

Safety Considerations

Citizen science encourages students to explore the outdoors in new ways. EcoSpark goes beyond following school board guidelines and policies regarding outdoor education and introduces all students to the basics of safely exploring the natural world around them. We review school board guidelines and policies regarding outdoor work.

Teachers taking part in our programs should also review school board first aid policies. Read each project's protocols and cautions in advance, which may alert you to any particular issues like outdoor allergen triggers (stinging insects, for example). Use caution with specialized equipment (sharp edges, for example).

Also review school board digital safety policies before participating in citizen science with students. Citizen science projects may ask for personal identifying information (name) or contact information (e-mail address) to set up an account. Some projects have age restrictions for account holders. Read the project's data policies on its website to learn what information will be shared with other project participants, researchers, or the public. Teachers can submit student collected data without personal identifying information by creating a classroom account for the project. Or you may choose to supervise students in submitting environmental monitoring data, such as species photos. Be careful not to include photos of students without permission.

Be aware of hazards including adverse weather, poison ivy, and extra risks when monitoring near traffic or water. Teach students tick safety when exploring outdoors, especially in tall grass. Wear long pants and check for ticks after the activity to prevent bites and the possibility of tick-borne illness. Learn more at [Ontario public health's website](#). Ensure everyone has adequate water and sun protection in hot weather and layered clothing with boots in the cold. Set clear site boundaries with students in advance to facilitate supervision.

EcoSpark staff are First Aid certified and always carry a first aid kit (including a tick key) for events.