



## **You're never too young to play in the dirt!: Getting youth excited about soil**

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Teaching primary and secondary school students (K-12) about soils although absolutely critical, can be difficult. We have struggled with ways to bring soil science information to the larger audience as the direct approach meets with resistance due to the time commitments to other standards. One approach is to get students outside to see soils in their natural environment and relate soils to broader landscapes and land use issues. Field trips related to a specific class, including art classes, demonstrate to students the relation of soils to areas they would never have considered. After school and extracurricular programs such as 4-H, Girl and Boy Scouts can be designed to include soils demonstrations and with proper care get the students involve in the planning and implementation of a project that is related to agriculture (urban gardening) or landscaping to address runoff and erosion. Soils are an integral part of some science based team competitions as well. The Future Farmers and America Land Judging Contest is a prime example. In this competition students have to view a soil pit, connect it to the landscape and make recommendation for management. Envirothon, another science based team competition, relies less on field observations as part of the competition than Land Judging. Instead some of the instruction to prepare students has been done in the field to give the students a practical knowledge of soils. In order to enhance all these activities we have also develop a Mobile Soil Trailer that bring the needed equipment and demonstrations to teachers who may not access to all the necessary materials to teach soils in the field. The end result is getting students excited about soil so that when they go to college they may consider soils or related field as a career path.