

This activity involves planting a garden—an exciting project that can teach students a lot about belonging. During the planting process, draw the students in by discussing with them the many different varieties of trees, plants, flowers, and other vegetation that exist. Emphasize how boring the garden or forest would be if it consisted of only one species, as well as how low the garden’s survival rate would be in such a case. Assure the students that each of their seeds is going to be planted to help grow one beautiful garden.

Materials

- ▶ Flowerpots
- ▶ Flower or vegetable seeds and potting soil
- ▶ Decorating materials

Instructions

1. Distribute flower or vegetable seeds to the students.
2. Give students a flowerpot and decorating material and ask them to paint and decorate the flowerpot. (If you have difficulty finding flowerpots, you may wish to use the disposable plastic pots available from nurseries or ask for some from families at the beginning of the planting season.)
3. Have students sow the seeds and nurture their plants in the classroom until they are ready to be moved outside.
4. As a class, decide first where the garden will be and then make a design for the garden.
5. Have your students plant the flowers and enjoy the beauty the class created together.

Discussion

1. In what ways are your plants alike? How are they different? What is something that is true about all plants?
2. How are people alike or different? What are some characteristics that all people share?
3. How did we have to work together to create our garden?

Enrichment

Have students explore the importance of ecosystems to various cultures.

Ask students to ponder how environments are reflections of the people who live there.

The purpose of this activity is to allow students time to discover heretofore unknown facts about their classmates. Students will find it entertaining to learn interesting things about their classmates.

- Materials**
- ▶ Interesting Facts Worksheet
 - ▶ Pencils or pens

- Instructions**
1. Give each student a copy of the Interesting Facts Worksheet.
 2. Have the students pass their worksheets to different classmates to see which of them can identify with any of the completed sentences. Those students who can should then write their name in the appropriate space (next to the interesting fact that applies to them). Students are permitted to sign their name only once on a classmate's worksheet.
 3. Have students share what they learned about each other.

- Discussion**
1. How can everyone's individual talents benefit us as a class?
 2. What are some talents we have in common?
 3. What surprised you about one of your classmates?

- Enrichment**
- Ask students to create their own talent worksheet questions without the help of the teacher.
- Instruct students to write a biography of one of their classmates.

Interesting Facts Worksheet

Find someone in our class who . . .

1. . . . plays a band instrument. Student: _____

2. . . . gets good grades in math. Student: _____

3. . . . has a unique pet. Student: _____

4. . . . spent summer vacation
many miles away. Student: _____

5. . . . has a good singing voice. Student: _____

6. . . . has met a well-known
or famous person. Student: _____

7. . . . is an excellent speller. Student: _____

8. . . . wants to become a baseball player. Student: _____

9. . . . earns money after school
by mowing lawns. Student: _____

10. . . . (Complete a sentence of your own.) Student: _____

Think about all the things there are to learn in this world. There are the typical facts, formulas, and rules, and then there are so many things that defy explanation. Have you ever tried to think about how something as simple as the phone works? The mere thought of sound traveling across oceans is quite impressive. This activity helps students explore all the creativity that is needed to be an inventor.

Materials

- ▶ I Wonder Worksheet
- ▶ Writing paper and pencils or pens

Instructions

1. Engage your students in a discussion about a number of history's amazing inventions. Make sure the examples are fairly simple to understand and can be explained to your students' satisfaction.
2. Ask students if they have ever wondered how something works. For example, have they ever wondered how music actually comes from a CD?
3. Give your students the I Wonder Worksheet and ask them to fill in the blanks, first listing the name of an invention and then asking a question about it. When the students have finished, collect all the worksheets.
4. Give your students one I Wonder question that is not their own and assign them the task of answering the question. The answer should be well thought out and creative but does not necessarily have to be correct. Make sure you give your students enough time to think seriously about their answers.
5. Share a few of the questions and answers with the class.
6. Once a week, share a creative but incorrect answer to a question and then follow up by sharing the correct answer. You may need to bring in guest speakers or other adults to help with some of the explanations.

Discussion

1. What did you learn from this activity that surprised you?
2. What do you think is the most amazing invention of all time? Why?
3. Is it more important to be correct or to be creative? Explain.

Enrichment

Use this same technique when you begin new lessons in class. For example, if you are studying frontier life, ask students to think of a few I Wonder questions. Students may say, for example, "I wonder what they did without TV" or "I wonder what they ate." Keep the I Wonder questions posted until they are answered.

I Wonder Worksheet

Name of invention

Question about the invention

1. _____

1. _____

2. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. _____

4. _____

4. _____

5. _____

5. _____

6. _____

6. _____

7. _____

7. _____

Peer pressure, as well as the desire merely to follow the group, often inhibits students' abilities to make decisions. Students need to be given a chance to make decisions regardless of what their peers think or say.

Materials ► Blindfolds

- Instructions**
1. Inform students that, rather than follow what the group does, you want them to make decisions all by themselves.
 2. Give each student a blindfold to wear and have everyone line up in the middle of the room. Tell the students that when they agree with a statement, they should take one step forward, and when they disagree, they should take one step backward.
 3. Start with a few easy statements, such as "Math is my favorite subject," "School is fun," and "I like recess." Students will easily be able to make up their own minds about these issues.
 4. Begin using more complex statements, such as "I treat everyone fairly" or "I feel safe at school" or any other statements that are relevant to you and your class. (Be sure to throw in a few laughter-provoking statements, such as "My teacher is the best.")
 5. After the line of students has fallen into disarray, ask students to take off their blindfolds: What do they notice? What does their observation say about decision making? What does it say about the class?

- Discussion**
1. Was it easy or difficult to make a decision when you did not know what your friends were doing?
 2. Did you like making decisions on your own? Explain.
 3. When would you rather make a group decision?

Enrichment Ask students to respond to writing prompts that contain decision-making dilemmas. You may want to choose scenarios that center on certain concerns at your school.

As an alternative to writing, present pictures that depict disagreements or choices to be made. Ask students to interpret the pictures and offer their ideas on how to solve the disagreements.