




Equity

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Introduction

Grade Level

These activities are intended for a fifth grade classroom.

Discipline

These activities have a science and social studies focus.

TEKS

Content:

In Grade 5, investigations are used to learn about the natural world. Students should understand that certain types of questions can be answered by investigations and that methods, models, and conclusions built from these investigations change as new observations are made. Models of objects and events are tools for understanding the natural world and can show how systems work. They have limitations and based on new discoveries are constantly being modified to more closely reflect the natural world. TEKS §112.16. Science, Grade 5. (a)(4)(B)

Throughout social studies in Kindergarten-Grade 12, students build a foundation in history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology, and society; and social studies skills. The content, as appropriate for the grade level or course, enables students to understand the importance of patriotism, function in a free enterprise society, and appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nation as referenced in the Texas Education Code (TEC), §28.002(h). TEKS §113.16. Social Studies, Grade 5. (a)(5)

Skills:

The student understands the location and patterns of settlement and the geographic factors that influence where people live. TEKS §112.16. Science, Grade 5. (b)(8)(C)

National Education for Sustainability K-12 Student Learning Standards

2.3 ~ Economic Systems ~ Equity-Resource Scarcity-Energy Economics-Ecological Economics-Food Systems

Objective

Students will learn the concept of resource scarcity, and different ways in which communities (do or do not) allocate these resources to meet the needs of their citizens.

Key Words

Scarcity
Equity
Allocation
Poverty
Funding Gap
ELLs

Description of Activities

The following activities have been compiled to address the topic of “Equity” in fifth grade classrooms. The activities meet the state and national education standards for fifth 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: Popcorn Scarcity

Introduction

In this activity, students experience scarcity through an activity. Following the activity, students relate the concept of scarcity to situations in school and their community. Students learn that people make choices because of scarcity.

Materials

Popped popcorn in a brown grocery bag (staple bag closed)
Brown grocery bags stuffed with crumpled newspaper (stapled closed)
Brown paper lunch bags (several per student)
Alternative snack (such as dry cereal)
Computer

Products

Popcorn party
Essay

Process

1. Explain that a parent or the principal donated a snack for the class and that students will come to the front of the room, row by row, and ask them to serve themselves.
2. Call the first row of students up to the front and give them brown lunch bags in which to put their popcorn. Allow them to take as much popcorn as they want, giving them extra lunch bags to hold popcorn if needed. Continue calling tables of students until the grocery bag of popcorn is empty.
3. Student will ask for the popcorn in the other stapled grocery bags. Open the bags and act surprised to find crumpled newspaper. Explain that you thought that all of the grocery bags were filled with popcorn.
4. Apologize to those students who did not receive a snack. Explain that everyone thought there was plenty of popcorn for all. Suggest that, if the first students served had known there was a limited amount, perhaps they might have been careful to leave enough for the rest of the class. **Note:** Students are likely to be very angry at the seemingly unfair situation; however, it is the purpose of this lesson for them to experience scarcity.
5. Discuss the following:

What is the problem? (There wasn't enough popcorn for everyone who wanted it.)

Why does this problem exist? (The amount of popcorn was limited and there were many students who wanted popcorn. Those who were selected first got as much or more popcorn than

they could really eat.)

6. Explain that the experience students had with popcorn symbolizes a major problem that all societies face—scarcity. Scarcity occurs because people want many things, but resources available for producing the things people want are limited.
7. Tell students that other groups still need a snack, but there's no popcorn left. Ask student what could be done. (Those with popcorn could share. Teacher could pop more popcorn. Teacher could provide an alternative snack. Those without a snack could go without.) Eventually, everyone should end up with a snack, although the teacher should explain that this is rarely the case in the real world.
8. Explain that when faced with scarcity, people and societies must make choices about allocation. When people allocate, they decide how something should be used and/or who should get something that is available.
9. Explain that people and societies make different allocation decisions. Point out that the number of computers available is limited but students and teachers have unlimited wants for the computers. Students and teachers want to use the computers to write, to research, to learn to use software, and so on. Ask the students who decides how to allocate the use of computers at school (teacher, principal, other faculty).
10. Discuss with students that even in our own country, there is a stark contrast between the individuals with wealth, and individuals living in poverty. We not only have problems with the scarcity and allocation of money, but resources such as water, oil, etc. The following video may be inappropriate for this grade level, but may give the teacher ideas for explaining real world examples of scarcity and resource allocation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO8mVv2ViHU>
11. Ask students to write an essay reflecting on how they felt when they did/did not receive popcorn. Ask the students who were first in line first in line, what was it like for them to be asked to share, and whether they felt it was fair that they had access to food because they happened to be first in line. Ask the students who were later on in the line what it felt like when there was not enough food left over for them. How did it feel to have to rely on others to decide whether or not they were able to eat?

Activity 2: Visualizing School Equity

Introduction

Students will learn about inequities in the system and begin to question why those inequities exist by examining the funding gap in their own state

Materials

Poster board

Markers

Copies of "Crossing the Gap" or internet access to read it online (available in Additional Resources--
<http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-35-spring-2009/feature/crossing-gap>)

Access to the Internet or copies of The Education Trust's report (available in Additional Resources--
<http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/FundingGap2006.pdf>)

Products

Poster

Process

1. Distribute copies of "Crossing the Gap" to your students. Give them time to read the story (It can also be projected for students to read, or pulled up on computers/tablets).
2. Break students into groups of three or four and provide each group with a poster board, markers and copies of "The Funding Gap." Ask each group to find one of the following items of information for their state:
 - The per-student funding gap between the highest-poverty and lowest-poverty school districts
 - The funding gap between districts with many students of color and districts with few students of color
 - The gap between districts with many ELLs and districts with few ELLs.
3. Ask students to multiply the gap in per-student funding by the number of students in their own class, then create a graphic representation depicting useful educational items that could be purchased with that money. (In a few states, funding in high-poverty districts actually exceeds funding in low-poverty districts. If you are in one of these states, ask your students to do some research on how your state bucked the trend — and discuss the reasons why a high-poverty district might need more funding.)
4. After students present their posters to the entire class, each group can discuss and vote on the following proposition: An explicit right to equal per-student funding should be added to the Illinois Council of Students' Bill of Rights.
5. Once your students have voted "yes" or "no" to the proposition, ask each group to present their decision, and three reasons supporting it, to the class as a whole.
6. For a lesson with even greater impact, replace the Education Trust findings with a list of per-student funding levels in each district in your state (you may be able to find these on the website of your state

board of education, or you can create one using the "Build a Table" function on the [National Center for Education Statistics \(http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/\)](http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/) website. Have your students create a chart illustrating the funding gap between the best-funded and least-funded districts in the state.

Lesson created by Sustainable Schools Project, SHELBURNE FARMS. Sustainable Economics: The Triple Bottom Line. Retrieved from <http://sustainableschoolsproject.org/curricula/sustainable-economics-triple-bottom-line> on June 11, 2014.

Additional Resources

Online Resources

Primary Resources

<http://ecedweb.unomaha.edu/lessons/popcorn.htm>

<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/visualizing-school-equity>

Secondary Resources

<http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/FundingGap2006.pdf>

<http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-35-spring-2009/feature/crossing-gap>

Educational Videos

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

https://www.ted.com/talks/majora_carter_s_tale_of_urban_renewal

<http://www.investopedia.com/video/play/what-is-equity/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO8mVv2ViHU>



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