuff like this field research. Thank [sic] so much for educating me in field biology. Midges are cool!”

- Student

“The Changing Currents program has been a great opportunity for my grade 8 students to get exposure to real science that has them buzzing about what other cool things scientists and engineers might be up to.”

- Teacher

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## Program Challenges

- Accessibility
- Varying motivations
- Data reliability
- Program-wide stewardship
- Limited time frame
- Funding (obviously)



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## Gaps and Way Forward

- Directly engage students in environmental problem-solving
- Increased use of student data
- Engage students in an extra-curricula group
- More partnerships for stewardship components (including City of Toronto)





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