LESSON PLAN

Learn how plastic use impacts the health of our planet.

Bring local and global ecosystems to life, connecting individual behaviors with the health of the planet. By focusing on plastic use, youth consider their own and their global peers' local waste management practices and discern the impact of their individual and collective behaviors on ocean health.

We understand that every classroom is unique, and we want to provide you with the flexibility to adapt our lessons to meet your students' specific needs and goals. The activities suggested in this lesson plan are designed to spark engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration among your students when implementing our Student to World courses.

Our goal is to support you in creating an enriching and meaningful learning experience that resonates with your students and serves as a helpful guide as you embark on this educational journey with Global Nomads Group.

About Global Nomads Group

For over 25 years, Global Nomads Group has leveraged technology to host digital safe spaces for young people around the world to share their stories, challenge assumptions, engage with and learn from each other, and, by doing so, foster a more just world.

Objectives

By the end of the module, students will:

1. Examine everyday plastic use in multiple contexts to explore how plastic is used globally in everyday lives.

2. Learn how plastic comes to us and what happens once it leaves us, what we use it for, and what meaning it has to us.

Introduction

Begin the class by asking students to look around and take stock of all the plastic they see. Ask them to share what they found and discuss as a class.

"The History of Plastic" Video

Show students the video "The History of Plastic". After the video, ask the class if they learned anything new about the history of plastic.

Timeline of Plastics

Ask students to read the timeline of plastics and take notes. After reading, lead a class discussion on the impact of plastic on the environment and the specific problems caused by plastic pollution.

Map Activity

Show students the map of each country's plastic waste. Ask students to identify which countries produce the most plastic waste and discuss it as a class.

Conclusion

Discuss as a class the challenges and benefits of reducing plastic use. Ask students to brainstorm ways to reduce plastic use in their everyday lives. Write their ideas on the whiteboard or chart paper.

Explore

Show students the map, and explore the stories, articles and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Take a picture of a piece of plastic you use in your everyday life.
2. Think about the story of the item you picked. Think about how you first got it, what you use it for, and what it means to you.
3. Consider what happens/happened to the item you picked after you use/used it.
4. Share the story of the plastic item you picked with your global peers. Explain how and why you got the plastic item, what will happen to it when you're done using it, and what that plastic item means to you.

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.

Extension Activity

- Research bioplastics and have students compare and contrast them with traditional plastics.
- Have students research companies or organizations that are working to reduce plastic use and present their findings to the class.

- Plan a plastic-free day at school or in the community and have students document their experiences.

Objectives

By the end of the module, students will:

1. Explore how they interact with local ecosystems outside of their own home environment.

2. Map how their actions affect local ecosystems.

Introduction

- Begin the lesson by asking students if they know what an ecosystem is. Write their answers on the board.

- Define an ecosystem as a community of animals, plants, and elements interacting with one another.

- Explain that humans are also part of ecosystems and can influence them, both positively and negatively.

Feedback Loops

- Introduce the concept of feedback loops and explain how they work using examples from everyday life (e.g., crying baby, hitting a switch to open a door).

- Discuss the difference between reinforcing and balancing feedback loops, and give examples of each.

Mapping Ecosystems

- Ask students to create a visual representation of an ecosystem using post-it notes or drawing paper.

- Instruct them to label the different elements of the ecosystem and draw arrows to show the connections between them.

- Encourage students to think about the feedback loops that exist within the ecosystem and to label them as reinforcing or balancing.

- Provide support and guidance as needed.

Reflection

- Ask students to share their visual representations with the class and explain the feedback loops they identified.

- Facilitate a class discussion about the different ecosystems and feedback loops, and their impacts on the environment and human life.

- Have students reflect on what they learned and how they can apply this knowledge to their daily lives.

Explore

Show students the map, and explore the stories, articles and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Think of an action you took that had an effect on your local environment.

2. Consider that action and its consequences on your local community, family, friends, and/or school. Think of what aspects of your environment might have been impacted.

3. Include a description, depiction, or drawing of the local ecosystem you are part of with your story.

4. Show your global peers the ecosystem you impacted with a drawing or description. Then share the story of your impact on the local ecosystem.

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.

Objectives

By the end of the module, students will:

1. Visualize how local ecosystems are connected to and have an effect on global ecosystems.

2. Focus on ocean health and how our everyday actions affect the ocean and coral reef.

Introduction

- Begin the lesson by introducing the quote by Leonardo da Vinci and ask students what they think it means. Write down their responses on the board.

- Explain to students that the quote means that everything in the world is interconnected and that our individual actions have an impact on the world around us.

- Show the infographic on the impact of plastic on the environment and explain to students how the use of plastic affects our oceans and the world at large.

Plastic Calculator

- Direct students to the Plastic Calculator link and ask them to read the information and take notes. https://www.earthday.org/plastic-pollution-calculator-2/

- Ask students to fill out the worksheet by calculating how much plastic they use on a daily basis and how they can reduce their plastic use.

- Students can work in pairs or small groups to discuss their answers and share ideas.

- After they have completed the worksheet, ask them to share their ideas with the class.

Research

- Divide the class into small groups.

- Assign each group a different aspect of the impact of plastic on the environment, such as plastic in the oceans, plastic in landfills, or plastic in wildlife.

- Ask each group to research their topic using the internet and library resources.

- Have each group create a poster or presentation about their topic, including information about the impact of plastic and ways to reduce plastic use.

- Have each group present their poster or presentation to the class.

Explore

Show students the map, and explore the stories, articles and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Express yourself with a creative story or poem that connects your use of a single item of plastic to ocean health.

2. Think about your initial use of the plastic item, what happened to the item when you were done with it, and the path your plastic item traveled from your initial use to the ocean.

3. Consider the ways that item of plastic affects the ocean and the coral reefs.

4. Share your story or poem with your global peers. Be sure to include how you felt learning about the consequences of plastic waste (e.g., anger, fear, sadness, guilt, indifference, relief, concern, resignation, helplessness, confusion).

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.

Objectives

By the end of the module, students will:

1. Explore everyday behaviors and their effects on ocean health.
2. Design a campaign that utilizes storytelling to take positive action and preserve ocean health.

Introduction

Begin the lesson by asking students if they are aware of the impact of plastic on the environment, particularly the oceans. Show them the infographic on plastic and sustainable products and ask them to reflect on how their behavior as consumers can impact the environment.

Single-use Swaps

Show students the infographic about Single-use Swaps. Ask your students to brainstorm other products that can substitute Single-use plastics.

Zero Waste Youth

Introduce the Zero Waste Youth organization and ask the students to explore the organization's website. Ask them to reflect on the organization's mission and the actions that they take to reduce plastic waste.

"The World Needs Clean Oceans" Video

Show students the video and ask them to take notes. After watching the video, facilitate a whole-class conversation about the ways that we can take action to help save the world's oceans and make a positive difference in the environment.

Explore

Show students the map, and explore the stories, articles and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Design your own local campaign with global impact, considering the following:

   1. The Ecosystem you want to focus on and the chain reactions within it.

   2. Where will you intervene in the ecosystem and what will that do to the current chain reactions?

2. Create a SMARTIE Goal for the campaign. For your goals to be SMARTIE, they must be:

   S - Specific: Say you want to improve ocean health by reducing the use of plastic. But saying that you want to reduce plastic use is not specific enough. You'll need to get more concrete, narrowing your goal and locating it within a particular context. One possible way to make your goal more specific is to narrow it to eliminating the use of plastic water bottles in your community, which you can further narrow to your school, your grade, or even this class.

   M - Measurable: Think of a way to measure your goal. Let's say you decide that reducing plastic water bottle use by 50% among the students in your grade would be more realistic than discontinuing use in your entire community. You now have a specific, measurable goal.

   A - Ambitious: Then, make sure that the goal you're trying to accomplish is challenging enough. You don't want your goal to be something too easy. You want to try to make some kind of significant progress with your goal. For example, if you already recycle in your house, it's not an ambitious goal to continue to do that. An ambitious goal should cause a change in your life.

R - Realistic: You'll also want to make sure your goal is realistic. This should be something you can accomplish with the skills and resources that you have. While you may want to set the goal of ridding the world of single-use plastic (that would be very ambitious), you may be setting yourself up to feel frustrated if you're unable to complete that goal. The trick is to find something that is both challenging but possible.

T - Time-bound: A very important aspect of goal-setting is deciding on a deadline that determines when your goal should be complete. This helps to motivate you to take action quickly. Think about it: if your teacher told you your homework assignment was due 'whenever you want', do you think you would do it? How about when a teacher says that a homework assignment is due tomorrow, doesn't that inspire you to get to work faster? Your own goals work the same way! Try to think of a date when you'd like to accomplish what you've planned. Maybe you'd like to organize a beach cleanup to take place in the next month. Or maybe you'd like to use one less plastic bottle each week for the next three weeks. Figure out a time that works best for you.

I - Inclusive: You'll want to make sure that your goal is considering all different kinds of people and not ignoring the perspectives of those who are often overlooked. For example, if you decide to start a campaign to encourage people to use sustainable materials, be sure to think about what groups of people may need to purchase single-use plastic because it is all they can afford. This is a great way to expand your goals to benefit your local community.

E - Equitable: The last step of forming your goal is to make sure it includes an element of fairness and justice. This is your reasoning behind making your goal, and it's one of the most important aspects you can use to motivate yourself to accomplish your goal. For example, you might want to encourage people to use metal straws because you believe the overuse of plastic is harming our global ecosystem and will make living difficult for future generations. If you ever feel stuck trying to accomplish a goal, remind yourself of the equitable reasons for creating that goal; it'll help!

3. Create a slogan (a short memorable phrase or motto) for your campaign!

4. Tell your global peers what action you plan to take, what your SMARTIE goal is, and share your slogan!

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.