



# Virtual Empathy Program

## Kindergarten

### **Introduction:**

This provides some basic background information, key vocabulary terms, and suggested activities that support the “Is it Alive?” 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](mailto:educate@mnzoo.org) or mail them to zookeepers at:

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

### **Standards Alignment**

#### ***2009 MN Graduation Standards supported:***

**K.4.1.12** Identify the external parts of a variety of plants and animals including humans.

**K.4.1.13** Differentiate between living and nonliving things.

#### ***NGSS Standards supported:***

**K-LS1-1** Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

### **Key Vocabulary Terms**

**Living** – Having life

**Non-living** – Not alive





MINNESOTA ZOO

**Reproduce** – Have babies, often called offspring or young

**Organism** – Any living thing

## **Pre-Program Activities:**

### **Activity #1: The Power of Observation**

To explore and discover the world around us, we must use our five senses (sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste). Practice observing different objects in your classroom by playing “I Spy.” Gather a variety of objects with different textures, smells, and shapes (Ex: marker, ruler, plant, white board eraser, square sticky notepad, etc.)



Start with examples below:

- I spy with my little eyes, something (insert color).
- I spy with my little eyes, something soft.
- I spy with my little eyes, something in the shape of a (insert shape).

Invite students to share one item they observe using the I spy statement.

## **Background information:**

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.

### **Activity #2: Non-living vs. Living**

How do we know if something is living or non-living? Write a list of student ideas.

Scientists can tell if something is living or non-living because living things behave differently than non-living things. Share pictures of living and non-living things and have students separate them into different groups. (*Example: School bus, pencil, flower, blue jay, black bear, chair, frog*) What is similar among the living





MINNESOTA ZOO

organisms? (*Living things reproduce, grow and change, drink water, eat food for energy*) What is similar among the non-living things? (*Non-living things cannot reproduce, grow, or need to eat for energy*)

### **Background information:**

It is not always easy to distinguish between **living** and **non-living things**. There are some guidelines that can be followed to help determine if an item is living or non-living. The six rules that are used by scientists are:

1. Living things need water.
2. Living things need food for energy.
3. Living things grow and change.
4. Living things reproduce (have babies).
5. Living things need a home.
6. Living things need air.

### **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.



MINNESOTA  
NATURAL  
HERITAGE



ANIMAL CARE  
AND CONSERVATION



ANIMALS AND  
ECOSYSTEMS



STEM  
EDUCATION



CONNECTING TO  
NATURE



MINNESOTA ZOO

- Connect students to caring action by suggesting and inviting students to think of simple caring actions. (*Example: recycling, picking up trash, teaching others about an animal, planting flowers*)

### **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.

Scan and email student postcards to [educate@mnzoo.org](mailto:educate@mnzoo.org) or mail them to zookeepers at:

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

**We are excited to share your postcards with zookeepers!**

