



Virtual Empathy Program

Grade 1

Introduction:

This provides some basic background information, key vocabulary terms, and suggested activities that support the “Wild Habitats” empathy program from the Minnesota Zoo. It will be helpful for your students to understand the **bold** terms before their first session.

The suggested activities were designed to enhance your experience. We ask that you provide us with your program feedback and share your students work to help us continue to improve our programs. Your feedback is critical as we use it to make changes from year to year. Your voice makes a difference!

Provide your feedback [here](#) or by going to <https://tinyurl.com/empathyprogram>.

Scan and email student postcards to educate@mnzoo.org or mail them to zookeepers at:

Minnesota Zoo Attn: Education
13000 Zoo Blvd
Apple Valley, MN 55124

Standards Alignment

2019 MN Graduation Standards supported:

1.4.2.1.1 Recognize that animals need space, water, food, shelter, and air.

NGSS Standards supported:

1-LS3-1 Make observations to construct an evidence-based account that young plants and animals are like, but not exactly like, their parents.

Key Vocabulary Terms

Habitat – A natural environment in which an animal, plant, or other living things live.

Organism – Any living thing, such as a plant or animal, able to grow or reproduce.





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Adaptation – Something to help an animal survive. It could be a part of their body or something that they do, like the way an animal moves or eat.

Survive – Live and grow

Pre-Program Activities:

Activity #1: The Power of Observation

Materials:

- Variety of objects with different textures, shapes, and sizes
- Large bin or table
- Something to cover the objects



Instructions:

Scientists observe the world around them to answer the questions they have. Observing something well means scientists pay close attention and study it from different angles, places, and time and sometimes even repeatedly. The longer scientists observe something, the more answers they collect to answer their questions. Observations can be made with your five senses (sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste) but different tools like magnifying glasses, microscopes, rulers and measuring tapes, and weights and scales can help.

Practice observing different objects in your classroom. Gather a variety of objects with different textures, size, and shapes and spread them out in a bin or on a table. (Ex: different colored markers, ruler, leaf, white board eraser, pinecone, notepad, pencil, crayon, small toy, paper clip, glue stick, small photo, etc.) Cover the objects.

Share with students that you will uncover the objects and give them 10 seconds to look carefully at what is underneath. Cover the objects after 10 seconds and invite students to share one item they observed. Make a list of their observations.

Repeat this at least three times. After the third round, keep the objects uncovered and have students compare the lists. Did students notice new objects each round? What objects are missing from their lists? Why do they think that is? Was the object camouflaged? Was it too small?



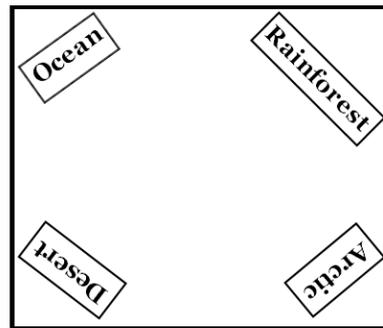


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Activity #2: Habitat 4-Corners

Materials:

- Index cards (animal notecards)
- 4 pieces of paper
- Tape
- Room with four corners/virtual whiteboard



Instructions:

Why do animals need a home? Talk about the different benefits of an animal's home. (*It provides warmth and shade, stores food, provides a place to sleep and stay safe from predators*) Explain that animal homes are called **habitats**. Have students brainstorm a list of habitats.

Write a habitat on each of the four pieces of paper (Ex: Ocean, rainforest, arctic, desert). Place each of the habitat names in one of the four corners of the room/whiteboard. Make animal notecards by writing the names or gluing a picture of at least five animals that live in each habitat. (Find digital photos if using virtual whiteboard.)

Put the cards in a stack and have each student draw a card. Have students pretend to be the animal on the card while walking to the habitat corner it lives in. When all the students are in their correct habitat, call on a few volunteers to share what animal they are and what habitat they live in.

Have students return to you to draw a new card. Continue to play the game until all the cards have been used or until students have picked at least three different animals.

Background information:

Animals live in habitats where their essential needs are met. Habitats provide animals with food, water, shelter, and air to help them live and grow. To survive in each habitat, animals have unique body parts or adaptations to eat, move, get away or hide from predators, and to find or build shelter. Habitats come in many different sizes and can be found all over the world and often are shared by millions of animals including humans. For animals to stay happy, healthy, and safe, their habitats must be protected.



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During your program:

We are so excited to meet and get to know your students better and to learn from them! In our sessions, we expect:

- Curiosity!
- Questions!
- Awe!
- Sharing stories!

During the program, you can support students and zoo instructors by practicing and engaging in empathy for animals' best practices.

Examples include:

- Use language that encourages students to see animals as individuals with unique personalities, experiences, and intentions. *(Example: Use “he or she” to describe animal instead of “it”)*
- Model positive, empathic attitude and behavior to provide an example for students to learn how to build empathic skills.
- Encourage and invite students to observe animal and imagine what it is like to be that animal. *(Example: “Notice how he is flicking his forked tongue out. That is how he smells. What do you think he is smelling right now?”)*
- Encourage storytelling and roleplaying to take on the perspective of an animal.
- Avoid reinforcing fear and disgust. It’s okay to acknowledge a student’s fear or disgust but refocus students’ attention to unique facts about the animal that they may find interesting.
- Connect students to caring action by suggesting and inviting students to think of simple caring actions. *(Example: recycling, picking up trash, educating others, planting flowers)*



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Post-Program Student Activity: Send a postcard to a zookeeper!

The Minnesota Zoo has over 400 different species of animals that live at the zoo and we have many zookeepers that take care of the animals that you visited on your trail tour. A day in the life of a zookeeper includes food prep, feeding the animals, making behavioral observations, cleaning, and maintaining the animals'



living space, training, educating visitors, and supporting veterinary staff. Zookeepers also make sure that our animal friends are exercising, staying curious, and practicing natural behaviors by providing them enrichment. An enrichment can be any object that is safe for an animal to interact with such as a ball, cardboard boxes, floating objects in the water, puzzle feeders, different scent, or pine needles and leaves. You might have seen some enrichment on your trail tour.

If you enjoyed seeing the animals on your tour today, send a postcard to a zookeeper. Print and use the postcard template provided or have students use a blank piece of paper. Include a drawing of what animal you enjoyed seeing and what the animal was doing to thank the zookeepers for taking such great care of them.

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We are excited to share your postcards with zookeepers!

