

What do You Know about Wetlands?

Summary Armed with their knowledge about wetlands, students will survey other students and adults about wetlands.

Objectives Students will:

- Ask questions of the general public about wetlands to determine their knowledge about wetlands;
- Develop confidence and public speaking skills by talking to people they would not normally speak with.

Materials Each student should have:

- Copies of survey
- 1 clipboard
- pencils

Time Involved Give your students 1 week to complete this assignment. The wrap up should take about 30 minutes.

Utah Core Standard V, Objectives 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b;
Standard VIII, Objectives 1a, 1b, 1c, 6c, 6e;
Language Arts: Standard I, Objectives 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d.

Literature Connections Cone, Molly. Come Back Salmon. Sierra Club Books for Children. 1994. In this story for elementary students, enterprising children and their teachers clean up a creek and reintroduce salmon to its waters. This true story demonstrates a way classrooms can become involved with their surrounding environments.

Lewis, Peyton, and Rory Chalcraft. Willa in Wetlands. Washington, DC: Wetlands Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 1991. (800) 832-7828. A play with songs where Willa goes to a wetland to find treasures. At first she finds nothing of value, but eventually discovers that everything is priceless. She also notices encroaching development into the wetland.

Turner, Ann Warren. Heron Street. Harper & Row. 1989. Over the centuries as people settle near the marsh by the sea, herons and other animals are displaced.

Preparation

None

Activity

Tell your students that they will be completing a survey where they will interview all kinds of different people, asking them questions about wetlands. First, they all need to come up with the survey questions.

What do You Know about Wetlands?, cont'd

Start out by brainstorming questions the students think they should ask people about wetlands. With a brainstorming session, no suggestion is dumb or put down, even if it seems out of the ordinary. It is important that the students feel this is a safe place to offer suggestions. As they throw out ideas to the class, write them down as quickly as possible on a board that everyone can see. Questions can be about wetland facts or people's feelings about wetlands.

After they have exhausted their ideas, and you have guided them a bit by offering suggestions of your own, look at the list, and see if the questions can be categorized or grouped in some way. For example, one category might be wetland values or functions, and a question related to this category might be, "Can you tell me one way that wetlands are important to people?" See if the students can come up with the categories. If they have difficulty, you may need to assist them with this task.

After choosing categories, choose appropriate questions to categorize. When about 10 questions have been chosen, create a survey sheet with spaces between questions so that your students will be able to ask a question, and then put the answer underneath the question. Make copies of the survey sheet, and give each student at least 8 copies.

Tell them they need to interview at least 5 people. They must include both children and adults. They also cannot survey people that have already been interviewed. Give your students about 1 week to complete this assignment. When they have completed it, and turned it in to you, create a summary of people's responses to questions. You can put their answers into general categories so it is easier to read and understand.

Talk to your students about some of the general results. What did they find out? Did this meet their expectations, or did they expect people to know more or less about wetlands? If people knew less than they thought they would, what can they do to better educate people about wetlands?

Extensions

After answering the last question above, "What can your students do to better educate people about wetlands?", have your students work on carrying out some of these ideas!

Introduce the concept of statistics to your class. Tell them that scientists use statistics to validate answers to questions. Statistics used in this activity would be very simple, such as: "Five people responded 'no' to the question 'Do you think wetlands are important?'"

Assessment

Ask your students how many of them spoke to people they did not know very well. Was it more difficult to speak to those people than to people they knew better? Try to come up with a list of things they could do to make this challenge a little easier.