
Sustainability Unit Example: 6th Grade Language Arts

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How do curriculum and instruction change when sustainability becomes the guiding approach? How does the content become richer? How does the level of inquiry deepen? This document provides an example of a teacher-created unit that is grounded in the content and pedagogy of sustainability education.

Background

The unit described was an outcome of the 2007 Summer Sustainability Institute sponsored by the Children’s Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELFF: <http://www.celfoundation.org>), with facilitation provided by Creative Change Educational Solutions(<http://www.creativechange.net>), and Scott Beall consulting. During the intensive week-long institute, teachers gained content knowledge, resources and strategies to redesign their approach to curriculum and instruction using the lens of sustainability. Guided planning time and one-on-one mentoring at the institute enabled teachers to walk away with a draft unit plan to implement during the school year.

After the week-long institute, the teachers were provided on-going support and communication. Teachers sent their in-progress lesson plans to Creative Change and CELFF, and received feedback and mentoring via phone and e-mail. This document is an outcome of this process.

Sustainability in Education

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Big Ideas:

Anthropocentrism- Belief that humans hold greater value than all else within the earth

Actions have short- and long-range consequences

Behaviors are affected by the types of motivations

Goal:

- Students will come to see that their actions have short- and long-range consequences
- Students will be able to evaluate the motivating forces of their behavior

Essential Questions:

- Do we behave in a way that will produce desirable consequences?
- What motivates our behavior?

Day 1

Procedure

Students will:

1. Reflect on their actions & the related consequences:
 - Discuss positive and negative actions they've taken and their consequences
 - Name the most important action they've taken
 - Discuss the positive or negative consequences of this action
 - Categorize these consequences into short- and long-term groups
 - Discuss the motivations for these actions
2. Record the definition of the term : Character motivation
 - The force(s) (religion, race, gender, peer pressure, character traits/personality, etc.) that influence a character's behavior/actions.
3. Read "A Sound of Thunder," by Ray Bradbury

Homework

1. Finish reading "A Sound of Thunder"
2. Complete a graphic organizer in which they list the most important action in the story; its short- and long-term consequences; the character's motivation for this action (See end of file.)

Day 2

Procedure

Students will:

1. Discuss their HW in small groups, attempting to come to an agreement upon the most important action of the story; the short- and long-term consequences of this action; and the motivation for this action.
2. Share their results with the class.
3. Personally respond to the question: What motivates Eckels' motivations?
4. Brainstorm, as a class, the question above.

Homework

Students will:

1. Answer the question: What forces motivate your personal behaviors?

Day 3

Procedure

Students will:

1. Discuss, as a class, the forces that motivate their own behaviors.
2. View *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh* (<http://greenplanetfilms.org>)
 - Use the graphic organizer to take notes on the Ladakhi motivations, behaviors, and short- & long-term consequences (**see page 6**)

Homework

Students will:

1. Review their notes on the movie.

Day 4

Procedure

Students will:

1. Share their graphic organizer notes in small groups.
2. Discuss, as a class, their graphic organizer notes.
3. Use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast their notes from “A Sound of Thunder” with their notes from *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*.
4. Draw conclusions from their comparisons:
 - How do you think Eckels would react if he were introduced to the Ladakhi community?
 - How might a Ladakhi respond to Eckels' decision to hunt a T Rex?
5. Record the definition of...
anthropocentrism:

- The view that humans are the most important beings on Earth.
- Regarding humans as the central element of the universe.

hierarchy:

- A series in which each element is graded or ranked.
 - Power structure; pecking order
 - A series of ordered groupings of people or things within a system
6. Brainstorm the ways in which advertising might be a motivating factor toward anthropocentric or hierarchical behavior.

Homework

Watch television and/or skim through magazines, writing down and/or cutting out any advertisements that seem to encourage anthropocentric, hierarchical, individualistic, dominating behavior or thinking.

Day 5

Procedure

Students will:

1. View and interpret a variety of advertisements (print & video), analyzing the imagery, sound, text, and other persuasive devices to help them determine the layers of messages embedded in the advertisement.

Homework

Watch television and skim through magazines, writing down and/or cutting out any advertisements that seem to encourage anthropocentric, hierarchical, individualistic, dominating, behavior or thinking.

Day 6

Procedure

Students will:

1. Work in groups to analyze the print images that they brought in for their homework.
2. Share with the class their interpretations of their ads.
3. Record definitions of: “green-washing”
 - The dissemination of misleading information by an organization to conceal its abuse of the environment in order to present a positive public image.
 - The practice of companies making their products appear to be environmentally sound by putting them in green packages, claiming they are biodegradable (when they are not), etc.
4. Engage in an activity with Cameron-Cole and Associates (Pleasantville) to uncover the purposes, players, and methods of green-washing in advertising.

Culminating Activity

Students will:

1. Set personal goals related to their behavior and its short- & long-term consequences. See sample graphic organizer below.

Graphic Organizer for Motivation

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Use PENCIL to complete the organizer below. You should list only *one* person or group of people on this organizer. Bullet your information.

Name of Person or Group of People: _____

Motivations: Forces ⇒ Behaviors	Behaviors/Actions	Short-Term Consequences	Long-Term Consequences