

Adopt an Animal

Purpose:

This lesson provides students with the opportunity to establish an emotional connection with an animal of the student's choosing. It allows for the skill of observation to be practiced using as many senses as possible.

Curriculum Match:

For Curriculum Match visit:

<http://www.vanaqua.org/education/LearningOutcomesandIRPCConnections.pdf>

- Direct experience is the basis of human learning
- Students should be provided opportunities to develop an aesthetic appreciation of the environment

(Taken from Appendix C: Cross – Curricular Outcomes)

** Adapt to best suit your grade level.

Materials:

- paper
- pencil
- coloured pencils or pens
- clipboard or binder (hard surface to write on)

Background Preparation:

Observation is a skill that gets better with practice. This activity will be more successful with prior practice in the classroom. Have the students practice observing: the classroom pet, younger children, a plot of ground outside, pictures from a calendar, a clip from a movie with the sound off, etc. Encourage the students to use all of their senses. Observations can take the form of poetry, dialogues, stories, notes, drawings or anything else the students may want to try to get their thoughts on paper.

Procedure at the Aquarium:

Have students explore the aquarium and choose an interesting marine animal. Make sure to lay out careful considerations for choosing an animal. For example, a fish will move around a lot, a sea star will not. Have them watch the animal for a few minutes and make sure that it is something they want to sit and observe. You may want to give them a list of things they can do while observing, or let them come up with their own. Once they have chosen an animal, have them sit and observe it for a specified amount of time. This is where the practice comes in, if they have never done it before, they will not observe long enough to make the connections that are the most important part of this activity. The longer the students can observe, the more they will get out of the exercise. When you bring the students back together, have them share what they have learned about the animal they have adopted, and some interesting things they observed the animal doing.

Extensions:

Have the students do a research project on the animal they adopted, making sure to include the following: where does it fit into the ecosystem; what its habitat is in the wild; why it is important, whether or not it is threatened or endangered; what it needs to survive; and what adaptations it has in order to survive in its ecosystem.

Assessment:

Use an observation sheet to assess students as they work; showing evidence that they:

- Follow directions
- Use multiple strategies for observation
- Are able to put thoughts and feelings down in a logical, coherent way
- Can generate thoughtful questions
- Can accurately describe their adopted animal (written or drawn)
- Can gather and record information
- Use all their senses to make observations