

Project Little Green Warriors

SUSI Global Environmental Issues '10

2013



Background

Young children are active and inquisitive, often exploring things with all of their senses and eagerly curious about the environment around them. To them, learning is everything, and experience is everything. What better time could it be to start the process of environmental sensitivity and responsibility than in early childhood? This is golden time of their lives that is primed for learning in the most direct manner-by experiencing the natural environment firsthand.

Environmental education will occasionally be taught through informal education. However, an early childhood view of the environment is not enough to let the children understand environmental issues, for instance; what happens when our ozone layer has holes in it, the effects of lead when it enters a child's blood stream, or to develop the right attitudes, skills and level of awareness to take action to create long-term sustainable environments. Key concepts like biodiversity or sustainability which are essential to solve environmental issues are often unheard of by early childhood educators in Malaysia, and more often than not, children grow up playing with natural elements like grass, flowers, and plants, but never truly understanding the significance of nature and the need to protect it. Malaysians are often insensitive about environmental problems, and one of the main reasons that contribute to this severity is the lack of environmental education being incorporated into formal education, from pre-school up to the university level.

Learning about our earth has to start at a young age, as preschoolers are more receptive and inquisitive. With a proper knowledge of the environment, these children can then grow to be individuals with a sense care towards the environment, and become environmental warriors for our earth.

Summary

Project Little Green Warriors is a project that focuses on developing an environmental syllabus which will be used for early childhood education in Malaysia. The syllabus will focus around several modules which can be completed in one year, designed based on the sense of wonder and the joy of discovery.

Participating kindergartens will be given a syllabus, and teachers will be trained to carry out the modules. Every student will also be given a workbook where they can write or draw what they have learnt, seen or experienced.

Environmental sustainability, ecology and biodiversity, ecosystems, climate change, and difficult environmental concepts will be transformed into a fun method of learning in a manner that is easy to understand for children. Beginning with simple and familiar experiences and frequent outdoor positive experiences, the children will learn to care for the environment while having a little bit of fun at the same time.

The children will also have a one day gallery for the public, in which they will exhibit what they have learnt in the form of performances, drawings or writing. Every child will be given a potted plant, which shall be their 'mini action plan', and they will bring this plant back home to be taken care of, to share the sense of responsibility and care for the environment with family members.

Project Objectives

1. To help Malaysian preschoolers understand the importance of our earth and the need to preserve it
2. To instill in them a sense of responsibility and care towards the environment
3. To learn about nature and biodiversity around them
4. To enhance their sense of wonder, imagination, and creativity
5. To help them develop into adults who understand and care about environmental stewardship

Syllabus

Classroom based learning

In-class learning

Students will first learn about environmental concepts and then apply them through singing, dancing, story-telling and drama movement (creative arts).

In a 30 minute session every week, children will be exposed to one environmental concept per session. Topics covered include recycling, natural ecosystems, ecology and botany.

Gallery of Solutions

At the end of the semester, children will have a “Gallery of Solutions” for the public where parents are invited to witness what their children have learnt over the semester. Performances regarding environmental knowledge and solutions to environmental problems will be presented in the form of song, dance, drama or story-telling.

Outdoor based learning

Developing Stewardship: Rethinking outdoor play

The outdoors can be a source of ideas, inspiration and materials for the creative arts. However, outdoor experiences for young children can be so much more than this. Children will learn significant environmental lessons regarding sharing nature with other species, nurturing native plants and animals, and taking responsibility for their care, including the maintenance and protection of habitat. Sustainable practices can be learnt through gardening, composting and adopting water use minimization strategies. Children are taught outdoor practices in conservation and recycling. Learning can be done through a real life interactive park where through games (treasure hunt, The Amazing Race), children will learn about environmental basics.

Green Spaces

Green spaces are created where children will be assisted to plant flowers and plants, and continually monitor their progress by watering them. A typical playground can be transformed into an

environmental yard by simple activities such as adding flower and vegetable gardens, tree houses, logs and providing children with tools for investigating and experimenting (water hose, magnifying glasses).

Action plan

Month	Items addressed
February 2013	Structuring of syllabus (classroom based learning)
March 2013	Structuring of syllabus (outdoor based learning)
April 2013	Proofreading of syllabus by early childhood & environmental experts
May 2013	Modifying, editing, and finalizing syllabus
June 2013	Training of teachers for pilot project
July 2013	Starting of pilot project (The Junior Learning House as a project school)
August 2013	Run first module of syllabus (to be written)
September 2013	Run second module of syllabus
October 2013	Run third module of syllabus
November 2013	Gallery of Solutions
December 2013	Evaluation of pilot project objectives, optimization and improvements syllabus
January 2014	Outing to a national park for children to learn out of their normal environment

Budget

Item	Quantity	Unit Cost (USD)	Cost (USD)
Printing of syllabus (pilot project)	5	5	25
Printing of workbooks (pilot project)	70	10	30
Purchasing of equipment (pots, plants, outdoor tables, watering cans) for pilot project			1200
TOTAL COST			1255