

DICKINSON COUNTY NATURE CENTER

GRADE 5 — “PROTECTING OUR PLANET”

Core expectations

5-ESS3-1 Obtain and combine information about ways individual communities use science ideas to protect the Earth’s resources and environment.

Activity Time

One 45-minute session

Program Alignment with Iowa Core Curriculum

Disciplinary Core Ideas

- **ESS3.C Human Impacts on Earth Systems:** Human activities in agriculture, industry, and everyday life have had major effects on the land, vegetation, streams, ocean, air, and even outer space. But individuals and communities are doing things to help protect Earth’s resources and environments.

Investigative questions

- What are ethics?
- How does a person’s ethics affect his or her decision-making regarding the environment?
- What are examples of tasks people have done to protect Earth’s resources?
- What can we do in our everyday lives to help protect the planet?

Investigative phenomena

- The naturalist will show students pictures of various human activities, and students will decide if the action is harmful, beneficial, or neutral to the environment.

Practices (SEPs)

- Students will obtain information by recalling relevant experiences or remembering something seen/heard in a print or media source.
- Students will evaluate the information by thinking about how ethics may have driven the person or community from the example.
- Students will be offered the opportunity to communicate their experiences or print/media stories by sharing with the class.

Cross Cutting Concepts students will identify:

- How people and communities choose to interact with their environment is based off their own personal code of environmental ethics.

Contact:

Environmental
Education Team

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Development Date: March 2018



Supplies

All supplies brought by the nature center unless otherwise arranged.

- Tape
- Laminated words
- Laminated pictures
- Code of environmental ethics cards
- Pencils

Program Overview

Background

Ethics, or the moral principles that guide a person’s behavior, extend into many aspects of a person’s life, including how people treat and care for the Earth. Ethics are influenced by age, gender, family, culture and religion, especially between the ages of 10 and 18. During this time, and as youth examine various viewpoints regarding different environmental topics, their environmental ethics may shift and fluctuate. Understanding their personal values and how their lifestyle affects the ecosystem around them will help students make responsible decisions regarding the environment.

Over the years, the health of our environment has been dwindling. Human activity has created issues with water quality, air pollution, wildlife population and biodiversity — just to name a few. However, individuals and communities around the world have stepped up and begun creating organizations, activities, events, technology and more to help protect the Earth’s resources. Responsible decision-making regarding the environment has increased, and no matter how big or small, every action taken toward protecting the planet is a helpful step in the right direction.

Procedure

1. The naturalist will begin by placing the words “harmful,” “beneficial,” and “neutral” on three different walls of the classroom. The naturalist will show students pictures of humans doing various activities, and students will decide if the action is harmful, beneficial or neutral toward the environment. Once students decide they will go stand by the sign on the appropriate wall.
2. Next, the naturalist will lead a discussion about the effects each of us has on the environment — from things we use everyday such as paper and pencils to activities such as driving cars, making dinner, or going on hikes outside.
3. Students will be asked to think of someone who has done something to benefit the environment. It can be someone famous or someone they know personally, such as a family member or teacher. What beliefs or values does this person hold about the environment? Students will be encouraged to share their thoughts.
4. Students will then identify something they have done to help the environment that they did not have to do. Why did they voluntarily chose to do that activity? How did their ethics influence them?
5. Students will be broken into groups and brainstorm a list of the daily effects each of us has on the environment. Next, students will work individually to decide what changes in their lifestyle they could make that would reduce their impact on the environment. They will use these potential changes to create their own personal Code of Environmental Ethics.
6. Students will be encouraged to use their codes and keep track of how easy or difficult it is to live by them.