

Create A Community

Subject: Language Arts, Science

Duration: 3-5 class periods

Location: Classroom

Key Vocabulary: Community, producer, consumer, decomposer, food chain, food web, habitat

Related Activities: The Ecological Symphony; Create A Food Chain; Habitat Hunt; Habitat Hold-Up; Hurry for a Habitat

Florida Sunshine State Standards: LA.4.4.2.1, SC.4.L.17, LA.5.4.2.1, SC.5.L.15, LA.6.4.2.1, SC.6.L.14



Objectives: The student will be able to: a) describe the components of a food chain/food web, and b) explain how plants and animals in a community depend on each other.

Method: Students research a chosen community, and reconstruct that community in their classroom.

Materials

- Reference books
- Paper
- Art supplies: crayons, paints, scissors, glue, etc.

Background: Plants ultimately support all forms of life, including people, either directly or indirectly. They are thought of as producers, which means they make their own food through a process called photosynthesis. Only green plants are producers. Most people are omnivores, which means that they eat both plants and animals in some form. Herbivores are those things which eat only plants, while carnivores are those things which eat other animals. Omnivores, herbivores, and carnivores are all called consumers. Consumers provide carbon dioxide, which plants need to produce food. Decomposers are necessary in a community because they cause decay and return nutrients and minerals to the earth. Students need to be able to distinguish between producers, consumers, and decomposers within a community. This activity is designed for that purpose.

Suggested Procedure

1. Introduce students to the definition of a community. Describe how producers, consumers, and decomposers function in a community. It may be helpful to show a movie or video about communities.
2. Vote on one of the Everglades habitats (e.g., fresh water slough, mangrove estuary, pinelands, sawgrass, or hammock).
3. Ask the librarian to organize a supply of reference materials on the plant and animal community you choose and any endangered species it may have.
4. Each student should choose plants and animals specific to the community. Use a sign-up sheet to ensure that both plants and animals are represented and that some are not over-represented. The goal is to create a diverse and accurate representation of a community.

5. Assist the students in researching assigned plants and animals of the community. Have students locate information describing what those organisms look like and how they function in the community.
6. Following their research, students may wish to “picture” their organism. Students may draw an outline of the species they choose on a sheet of paper.
7. Instruct students to then attach another piece of paper behind the first and cut out the shape. When the shape is cut out, they will have two identical halves.
8. Instruct students to detail their drawing on both sides. The two pieces may then be sealed with glue, leaving only a small section unattached. Before the last one or two openings are closed, stuff the organism with crumpled paper. For stuffing, students should use the discarded paper that they cut out.
9. To populate the room, use string to suspend the organisms from the ceiling or along the wall. Hang them at appropriate heights. Background scenery may also be used.

Evaluation

Summarize the project by asking students the following types of questions:

- Can you show me some examples of producers? Consumers? Decomposers?
- What would be the effect of removing a particular organism from the community?
- What would happen if the entire population of these organisms was removed?
- What could cause the decline of organisms in a community?
- How might the decline of an organism affect our lives?
- What are some ways this community is important? Some examples include: helps keep the soil in place, conserves water and prevents flooding, beauty, provides homes for plants and animals, provides biological diversity, provides food, supplies medicines, etc...

Discuss some of the endangered plants or animals that students researched.

- What are the reasons each is endangered?
- What are some things that are being done about it? How might we help?
- List some examples of food chains in this community.
- Can these food chains be connected to other food chains?



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