

# Saving the Planet by Saving Water

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Let us say you think you are a great teacher, and you do an excellent job of instructing your students. Your children pass exams with flying colours. On the other hand, these same students of your class waste water in their homes, spread garbage around their neighbourhood, destroy trees and the plants on the school grounds or participate in all of these actions as part of a group. If you think this may be true, you should reconsider the definition of a school teacher. A school is a centre of learning and the best place to educate youngsters. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the primary goal of educational processes in schools is to educate future adult citizens.

Children should, and can, be made aware of their surroundings from a young age. This awareness not only allows students to engage in experiential learning outside the classroom but also allows them to connect with the real world and apply what they have learnt to life situations. Environmental education teaches pupils how social, ecological, economic, cultural, and political issues are intertwined. It also assists children in comprehending how their choices and behaviours affect the environment.

## Teaching environmental awareness

Environmental awareness should be taught in the school in a way that is appropriate for the children's age and maturity levels. At the same time, instruction should not be just theoretical, but also practical, interesting, and enjoyable. I spoke with a few teachers to find out what kind of environmental activities they could perform in their classrooms.

### *Classroom interventions*

Anuradha, a teacher at the Azim Premji School in Mandwa, Sirohi, believes that Nature Walks are a wonderful exercise that help children connect with their surroundings. This practice assists youngsters in developing skills, such as seeing, understanding, knowing, and inquiring about their surroundings. She organises nature walks with her students from classes I to IV. According to educational psychology, nature walks are an effective method

for connecting youngsters with observing their surroundings. Children up to the age of 7 years are said to have excellent observational skills and are quick to grasp new information. Children have a proclivity for noticing everything and, as a result, are better at learning new things.

Sharing her experience, Anuradha further states that one of the learning outcomes set by NCERT for science students in higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) is to take measures to protect their environment. As a result, she ensures that all her lesson plans provide sufficient scope for children to achieve the recommended learning outcomes as well as to carry out the specific activities suggested. She discusses the topics extensively with the children, shows them videos, organises debating competitions for them, and asks them to prepare charts, posters, etc. Some of these projects are directly linked to the environment. For instance, for National Science Day, the children made a working model of a particular technique for irrigation of crops in which water consumption is very low and irrigation is better. While teaching the transportation of water in plants, she also raised the important issue of the frequent pumping of water from the ground leading to a dangerous shortage in the groundwater supply, with the added disadvantage of water required for trees and plants gradually getting exhausted. Anuradha asked the children what steps should be taken to stop the excessive exploitation of groundwater resources. The children gave some suggestions and concluded through discussions that the exploitation of groundwater can be reduced only when the freshwater sources on the surface of the earth are not polluted and are conserved. Children prepared plays on this topic on their own. Taking this idea forward, they also completed a project on waste disposal at the school. By taking the school as a model, they could spread awareness about it in their village as well.

Rekha Rathod, a teacher at the Government Primary School, Dharda Paoti, says that a teacher should tell the children about the plants and

animals in their surroundings so that children know their importance. She has done this with her class and, as a result, the children are sensitive to trees and plants. They have started telling people at home and around them to not cut down trees. It is the result of constant interaction with children that their families understand that paper is obtained from trees, and notebooks and books are made from it. Rekhaji says that she takes the children to the village and on the way, shows them the nests that birds have built on trees. She tells them that if trees are not saved from being felled, the birds

will lose their homes. Eventually, many species of birds will become extinct, resulting in an imbalance in the environment.

After talking to Rekhaji, I came out of the class and saw that some children were making soil beds and watering the trees and plants in the school compound. I spoke with them, and they seemed to understand that trees and plants need to be watered and fertilised for them to grow well and that more trees would make people, animals, birds and bees enjoy a better quality of life.



*Pictures 1 and 2. Children watering and caring for trees in the school compound.*



## Pointers for teachers

I believe a teacher should keep the following things in mind while teaching about the environment:

- Awareness of the environment includes the assimilation and appreciation of key human values and attitudes. It encourages youngsters to actively participate in environmental conservation by promoting an understanding of the link between all living organisms and their environment.
- The teacher should make an effort to connect children's local knowledge with academic or classroom learning. This can help in breaking the tendency of rote learning and stimulate developmentally age-appropriate environmental learning.
- Pictures play a vital role in environmental awareness. As a supplement to written content, children should be encouraged to engage in picture-reading and tactile activities that are both entertaining and challenging.

## Lesson Plan: Environmental Awareness

### Class I

This is a systematic lesson plan on the theme of environmental awareness to demonstrate how a teacher can work with children in primary classes.

<b>Theme:</b> Water		
<b>Key concepts:</b> Need for judicious use of water, reusing water in the home/family		
<b>Learning outcomes:</b> Children will develop awareness in the following learning areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need to save water</li><li>• Activities where water wastage can be reduced both at home and school</li><li>• Ways of reusing water at home and school</li><li>• Appreciation for the reuse of water at home and school</li></ul>		
<b>Classroom transaction</b>		
Learning points	Strategies	Pedagogical process/classroom interaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of water reuse</li><li>• Need and ways to save water at home and school</li></ul>	Observation	When introducing the concept, use the children's prior knowledge (on water usage). Ask them to look at the pictures of water usage and activities done without water on the display board and share with the class. What is happening in the pictures?
	Group discussion	In a small group, start discussing those pictures in which water usage is high and whether it can be reduced. Children will respond to this in different ways, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We can brush our teeth with half a bottle of water instead of a full bottle of water.</li><li>• We can save water by taking a bath with water in a bucket instead of a shower.</li></ul> Encourage children to respond independently. Now encourage the children to give examples of where water wastage can be reduced in the classroom. Expected responses could be: We can reduce the use of water that we use for painting and take only as much water as we need for drinking. Tell children the following story and ask them to think about it. Madhu is a little girl who lives in a desert area. Her village gets water supply for only two days a week. Consider the ways in which Madhu can reuse water to overcome its scarcity.

Some pictures that teachers will use in their class: Madhu is taking a bath sitting on the charpoy and a tub is placed under the charpoy to collect the bath water. Madhu uses the water from the tub to mop the floor and clean the drain.

The children will think about the story and the teacher can expect the children to have questions. The question session on the story could be as follows:

1. One child may ask, 'There is a lot of water in our city, so we do not have to reuse it'
2. Second Child, 'Since we don't live in a desert, we don't need to save or reuse water.'
3. The third child might add, 'Why should we use dirty water?'
4. Some children may appreciate the need to reuse and save water.

	Small project	Ask the children to collect poems, stories and songs related to saving water and bring these to class. Read them aloud for children to enjoy and learn. They can also create their own stories and poems on water, which can be kept in their portfolio.
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### Learning assignment

- Ask the children to identify an activity in which water can be reused at home and illustrate this through pictures.
- Ask children to suggest any two ways of reusing water in school.
- Children can talk to their grandparents/elders to find out if, as children, they needed to reuse water. Consider why it is needed now. They can share their findings with the class.



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