

Teacher Education Institute (TEI)

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Environmental Studies

Our approach emphasizes that a thematic approach is relevant when teaching young students. Such is the case regarding Environmental Studies. Initially it is taught as Home Surroundings.

Home Surroundings

Home Surroundings brings to 6 and 7 year olds an awareness of the world around them. The themes chosen in the first two years would be those from nature. One example would be the Seasons; this is also an introduction to Science. Other themes form the basis of specialized subject areas, for example History. Geography, Botany, Anatomy, Physics, Chemistry and so on, are studied at a later stage.

In grade 3 children also enter into the environment in a practical way. Suggested themes are Farming, Gardening and House-Building.

Man and Animal

In grade 4 the subject is Man and Animal. This involves an elementary study of the Animal Kingdom and its relationship to Man. This study is timed to coincide with the 9 year olds' new awareness of themselves as individuals, separate from the world around them.

It is important that the study begins with Man and only then relates to Animal. It is natural for children to believe that they are the centre of everything. It follows that for children any examination of the animal kingdom should occur initially in relation to human beings. For example, the following describes some of the areas that could be covered when teaching Man and Animal.

- a) the upright stature of Man followed by a comparison with the Animal Kingdom;
- b) man's gift of speech followed by a comparison with the communication of animals;
- c) man's ability to use his hands followed by a comparison with the limited use of animals' forepaws and so on.

One of the aims of these lessons is to awaken in the 9 year old a sense of reverence for the human being, and a sense of responsibility towards the Animal Kingdom. Later on the Plant and Mineral Kingdoms will be studied along similar lines.

Also Local History and Geography are covered in grade 4. The study of history and geography starts with the direct experience of the child. Thus the local area is studied and a main lesson book created. Maps of the local area are drawn; a study made of the ways in which some local industries started and so on; visits are made to natural resources, places of interest etc.