

Community Clean-Up

Lesson Plan

Adapt this one-period **lesson plan** for any grade level and follow it with a simple and powerful **service project** for Earth Day. The **reflection** brings learning and service impact together.

Students learn about the goals of Earth Day and identify areas in town that need clean-up or planting. They plan a day of service.

Anticipatory Set: (5 min.)

Before playing this 60-second “Earth Day Medley” from TED-Ed, tell students to watch for the visual messages about the gifts of the earth and our interactions with it. <http://bit.ly/EDmedleyLTG>

Questions for discussion:

- What are some attributes of the earth shown symbolically?
- What do you think is the social action message of this video?
- Why do you think we have (or need) a day dedicated to stewardship of the earth? – Earth Day on April 22

Part One: (15 min.) Introduce history and goals of Earth Day and introduce community clean-up project.

1. Tell the students that they are going to celebrate Earth Day by taking action locally.
2. Show a 90-second video about the history and goals of Earth Day. <http://bit.ly/WhatisED>
3. Review the issues Earth Day seeks to address (oil spills, pollution, loss of wilderness, etc.), and ask the students which of these issues they care about most.
4. Building from the video’s list of things people can do (plant trees, recycle, ride bikes), brainstorm and discuss what individuals can do in the local community to take care of the earth.
5. Show pictures of community areas with trash or overgrown, uncared for areas (parks, drains, streets, rivers, fields) and build students’ level of concern for caring for their own local environment. (You will need to collect these pictures in advance.)

Variation for older students: Have students create their own “Animoto” video about Earth Day, using facts, images, and suggestions for things people can do locally for stewardship of the earth.

Online Competitive Games about Earth Day:

https://quizlet.com/_282uco

<https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/1711c8b6-c5dd-4588-b995-3f46cdf57c58>

Variation for younger students: Watch a Disney Earth Day feature length movie about animals around the world interacting with their environment. Discuss how all life (including humans) interacts with its environment.

Part Two: (10 minutes) Give students time in small groups to read aloud and discuss the meaning of the following quotes as they relate to participating in a local clean-up project and its impact.

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.” Edward Everett Hale

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead



"A small act is worth a million thoughts." - Ai Weiwei	"In a gentle way, you can shake the world." -- Mahatma Gandhi
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Part Three: (30 minutes) Plan a service project in which students clean up one or more areas around town, either by planting, picking up trash, or making it more usable by people or wildlife.

1. Make a group decision about what is needed and how the group can address the need.
2. Start gathering information and make a step-by-step plan of action. Include getting permission to work in a public or private space, if needed.
3. **Extension:** Have a representative from the town council come and be part of the discussion about the community clean-up project. Discuss how they can be of help to the class and what the students can do to help the community efforts.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Empowering Others

English and Social Studies

- Research and debate government and nonprofit roles in addressing climate change.
- Create posters to share in the community about clean up, actions that impact the environment, or historic/natural features of a local hiking trail.
- Create a community map of natural areas and areas that need clean-up.

Math

- Sort and measure recyclable material and trash collected during clean-up day.
- Estimate time and distance to be traveled to clean up local areas.

Science

- Conduct a lab on how to recycle different objects based on their properties.
- Look up national projects to report a count of frogs or birds locally.
- Science World magazine articles and videos about Earth Day
<http://scienceworld.scholastic.com/>
- Science lesson about how long it takes for different materials to break down
http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp308-04.shtml

Service Project for Earth Day

This service project may be started in class and completed over a single day or over several days.

Procedure:

1. Students clean up trash in designated areas and put up signs or provide trash cans to maintain the appearance. The clean-up may involve planting native species or removing invasive species.
2. If the area is a hiking trail, students may provide laminated trail maps with interpretations of the natural history and features along the trail.
3. Involve families and other community members in the clean-up or in awareness of how to maintain the beauty of the cleaned area.

Reflection:

Follow the project with a brief reflection.

1. Discuss the impact of their project as partners, small groups, or whole class.
2. Students write a paragraph reflection connecting their project to the quotes in Part Two above.
3. They compile pictures, data, and narrative from their project into a form to share. Give them a place to share their reflection.

Follow-up: Discuss what they'd like to do next to continue taking care of the community environment.

