Connection to Nature

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## Revision History

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Excellence in Curricula and Experiential Learning

Introduction

Grade Level

These activities are intended for a first grade classroom.

Discipline

These activities have a science and social studies focus.

TEKS

Content:

The study of elementary science includes planning and safely implementing classroom and outdoor investigations using scientific processes, including inquiry methods, analyzing information, making informed decisions, and using tools to collect and record information, while addressing the major concepts and vocabulary, in the context of physical, earth, and life sciences. Districts are encouraged to facilitate classroom and outdoor investigations for at least 80% of instructional time. TEKS §112.12. Science, Grade 1. (a)(3)

In Grade 1, students observe and describe the natural world using their five senses. Students do science as inquiry in order to develop and enrich their abilities to understand the world around them in the context of scientific concepts and processes. Students develop vocabulary through their experiences investigating properties of common objects, earth materials, and organisms. TEKS §112.12. Science, Grade 1. (a)(4)(A)

Skills:

The student conducts classroom and outdoor investigations following home and school safety procedures and uses environmentally appropriate and responsible practices. TEKS §112.12. Science, Grade 1. (b)(1)(A)


The student knows that information and critical thinking are used in scientific problem solving. TEKS §112.12. Science, Grade 1. (b)(3)(A)(B)(C)

The student knows that objects have properties and patterns. TEKS §112.12. Science, Grade 1. (b)(5)(A)(B)

The student knows that the natural world includes rocks, soil, and water that can be observed in cycles, patterns, and systems. TEKS §112.12. Science, Grade 1. (b)(7)(A)(B)(C)

The student knows that the natural world includes the air around us and objects in the sky. TEKS §112.12. Science, Grade 1. (b)(8)(A)(B)(C)(D)

Connection to Nature

[Credit: CC BY-NC]
National Education for Sustainability K-12 Student Learning Standards

2.2 ~ Ecological Systems ~ Connection to Nature

Objective

Students will become aware of their surroundings. They will learn about habitats and how to see the world through their senses.

Key Words

Habitats
Senses
Needs
Nature

Description of Activities

The following activities have been compiled to address the topic of “Connection to Nature” in first grade classrooms. The activities meet the state and national education standards for first grade, and are intended to supplement pre-existing curricula, with a focus on integrating sustainability topics. The activities can be used in conjunction or alone.
Activities

Activity 1: Wherever I Look

Introduction

In this activity, students will become a bit more aware of the natural world around them by looking, then drawing and writing what they see.

Materials

Drawing paper
Drawing utensils (i.e. pens, pencils, markers etc.)

Products

Drawings
Poems

Process

1. Ask children to describe briefly what they noticed of the natural world (that is, anything not actually built by humans) on their way to school this morning. Point out that we may all see different things, depending on where we look.

2. Introduce children to the following sentence starters:
   - When I look up, I see . . .
   - When I look down, I see . . .
   - When I look left, I see . . .
   - When I look right, I see . . .

3. Tell children that they are going to go outside and look in those directions and notice what they can see of the natural world. Take children outdoors and have them spread out enough so that everyone has a clear line of vision. You could also have children work with partners so that each child is responsible for two directions. One child describes what she or he sees as the other makes notes or sketches. Then the partners change roles.

4. When you return to the classroom, ask children to prepare four "panels," one for each direction. They should draw what they saw (for example: a bird, tree, bug, weeds) and complete the appropriate sentence starter. Display the panels in groups of four under each child's name.

5. Ask children to read their group of sentences as a little poem. Also try various combinations of lines to create a choral reading. For example, have four students read about what they saw when they looked up, then four read about what they saw when they looked down, and so forth.

Activity 2: Sensory Discovery Walk

Introduction

Students “open their eyes” to nature by exploring their surroundings without sight. Then they map and retrace the path they traveled. They will perform the role of both leader and follower. Using their five senses to explore their surroundings, they will create a map showing the sources of their sensory impressions.

Materials

Blindfold
Notebooks
Drawing utensils (i.e. pens, pencils, markers etc)

Products

Drawings

Process

1. Outdoors, divide students into pairs and distribute blindfolds. Explain that one partner will start as the leader and the other will be blindfolded. With the leader guiding, the blindfolded student should use his or her other senses to create a mental picture of the path traveled.

2. Model good guiding techniques, such as taking the blindfolded partner’s hand or elbow or putting a hand on his or her shoulder. Remind leaders to walk slowly and keep their partners from bumping into things or touching anything unsafe. Suggest that they keep spoken directions to a minimum (or even don’t speak at all) and stop frequently to let their partners explore interesting objects.

3. Provide suggestions for the blindfolded partner such as these:
  - Listen to the sounds of the wind and the birds.
  - Try to feel on your skin when you are walking through sun or shade.
  - Notice what the ground feels like under your feet. Is it soft or hard? Wet or dry?
  - What can you smell?
  - Explore with your sense of touch. For instance, if you encounter a tree, feel its bark. Is it rough or smooth? Can you reach all the way around it? Does it have any branches low enough to reach?

4. Have students retrace the path without a blindfold. Remind students to use their other senses too. For example, if they are not sure if they found the same tree, why not touch it and see if it feels right!

5. Partners should then switch roles and repeat the activity. Remind the new leaders to be sure to choose different routes.

6. If time allows, have students draw as much as they can remember.

Connection to Nature
7. When everyone has finished, gather them group together and discuss the experience.

- How much of the walk were they able to remember?
- Were they surprised by anything that looked different from what they were picturing in their minds?
- Did the path seem longer when they were blindfolded or when they could see?
- Did objects seem bigger or smaller?
- How many signs of animals did they see or hear?
- How many different plants did they touch?
Activity 3: What’s Your Habitat?

Introduction

Students will learn about the basic survival needs of humans and wildlife by drawing their own homes and neighborhoods.

Materials

Paper
Drawing utensils (i.e. pens, pencils, markers etc.)
Pictures of human and animal homes
Examples of different habitats (forest, desert, grassland etc.)

Products

Habitat drawings

Process

1. Ask students:
   - What do all humans need to survive?
   - Which of these do plants and animals also require?

2. Guide class to generate a list with these needs: food, water, cover and places to raise young. Write the list on the board. Students may give other answers, which you can put with the four major categories.

3. Ask, Where do humans get the food, water, cover and places to raise young they need to survive? Generate a list of student answers.

4. On the board, you may want to draw a picture of your own home/neighborhood to show examples of how to locate food, water, cover and places to raise young.

5. Pass out art materials to students and ask them to draw their home. They can start with a picture of the house or building where they live. Tell them to leave space around the house to add other parts of their neighborhood where they meet their basic survival needs. Have them each pick a color to represent each of the four basic needs and write it on the bottom of the paper.

6. Ask:
   - Where do people get food? (Perhaps from a supermarket or garden?)
   - Where do they store and cook food? Have them add these places labeled with “food” (in the food color) to the drawing.
   - Guide students to think about other needs. Where does the water they drink and bathe with come from? Is it from a well in the area or is it piped into their home from a reservoir?
   - Where do they go to escape heat and sun or rain and snow?
   - What other habitat elements do they need to survive?
• To think about places to raise young, they should consider themselves the “young” and think about how their parents met this need. Add pictures of these to their drawings of “home.”
• Use the selected colors to label pictures to show what it provides for them (i.e. water).

7. When they’ve finished, have each student share his or her picture with the class. On the board, note how many of the habitat elements students included on drawings. Which needs appear on everyone’s drawing?

8. Tell students that they have just drawn their own habitat. Habitat is home, the place where humans get all that they need to survive. Like all animals, habitat is where humans satisfy the most basic survival requirements. (For those who didn’t include the four habitat elements, have them go back and draw the missing ones in.) Display drawings.

9. As a wrap-up, compare the students’ habitats to pictures of animal habitats in the wild. Use pictures of animals that build a home to live in, such as an ant, a bird or a beaver. Then show pictures of animals that do not alter their environment, but find cover all the same – a snake that lives between rocks, for example. Discuss how the habitats are the same or different.
Additional Resources

Online Resources

Primary Resources

http://www.eduplace.com/ss/act/look.html


Secondary Resources

http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/gamesactivities/foodchains.html

http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/gamesactivities/plantsgrow.html

Educational Literature

“Watershed Adventures of a Water Bottle” by Jennifer Chambers

“How a Seed Grows” by Helene J. Jordan

“We Planted a Tree” by Diane Muldrow

Educational Videos

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQIzoLURI2g

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue9jPH31lVo
EXCEL is a division of the Sustainable Communities Initiative