

Cal Poly's ESWCC Teaches the Next Generation of Soil Scientists. (A00-perry397996-poster)

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Abstract:

Since 1992, members of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's Earth, Soil, and Water Conservation Club (ESWCC), sponsored by the MESA Agricultural Initiative, have volunteered their time and expertise to educate middle-school students in soil science. ESWCC members assemble soil testing kits containing three soils, pH testing materials, and instructions for analyzing soil pore space, water infiltration rates, and soil texture by "feel". The kits help over 200 California teachers convey the importance of soil science through simple physical and chemical procedures that provide a deeper understanding of soil. ESWCC members train teachers to run classroom experiments and to relate soil properties to resource management. MESA students attend local and regional soil judging contests administered by the ESWCC. Contestants solve problems and measure soil pH, pore space, and soil texture for two unknown samples. Cooperation between the ESWCC and the MESA Ag Initiative benefits both Cal Poly and California middle-school students. Club members gain valuable experience teaching younger students. Middle-schoolers exposed to soil science gain valuable skills, are rewarded for their achievement, have positive interactions with college students, and discover opportunities afforded by attending college. Anyone interested should visit www.calpoly.edu/~agmesa/ for ideas about developing a similar program.

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